WOMEN IN MAURITIAN POLITICS
– CONSEQUENCES OF WOMEN’S INCREASED REPRESENTATION

Examination paper – Bachelor Public administration
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Abstract
The purpose of the thesis is to understand and analyse councillors’ view on women in Mauritian politics. This thesis focuses on their experiences after the implementation of gender quota in local government which led to an increased women’s representation in local politics as well as the consequences derived from it. The empirical material for this thesis has been gathered through qualitative interviews with male and female councillors from three municipalities in Mauritius. The theoretical framework is divided into three parts which are used to analyse different points from the empirical material. In the theoretical framework we have included theories about the ways to increase women’s representation, why women should be active in politics, and about gender quota. To analyse the empirics from a theoretical point of view, we have divided the results into three sub-categories which are the respondents’ stance to gender quota and women’s representation in politics, the theory of critical mass and the change in political agenda, as well as the councillors’ attitudes towards female politicians. The results from this thesis show that the notion that politics is solely a male domain has begun to change. The increased women’s representation has shown that women are as competent as men in the political field. However, the results do not show a notable change in the political agenda, because not enough time has passed to see any differences. Women in Mauritius are today more accepted to partake in politics but there is still a long way to go for them to be considered equal members as men in the political world.

Keywords: gender equality in local politics, gender quota, women’s empowerment, women’s political representation
Sammanfattning

Nyckelord: jämställdhet i den lokala politiken, könskvotering, kvinnornas makt, kvinnornas politiska representation
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### List of abbreviations

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADBG</td>
<td>African Development Bank Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMESA</td>
<td>Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International IDEA</td>
<td>International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPU</td>
<td>Inter-Parliamentary Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sida</td>
<td>Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UN Women</td>
<td>United Nations Women</td>
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<td>WIN</td>
<td>Women in Networking</td>
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<td>WIP</td>
<td>Women in Politics</td>
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1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce Mauritius and their political system, the government’s way of empowering women by implementing gender quota in local politics, and reasons behind the decision as a step towards reaching gender equality, which is an international goal. The purpose will then be stated in form of questions for us to find the answers to.

1.1 Background

The year 2012 was an important year for women in Mauritius. It was the year when the local government implemented a law which states that at least one third of the candidates that run for local elections need to be of a different gender. This contributed to a notable increase in the number of women nominated and elected in local government and thus contested the notion that politics belongs only to men. This bachelor thesis is going to focus on gender quota and what the increased women’s representation in Mauritius’ local politics has meant for the views on women involved in politics as well as what impact they may have in the political arena.

Mauritius is considered a role model for Africa by being the first stable democracy in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), and has often been called a rainbow nation because of its cultural diversity. Despite its achievements of great economic growth, welfare and highly literate population, Mauritius has still a non-representative parliament, says Ramtohul (2006), professor in social studies. She points out that even though 52% of the population are women, the parliament’s 18.8% women’s representation in 2006 is a number that shows a great imbalance between population and political representation. According to Ramtohul, there is a resistance amongst male politicians concerning increasing women’s presence in politics. She states that men in Mauritian society are still governed by the assumption that politics is their playing field and that only they can represent women’s interests adequately. (Ramtohul, 2006:14-15)

Political representation is not the only place where women are facing problems regarding their role in the Mauritian society. According to an article written by Virahsawmy (2015), there is a need for concern when almost 25% of women in Mauritius have been a victim of gender-based violence. The local government addresses gender-based violence as an issue and have with Gender Links (2009), a non-governmental organisation whose purpose is to promote gender equality and justice in the Southern African region, formed action plans to fight this concern. The local government has been chosen as the first stepping stone due to their close work with the citizens, as specified by Gender Links. With more women in the local government, the more prioritised might the issue of gender violence be. This stresses the importance of empowering women in the Mauritian society. Virahsawmy’s article stipulates that gender inequality is established firmly in the attitudes and, according to her, takes political commitment from every level of governance to affect those attitudes and begin the social change. Virahsawmy (2014) also states in another article the importance of perspectives and interests that women offer, but as a result of underrepresentation in politics, goes unnoticed. International communities such as SADC, the African Union, and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) has criticised Mauritius for the low percentage of women in politics and has called for an immediate rectification to that issue. (Gender Links, 2009:4; Ramtohul, 2006; Virahsawmy, 2014, 2015)

An article written by Ackbarally (2012) emphasises the importance of women’s representation in politics as part of women’s empowerment as well as the difficulties that they encounter when...
trying to enter the political world. Women have been involved in the political process only as campaign contributors to male politicians. In the article, Ackbarally summarises his interviews with members of Women in Networking (WIN), the leading women’s network in Mauritius, and points out that one of the members reveal that “...nobody has so far recognised my capacity. Men always ask us to organise public meetings and bring the people, but they never see my potential as a candidate” (Ackbarally, 2012). This is, according to Ackbarally, the underlying problem with the representation of women in Mauritian politics, i.e. deep-rooted social norms that make politics a man’s playing field.

One step towards gender equality in politics is to modernise the electoral system to create conditions to help more women participate actively in public life and reinforce the existing tendency to produce diverse and broad representation of all (The Electoral Reform Unit, 2014). Virahsawmy (2012) writes in her article that the electoral reform to implement gender quota in local politics started in 2005 with leader Ramgoolam and his party’s awareness of the low 5.4% women in parliament and 6.4% in local government. The viewpoint for the electoral reform, as reported by Virahsawmy, came from Ramgoolam’s statement that there was a wish to introduce a mixed system or a system of political representation that might benefit women. Women in Politics (WIP) (2013), a non-governmental organisation with the goal to encourage and promote women’s participation in politics, had a vision for Mauritian women to fully participate and to be proportionally represented in parliament and local government. WIP has stated that they have worked hard to raise awareness for women’s representation in politics by meeting with political parties and other women’s groups like Gender Links. Virahsawmy (2012) announces in her article that Gender Links trained and encouraged women to run for political office and made the population aware to vote for women. WIP also had a collaboration with the Minister of Local Government for the reason that the local government was seen as a potential site to increase women’s participation in politics. They campaigned for a gender neutral quota to be introduced in the reform as to ensure that female candidates do not get treated as second class candidates. WIP as explained on their website worked with training the potential candidates for local government elections and raising awareness in the population, with the message that women are viable candidates. According to their website, WIP also organised and participated in debates and ran advertisements in radio and bus campaigns. (The Electoral Reform Unit, 2014:2; Virahsawmy, 2012; WIP, 2013)

1.2 The Republic of Mauritius

Mauritius, officially the Republic of Mauritius, is an island nation in the Indian Ocean at the coast of the African continent with an area of 2 040 km$^2$ and a population of 1 331 155 people in 2014. The capital and largest city is Port Louis. Mauritius is a relatively young country that attained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1968 and is a constitutional republic with three levels of government: central, local and village. The nation is a stable democracy with regular free elections and a positive human rights record. Mauritius has one of Africa’s highest per capita incomes, with $16,100 GDP in 2013. In comparison to the rest of the world, Mauritius comes in 86th place. Mauritius is a nation with ethnic and religious diversity, where the largest ethnic group is Indo-Mauritian of 68 percent and the most prominent religion is Hindu with 48.5%. English is the official language but less than one percent has it as its native language, as oppose to 86.5% of the population that has Creole as a native language. The sex ratio in Mauritius stands 0.97 male(s) for every female as of 2014. The country’s unemployment rate is relatively low with its 8.3% which results in eight percent of the population being below poverty line. A major income source in Mauritius is tourism. (Karlsson, 2015)
1.2.1 Election process and gender quota in local politics

Mauritius utilises a plurality/majority system in the electoral process known as block vote. Block vote means that the candidates that have the highest total votes in the constituency win the election. This system usually leads to voters voting for candidates instead of parties. (International IDEA, 2013) The local government in Mauritius is divided into five municipal councils and 130 village councils where the election for councillors is held every sixth year. The councils’ assignment is to overlook different public services and to organise cultural, leisure, and sporting activities. The councillors get their mandate by winning in a simple majority system where the number of councillors in each ward is decided by the Electoral Commissioner. Every citizen qualified to vote can then vote for a maximum of three candidates.

With the enforcement of the Local Government Act, the representation of women in both municipal and village councils have increased because the act states that if any party have more than two candidates in an electoral ward then the candidates must be of different genders. (Local Government Act, 2011:632)

Mauritius have, as an approach for solving the issue with gender inequality regarding political representation of women, issued gender quota in the local politics. Gender quotas are, according to Dahlerup (2005), legal or voluntary-regulated goals set in numbers or percentage that stipulates the number of women which must be included in the candidate list (as Mauritius have implemented), or number of seats in the parliament that are delegated for women. Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008) stress the importance of quota as an instrument to battle gender inequality in the political world. The goal with gender quotas is to balance the political arena for women and men. There are a lot of arguments regarding the legitimacy of the quota. Dahlerup (2007) states that the adversaries of the quota system often argue that quotas are a violation of the very same principle of equality that they stand for, since men are disfavoured in favour of women, unlike the supporters of gender quotas that see them as a way of achieving gender equality in political institutions. (Dahlerup, 2005:141; Dahlerup, 2007:81-83; Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2008:10-11)

According to Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008), quotas have exceptionally risen the past ten years around the world with about 40 countries implementing gender quota in their constitutions. Political parties in 50 other countries have also voluntarily implemented quota on their voting lists. This means that around half of the world’s countries today use one or another form of quota in politics. Dahlerup and Freidenvall state that there is a growing criticism about how slow women’s proportion in politics and society’s other elites increases. UN’s declaration “Platform for Action” recommends its member countries to use positive action and setting specific targets to achieve a co-equal representation in politics. This gives legitimacy for women’s movement’s demands on quota. Dahlerup and Freidenvall are questioning if more women in higher political positions are in reality chosen today. They claim that statistics over female political leaders around the world reveals that there were more female prime ministers in the beginning of the 1990’s than there are today. (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2008:7-8)

Virahsawmy (2015) states in her article that former Prime Minister Ramgoolam believes gender quota is a step towards equality and wishes for the number of female candidates to raise. The current National Assembly consists of eight women out of 69 seats available, which is barely 12%. Women in this country, whom have the right to vote and get elected, suffer from discrimination which results in fewer engaged in politics, explains Virahsawmy. She states that even though gender inequality has been reduced in different fields such as education, enterprises, and judiciary, it remains a major concern. (Virahsawmy, 2015)
The quota system is the first step to ensure women’s active political involvement where they can express their ideas about the social and political life in Mauritius. According to the article by Ackbarally (2012), not all welcome the implementation of gender quotas. Certain male members of the political world argues that gender quotas will not help women and that quotas only make women appear weak in facing the world of politics. However, as is seen from the results of the elections, the direct effect from the legislation has increased women’s representation in the local government from 5% to 25% in village councils and from 12% to 35% in municipal councils. In Figure 1 below shows a more detailed presentation of the five municipalities and the effect of the implementation of gender quotas of elected women. The implementation of the electoral gender quota allows candidates, specifically women, to be considered for local government. (Ackbarally, 2012; Electoral Commissioner’s Office, 2015)

![Figure 1 Percentage of elected women in the municipalities of Mauritius, before and after implementing gender quota in candidacy.](image)

1.3 Definition of gender equality and its importance

Gender equality does not mean that women and men are the same in biological terms, according to United Nations Women (UN Women) (2011). Instead, it is that women and men should be treated the same regarding their rights, responsibilities and opportunities. Gender equality is often perceived as a women’s issue because women have been most at disfavour in society, but UN Women adds that it should equally concern men. The gender-based inequalities are a global issue that ranges from voting rights to equal representation in the workplace, parliaments and society, according to UN Women. There has been significant attention towards resolving this issue on a global level. Most countries, like member states part of UN Women (2015), have devised plans to combat gender inequality. Some countries have also taken a further step and established ministries to assist. Progress has been made regarding this issue on numerous levels, as stated by UN Women. The organisation also stipulates that taking the needs of women and girls across the world into account is essential to achieve sustainable human development. Empowering women and girls contributes to a better world, UN Women adds. (UN Women, 2011 & 2015)
The United Nations (UN) declared in the year 2000 their Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for the world’s countries to strive for and accomplish by 2015. These goals range from eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, to developing global partnership for development. There has been a significant progress made with the help of the combined efforts of national governments, the international communities, and the private sector in achieving these goals, as stated by UN’s report. One of the MDGs is to promote gender equality and to empower women. The MDGs report released in 2015 shows a change and a notable progress in women’s representation on a global level and a worldwide increase of numbers regarding women’s representation in education, employment and politics. (UNDP, 2015)

According to UN’s website (2015), the target set to achieve gender equality regarding all levels of education has been reached, and although there has been significant progress in terms of poverty, labour market and wages for women as well as women’s participation in politics, gender disparities still exist in those fields. Women’s participation in the workforce has increased from 35% in 1990 to 40% in 2015 while the seats held by women in national parliament have increased steadily between the year 2000 and 2015, but women are still underrepresented in the world’s parliaments with an average of one female out of five members, as stated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2015). To reach a better state of participation by women in the political sphere, UNDP indicates that a number of countries have passed on new laws and regulations that ensures women a greater access to candidate lists, and in that way a better representation and political leverage. (UN, 2015; UNDP, 2015)

That is exactly what Rwanda did when they in 2003 became the first non-Nordic country to have the highest representation of women in national parliament with 48.8%. According to Inter-Parliamentary Union’s (IPU) (2015) statistical data, there are three other African countries in the top ten list, Seychelles, Senegal and South Africa, but the progression of women’s empowerment is not only contained by these four countries. According to African Development Bank Group (ADBG) (2015), countries in the African continent, one of which is Mauritius, have made many advances on women’s empowerment and enclosed new laws as well as made changes to existing laws all in the name of promoting gender equality. (ADBG, 2015; IPU, 2015)

1.4 Previous research

Wängnerud (2009) emphasises that there are numerous researches that analyses and try to explain the growing number of elected women. She claims that positive changes in women’s representation is a collective effort by political parties, women’s organisations and other groups whose main objective is to increase the number of elected women. Wängnerud indicates that it is not only the party politics and their collaboration with other organisations that has an influence on the elected women but also the type of welfare state and electoral system. Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008) refers to gender equality policies which purpose is to increase women’s representation. There are three modern forms of policy and these are anti-discrimination legislation, affirmative action (quota) and gender mainstreaming. Anti-discrimination legislation prohibits direct and indirect special treatment on the basis of gender, but the legislation has its restrictions and does not cover all aspects when it comes to gender equality in labour. These restrictions come in form of pay differential and job markets gender segregation, therefore another form of gender equality policy is introduced, declares Dahlerup and Freidenvall. Affirmative actions for equality are actions with the purpose to discourage existing deformities in the job market and the education system when it comes to gender and race, and with the help of positive action and positive treatments promote gender equality. Quota is one of the many forms of affirmative action and is often used in the political world.
Gender mainstreaming implicates that a ‘gender perspective’ should be integrated in all operations, from the planning and decision process, to the implementation and evaluation phase. (Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2008:12; Wängnerud, 2009: 61-62)

There are, as reported by Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008), many types of quotas that exists in different social arenas which applies to different individuals and groups, and can concern the local, regional and national level. There are also different solutions to the problem of women’s underrepresentation in politics. Dahlerup and Freidenvall state that if the problem is perceived to be due to qualification, then competence enhancement is implemented. But if the problem seems to be because of women being systematically discriminated and sifts out of the selection process, then quota is used as a legitimate solution, says Dahlerup and Freidenvall. There are different dimensions of quotas depending on the level that quotas are applied. According to Dahlerup, the different dimensions of quotas depend to some extent to the democracy level and the electoral system that the country uses. The first dimension is when quotas exist by changing the laws in the country or in the parties. In legal quotas, the rules are established in the constitution, whereas party quotas are when individual parties have applied rules to their own policy. The second dimension concerns the phases of the nomination process. Aspirant quotas implies rules for equal distribution of gender in the first group of potential and willing candidates and are mainly used in majoritarian electoral systems, as opposed to candidate quotas which means gender distribution in assembling the party lists for election and is preferred by countries that have proportional electoral systems. The last dimension is reserved seats, meaning that certain groups are guaranteed a certain number of seats among the elected and are common in countries which have group representation. There are other reasons to why some countries have implemented legal party quotas and why others seem to prefer voluntary party quotas. However, the implementation of a quota system, excluding reserved seats quotas, cannot guarantee that equality is achieved in the political world regarding representation. Dahlerup emphasise that gender quotas contribute to a rapid increase in number of women in politics even if the question of equality is not solved. (Dahlerup, 2007:79-81; Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2008:12-13)

Karam and Lovenduski (2005) state that there are a number of variables that can affect the impact of women parliamentarians. Variables such as economic and political circumstances in which the assembly operates in, women’s number, their experience and background, as well as how the political process functions has an effect on the extent to which women in parliament can make a difference once elected. (Karam & Lovenduski, 2005:187-188)

Rwanda is often cited as a success story when it comes to implementing gender quota. Burnet (2011) explains that the results of her case study about Rwanda’s implementation of gender quota in politics shows that having more women in government does not always lead to a more democratic government, but it can lead to increased political, social, and economic activity amidst the entire female population. She states that the effectuation of gender quotas in every level of government in Rwanda has reversed the typical gender paradigm where women were responsible for the household and men worked and supported the women. Women from urban areas have, according to Burnet, benefited more from this role reversal because they gained access to better positions with higher salaries in contrast to women in rural areas that faced increased workloads without compensation. (Burnet, 2011:328-331)
1.5 Research problem

It is clear that Mauritius faces problems regarding women’s role in the society in which their social standing leaves much room for improvement. The patriarchal view exists in many spheres in the Mauritian society and its existence restricts equal participation of women in the society. Issues like gender-based violence and discrimination makes it important to empower women in Mauritius to have their voices heard. The nation has taken several measures to improve women’s role in the society. Pressured from international communities as well as national women’s organisations, the Mauritian government implemented an act in form of electoral gender quota in local politics as a means to empower women and to battle gender inequality in the political world by increasing women’s representation in politics. The local government act was implemented in the second dimension, the nomination process, in form of candidate quotas. This has led to the increase of women’s representation in local government by almost threefold and therefore indicate that the problem of a low women’s political involvement does not lie in competence or qualification but the systematic excluding of women.

1.6 Purpose

Our aim is to comprehend if and how the political agenda has changed since the increase of women’s representation. We want to explore the consequences that has emerged from increasing women’s political representation in Mauritius as a result of implementing electoral gender quota. We want to understand if and how the quota system has affected different municipal councillors’ perception of women in politics and find out the answers to questions such as:

- Which are the municipal councillors’ views on gender quota as a means to increase women’s representation in politics?
- To what extent and in what ways has women’s increased representation in local politics changed the political agenda?
- In what ways has women’s increased representation in local politics meant for the attitudes towards women in politics?

By analysing the change in political agenda and the attitudes towards women in politics as a consequence from an increased women’s representation, we can give a small scientific contribution to the knowledge gap which focuses on women in Mauritian politics.


2 Methodology

This method chapter describes the way our bachelor thesis is written by including its design, the form to collect the data material which we need in analysing the empirical material, how we have come to select our respondents, and delimitations of what this bachelor thesis will not bring up.

2.1 Research design

The research we have conducted is a field case study which has been carried out in municipal councils in Mauritius. Since our study focuses on explaining and understanding questions, a qualitative research method has been applied. Qualitative method is, as defined by Bryman (2011), a type of research approach that is more open and focused on words, unlike quantitative method which is based on numbers. There are, in qualitative method, several different approaches to collect data material where the most significant are ethnography/participant observation, interviews, focus groups, language-based methods for the collection and analysis of qualitative data, and collection and qualitative analysis of texts and documents. (Bryman, 2011:340-342) Since we need a deeper understanding of our research questions, we have concluded that using interviews is the best approach to generate empirical material for us to analyse and in that way enabling us to answer our research questions.

2.2 Data collection

Interviews come in different types, according to Bryman (2011), interviews which occur in qualitative researches tend to be less structured (i.e. unstructured or semi-structured) than interviews that are used in quantitative researches. Bryman states that qualitative researches emphasises on the respondents’ own perceptions and experiences unlike quantitative researches which highlights the researchers’ interest. (Bryman, 2011:413) For the purpose of our study, we have interviewed both male and female politicians whom have been elected for political office in municipal councils. In doing so, we hoped to acquire an extensive perspective of the local politicians’ views and personal experiences on women’s role in Mauritian politics. Our ambition was to gain a broader spectrum of information that could help us analyse the politicians’ stance towards gender quota, the changes in political agenda and the attitudes towards female politicians which can emerge in local politics due to increased women’s representation.

Since our study aims to explain and understand the respondents’ reality, then the best approach to obtain that knowledge among the forms of collecting qualitative data is interviews. Interviews are better in achieving this than other methods. Bryman (2011) points out that although observations are great when studying people in different situations, it is an approach that is expensive and demands a lot of time. Not only would we have to have permission to join the respondents’ council meetings which are not open to the public, but observing their meetings would be a huge language barrier as Mauritians mainly speak Creole, which is a language that we do not comprehend. Bryman explains that the ones being observed also tend to change their behaviour when they are aware that they are being observed. He also state that a disadvantage with observing is that it does not reflect what the respondents perceive, which is our main focus with this study. Bryman further describes that focus groups would give us the respondents’ thoughts and perceptions during discussions of a subject that is given to them, however the ability to direct the discussion can be influenced by a lot of factors, like the internal group dynamics and how comfortable the respondents are with each other. For the reason that we want to get the respondents’ own perception on the subject and to not have answers that are
influenced by group members, this method is not applicable for us. It would also be difficult to find and gather enough councillors who could leave their political obligation at the same time. Collecting and analysing data, texts and documents would not either inform us of the respondents’ perception. The best approach is then through interviews where the respondents can give direct answers to our questions. In conducting our inquiries, we used semi-structured interviews where we formed a guide of interview questions to follow (see Attachment), making this approach flexible by following the respondents’ point of views and enabling us to form the questions in different ways. (Bryman, 2011:340-342)

2.2.1 Selection

We have based our selection of municipalities from the Electoral Commissioner’s Office (2015) statistics regarding women’s representation in local politics prior and posterior to the implementation of gender quota. This has enabled us to map out a selection process from which we have chosen our interview respondents, see Table 1.

Table 1 Amount of female candidates (C) and elected (E) in the last four elections, shown in percentage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Port Louis C</th>
<th>Port Louis E</th>
<th>Vacoas-Phoenix C</th>
<th>Vacoas-Phoenix E</th>
<th>Curepipe C</th>
<th>Curepipe E</th>
<th>Quatre Bornes C</th>
<th>Quatre Bornes E</th>
<th>Beau Bassin-Rose Hill C</th>
<th>Beau Bassin-Rose Hill E</th>
<th>Total C</th>
<th>Total E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>8.33</td>
<td>11.11</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>13.85</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>6.41</td>
<td>12.50</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012*</td>
<td>22.41</td>
<td>25.00</td>
<td>23.21</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>33.32</td>
<td>46.67</td>
<td>43.75</td>
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<td>33.33</td>
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<td>2015</td>
<td>30.11</td>
<td>34.38</td>
<td>20.22</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>38.68</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>30.95</td>
<td>35.00</td>
<td>31.88</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>30.37</td>
<td>34.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*2012 is the first election after implementing gender quota. Source: Electoral Commissioner’s Office (2015)

The selection of respondents to interview (see Table 2) are members from the three municipal councils with most progress of female representation of the first election after implementing gender quota in the year 2012. These are elected politicians from the municipalities of Curepipe with its increase of 42.53% women, Quatre Bornes’ 36.66%, and Vacoas-Phoenix’s 25%. Of the three, Quatre Bornes elected a majority of women in 2012 with 53.33% women in total in municipal council. Curepipe is the third largest city with about 84 200 citizens while Quatre Bornes is the fourth largest with 80 961 citizens and Vacoas-Phoenix being the second largest in Mauritius with 110 000 citizens (GeoNames, 2015).

The three municipalities which have been selected shows the highest increase in women’s representation, it is reasonable to assume that the conditions for women to make an impression in politics and that the attitudes towards female politicians are at least no better in the remaining two municipalities. Rather it can be assumed that if small changes can be observed in these three selected municipalities then it will probably look even poorer in municipalities with a lower women’s representation.
Table 2 List of respondents with the interviews’ duration time, their municipal council, and gender.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Duration (min)</th>
<th>Municipal council</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Councillor F1</td>
<td>0:42</td>
<td>Quatre Bornes</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor M1</td>
<td>0:42</td>
<td>Quatre Bornes</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor F2</td>
<td>0:59</td>
<td>Quatre Bornes</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor M2</td>
<td>0:47</td>
<td>Quatre Bornes</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor F3</td>
<td>0:39</td>
<td>Curepipe</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor F4</td>
<td>0:39</td>
<td>Curepipe</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor F5</td>
<td>0:49</td>
<td>Curepipe</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor F6</td>
<td>0:39</td>
<td>Curepipe</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor F7</td>
<td>0:44</td>
<td>Vacoas-Phoenix</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor F8</td>
<td>0:37</td>
<td>Vacoas-Phoenix</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor F9</td>
<td>0:34</td>
<td>Vacoas-Phoenix</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Councillor M3</td>
<td>0:38</td>
<td>Vacoas-Phoenix</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to statistics we gathered from the Electoral Commissioner’s Office (2015), the number of newly elected councillors is greater than the number of councillors that have been elected before, which stands 98 first-time elected out of total 120 councillors in all municipalities. Out of the 24 councillors in Curepipe, only four had previously been an elected councillor, while in Quatre Bornes and Vacoas-Phoenix, the number shows one previously elected out of the total 20 in the municipalities respectively (Electoral Commissioner’s Office, 2015). We have divided the interviews into four elected politicians in every council. Our ambition was initially to interview two male and two female councillors in each municipal council for the reason to get viewpoints from different sources. We achieved this ambition in the municipal council of Quatre Bornes but were unfortunate in the remaining two. In the municipal council of Curepipe were all female respondents, and in Vacoas-Phoenix three female and one male councillor. This occurred due to a drop-out since the aforementioned respondents were the only ones who agreed to be interviewed. Several of the councillors that were asked did not have available time to talk to us. Others have misinterpreted the purpose of our study and thought that we only wanted to do a research on the female politicians’ view, and thereby felt that they do not have anything to contribute with. For the reason that our bachelor thesis’ focus lies on women in the political world, having more female respondents is not seen by us as an obstacle in answering our research questions. Having three male respondents can serve as an indication on male councillors’ viewpoints in contrast to their female colleagues. Had we only had female respondents then it could influence the results of our study to be seen solely from their point of views and may therefore not necessarily coincide with the opinions of all the councillors. Considering that almost all elected candidates were first-time councillors, our selection was based solely on gender and not on the years of active political involvement or the length of candidacy. The interview subjects’ affiliation to political parties was not used as a factor in selecting respondents for the reason that the party alliance was the only parties in government and the councillors therefore share similar views. (Electoral Commissioner’s Office, 2015)

2.3 Data analysis

Analysing the data has been done through consented recordings as well as taking notes of all interviews. Listening and transcribing the interviews was then the next step to have pure empirical data material. Transcription was used as a foundation to better isolate the essential information from the nonessential, by dividing the empirical material into groups makes it easier to later analyse. Throughout the transcriptions were continuous discussions to interpret the respondents’ answers.
2.4 Critique of method

A weakness with qualitative method is that it is time consuming for both us and the respondents to go through the interview questions and it is also time consuming for us to process all the data. Qualitative interviews are however flexible where we can ensure that all respondents have answered the questions. A critique that Bryman brings up with qualitative researches is that they are subjective when it is to a great extent based on the researchers’ often unsystematic ideas of what is important and influential, as well as their close and personal relation which they have established with the respondents. Another critique is the difficulty of replicating a research, according to Bryman, since qualitative researches are often unstructured and dependent on how inventive the researcher is makes the research seldom possible to replicate as there are barely any accepted approaches when it comes to this. A third critique which Bryman (2011:369) emphasise is the problem of generalising, as it is difficult to generalise the situation in which the results were established from. Due to the limited amount of time available for us to conduct our study, we can solely utilise our time in a certain number of individuals. Considering that we only have time to interview a few politicians from a limited amount of municipalities, Bryman denotes that there comes a risk that the interviews might give specific information that may only be valid for the interviewed individuals and may not reflect the general perception and experiences that other councillors have, it may therefore be difficult to draw general conclusions. It is however not our primary goal to bring out systematic patterns that can be generalised, which is often the purpose of quantitative studies. We are seeking a more profound understanding which can be generalised in theoretical sense. (Bryman, 2011:368-369, 413)

2.5 Validity and reliability

Validity and reliability are essential parts of qualitative and quantitative researches, according to Bryman (2011). Determining validity and reliability is important in qualitative researches since the interpretation of data can be influenced by the researcher. Validity and reliability in qualitative researches is based on measurement but it cannot be estimated through numbers as it does in quantitative researches. Validity and reliability in qualitative researches are defined differently by scholars. Bryman state that it could be closely defined according to the criterions in quantitative researches, mainly of observing, identifying, or measuring what you say you are going to measure. Validity in qualitative research is by other words a measurement for credibility, meaning its trustworthiness of how accurate and truthful the scientific findings are. Reliability on the other hand is based on the efficiency of the research method and how dependent it is for the study. Bryman refers to other scholars whose definition of reliability is to what extent a research can be replicated and how the members of a research team interpret what they see and hear. By using qualitative research and approaching with interviews to get a deeper understanding of the respondents’ perceptions is a credible and dependable method in answering our research questions. Since our study only include a small portion of the political world in Mauritius, namely municipal councils, then the results which we have collected may not coincide with the results that might have been from village level if we had chosen to study them. Nor may the results coincide on the national level had they implemented gender quota, since their number of women’s representation is far lower. Our bachelor thesis is then only valid on local level. Over 90% of Mauritius’ municipal councillors today are newly elected, however we were still given a range of contrasting opinions from both male and female councillors. We might not be able to generalise the aspects of all municipal councillors with 25% male respondents but we can acknowledge some male politicians’ outlook on women in politics. Even though the respondents’ answers can sometimes be contradictive when directly
answering a question and then argues for the opposite, we can interpret their dialogues for what they actually mean and what their views are in reality. (Bryman, 2011:351-352)

2.6 Delimitation

We have limited our research to include only municipal councils and not national councils since they have yet to implement gender quota on their level. We have also excluded village councils since they are of such extensive volume. Our bachelor thesis will not focus on parties and their different approaches for nominating female candidates to the candidacy list, since there are over 20 different parties to review. We will also not study the party alliances since they have formed new alliances compared to prior the implementation which makes it difficult to follow up patterns in why some alliances have nominated more women than others. This would have been relevant if our study was about the nomination process and how the implementation of gender quota affected the politicians in local government when running for office, however it has unfortunately not been practically operable in this study.
3 Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework will present the theories that is necessary for us to analyse the empirical material and answer our research questions. Here we have included the theories about the ways to increase women’s representation, why women should be active in politics, and about gender quota.

3.1 Measures to increase women’s representation

According to Kittilson (2015), women benefit from having some type of rules, such as power-sharing electoral rules that the parties adopt, and the implementation of rules like gender quotas helps support the increase of women’s representation in politics. Kittilson argues that the existence of formalised rules helps newcomers, especially women, to prosper unlike the informal practises that often benefit already established powerholders, specifically men. Kittilson notes that rules can be of a great advantage to women battling gender inequality in the political world. Women in societies with traditional gender norms can still find it difficult to get elected despite electoral rules being established. As Valdini (2012) alleges in her article, the word “woman” along with leadership have a more negative connotation in societies with traditional gender norms than in societies with more modern norms. She state that numerous scholars claim that female candidates in societies with traditional gender norms will be at a disfavour since voters form an opinion based on the candidates’ gender. Valdini reasons that since parties anticipate that voters take a shortcut and turn to personal traits instead of getting the full information of a candidate, the parties will use a selection strategy which balances their candidate list with just enough diversity to not drive the voters away. This will, in societies with traditional gender norms, have a negative effect on the number of women chosen for candidates, informs Valdini. (Kittilson, 2015:452; Valdini, 2012:742-743)

The struggle for women to influence as elected representatives does not end when entering the political arena, declares Karam and Lovenduski (2005). As they explain it, parliaments are considered a male domain since parliaments are established, organised and dominated by men. Even though there are no intentional schemes that rule out women from parliament, there is an unspoken excluding of women due to the nature of the political processes that takes place, which is taken care of by men, claims Karam and Lovenduski. (Karam & Lovenduski, 2005:187-188)

3.2 Importance of women’s representation in politics

Wängnerud (2009) specifies that even though it is expected that female politicians should better represent the interest of female voters, there are several counter-arguments against gender being essential. There are a number of scholars who argue that ideology, social characteristics such as class and ethnicity, and political parties have a much stronger political preference than gender. Wängnerud does not diminish the importance of party influence to gender but does not share the opinion that gender has no impact. According to Wängnerud, female representation in politics fortifies women’s interests. How gender affects politicians’ attitudes has been researched extensively and as a result of many studies it is agreed that gender has an impact. The difference between the studies is the magnitude of the impact, but even though the studies cannot agree on gender’s level of importance, they all conclude that there is a distinct difference between the attitudes of men and women in politics. Wängnerud explains that the studies shows women in parliaments are more inclined to be left-winged than men, more favourable toward new policies, support more permissive policies, and more in favour at introducing affirmative
actions. Gender differences that exist within the parliamentary process are seen as a tool for change in politics. (Wängnerud, 2009:61-62)

As Karam and Lovenduski (2005) earlier brought up, the number of women is a variable which can affect the impact which women can have in politics. In discussions about women’s political representation, Dahlerup (2006) emphasises this as the theory of critical mass. The theory implicates that with a certain minimum representation, a minority can make a significant difference. Researches indicate that women in politics need to reach an amount of 30% before they can make an actual difference in politics. Based on the experience in the Nordic’s parliament, Dahlerup refers to her works of analysing the theory of critical mass where she drew the conclusion that there is no particular point in number or percentage of women which can make a difference. Dahlerup argues that the amount of women are of minor importance for the policy outcome, since a few women under the right circumstances can make a difference, while a larger amount may not be able to do so. To empower women, the focus should instead be on critical acts. In Dahlerup’s analysis of the critical mass theory, she identifies six aspects that might change as an effect of increasing the number of women in politics. These are changes in (1) the reaction to female politicians; (2) the performance and efficiency of female politicians; (3) the political culture; (4) the political discourse; (5) the political decisions; and (6) the empowerment of women. The critical mass theory has been used as an argument when introducing electoral gender quota to rapidly increase the number of women in politics, but the preference for 30% quotas have also had underlying motives, such as looking modern and democratic, or to avoid the demand for real gender balance as in half of the politicians being women. Even if there is a change in the number of women and men in politics, it does not mean that women have had an influence and therefore changed the political or party agenda. (Dahlerup, 2006:511-520; Karam & Lovenduski, 2005:187-188)

An argument that is used to promote and encourage women’s participation in politics is the reasoning that women in politics are less prone to corruption. There is a clear correlation between gender and corruption, according to Stensöta, Wängnerud and Svensson (2015). They state that women, specifically in the electoral area, are grouped from their similar experiences and tend to follow each other’s examples which then leads to a lower level of corruption. According to Goetz (2007), the women’s domestic attributes such as nurturing and caring for family, as well as their need to help, which were previously seen as lacking in the political world, are now seen as tools to battle corruption. Goetz specifies that over the last century, numerous scholars have contributed to the assumption that women can transform the political world as they are considered effective in mediating and managing conflicts. Goetz argues that even though this view has contributed to the myth that women can be used as a force to battle corruption, none of these scholars has gone so far as to suggest that women in politics are less corrupted than men. The reason women in politics display less corrupt behaviour can be, according to Goetz, a result of excluding the women from the areas where real power is demonstrated. She also states that the assumption of women being less corrupted can change over time with a greater number of women entering the political sphere. (Goetz, 2007:91-92, 102-103; Stensöta, Wängnerud & Svensson, 2015:493)

### 3.3 Gender quotas

Gender plays a key role in the political world albeit not expressed explicitly. Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008) describe gender quota as a mean for women to battle the unspoken barriers preventing them from taking an active part in the political scene. Since gender quotas can be related to many central themes in feminist theory and political theory such as representation, democracy, fairness etcetera, gender quotas are according to Dahlerup (2008), an important
research subject. So why are gender quotas essential? There exist several reasons, but Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008) emphasises three arguments in political theory for increasing women’s representation: arguments of fairness, resource, and interest. According to the argument of fairness, political assemblies should mirror the population’s composition. The argument of resource builds on the idea that women have specific knowledge and experiences that should be used in building the society, while the argument of interest is based on the idea that women and men have part contradictory interests. Although these three arguments are seen as the most essential ones, Phillips (1995) mentions a fourth one, the argument of role model. The argument of role model is based on the premise that more elected women leads to encourage other women to follow, and to reduce the assumptions of traditional gender roles. Phillips states that even though this argument does not have a direct utilisation in politics, positive role models are unquestionably beneficial. To her, the argument of fairness is the most compelling of all arguments for equal gender representation since it is an argument for justice. She claims that it is unfair for men to monopolise political representation. If there were no barriers preventing certain groups to enter the political world, then the political positions would be distributed randomly between the sexes and there would be no need to implement acts to ensure equal representation. Phillips specifies that a more distorted distribution shows evidence of intentional or structural discrimination where the rights and opportunities available to men are denied to women. (Dahlerup, 2008:322-323; Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2008:8-25; Phillips, 1995:64)

The significance of quotas are, according to Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008), substantial in the political arena as a way to achieve practical equality between the genders by giving women the same opportunity to participate in the decision-making process. Bacchi (2006) agrees that equality is one of the reasons for electoral quotas to increase women’s representation. The affirmative action also includes women’s opportunity by reforms such as skills training and financial aid. Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008) states that the argument of fairness is the primary argument for quota. Equal representation means that the assemblies should represent the views of the entire population. If half of the population consists of women then women should also have half of the decision-making seats. But the argument of fairness is also an argument against quota. Dahlerup and Freidenvall indicates that a great number of debaters argue that quota can be a form of reversed discrimination, for it is competence and not gender that is important. Men are, according to the opponents, discriminated by not being treated as equals in the selection process. Dahlerup and Freidenvall states that other debaters argue that it is not the issue of whether or not women belong in the political world but the issue of the systematic excluding of women in the decision-making process that has to be amended, and quotas are one way to achieve that. (Bacchi, 2006:33; Dahlerup & Freidenvall, 2008:11, 27-28) Phillips (1995) on the other hand wants to turn the argument of reversed discrimination around and as she puts it:

Ask by what 'natural' superiority of talent or experience men could claim a right to dominate assemblies? The burden of proof then shifts to the men, who would have to establish either some genetic distinction which makes them better at understanding problems and taking decisions, or some more socially derived advantage which enhances their political skills. Neither of these looks particularly persuasive; the first has never been successfully established, and the second is no justification if it depends on structures of discrimination.


Dahlerup (2007) explains the two concepts of equality by which gender quotas are measured. Equality of opportunity means that everybody should be treated equally in the competition process as opposed to equality of result which is an equal representation of women and men in the political world. Dahlerup clarifies that these two concepts are used to analyse different gender quotas as most forms of gender quotas are more likely to contribute to the concept of
equality of opportunity than equality of result. (Dahlerup, 2007:74) Dahlerup believes that quota systems are essential, since as she explains it:

> Gender quotas offer a real opportunity for both sexes to compete for political positions and the possibility for the voters – perhaps for the first time – to be able to choose between male and female candidates.

Dahlerup (2007:88)

### 3.4 Model of analysis

Numerous researches have concluded that gender, to some extent, matter in the political world. Women can contribute with other experiences and knowledge, and the attitudes that women and men have in politics differs. Several scholars give many reasons as to why women should be represented in the political arena and what changes an increased women’s representation could bring to the society. The theoretical framework exists for us to better understand and explain various points of our empirical material.

To answer the question of municipal councillors’ view on gender quota as a means to increase women’s representation in politics, we will use Dahlerup and Freidenvall’s, Phillips’, and Bacchi’s arguments in political theory, as well as Stensöta, Wängnerud and Svensson’s, and Goetz’s research on corruption to study and analyse politicians’ stance to the need of women’s representation in politics.

The question of to what extent and in what ways that women’s increased representation in local politics has changed the political agenda, we will use Dahlerup’s theory of critical mass as well as Karam and Lovenduski’s research of women’s influence as elected representatives to answer the question by studying and analysing female politicians impact that they have in the political world.

To answer the final question of what the increased women’s representation has meant for the attitudes towards women in politics, we will use Valdini’s research on women in societies with traditional gender norms, Wängnerud’s research on the impact of gender in politics, and Kittilson’s view on electoral gender rules to study and analyse the politicians’ point of view regarding female councillors.
4 Results and analysis

In this chapter, we are going to present the results of our research. In order to preserve our respondents’ right to anonymity, letters and numbers are used instead of their names. The respondents have received either a letter F which stands for female respondent or M for male, accompanied by a number ranging from 1 to 9, and the name of the municipality as a means to identify which female or male respondent that have expressed themselves. The results chapter will firstly introduce a short presentation of the respondents in the different municipalities, and proceed with presenting and analysing the results from a theoretical point of view divided into three sub-categories, the respondents’ stance to gender quota and women’s representation in politics, critical mass and the change in political agenda, and the attitudes towards female politicians.

4.1 Presentation of respondents

4.1.1 Quatre Bornes

In the first municipality where we carried out our interviews, the municipality of Quatre Bornes, were two male and two female councillors. The male councillors, M1 and M2, were both business owners prior to being elected politicians. For the reason that being a politician is, according to them, an honour position with little payment, they are still business owners even though they claim being a councillor requires a 24-hour commitment. The female councillors, F1 and F2, were previously both housewives, however, F2 was also a business owner. Now both of them devote their time as council members. Although both female councillors were politically interested since childhood and were members of political parties, none of them ever considered being actively involved in politics. They were both initially sought out by their political parties to candidate in local politics even though they had no experience in the field, for the reason to fill out the party’s quota.

4.1.2 Curepipe

From our visit in the second municipality, Curepipe, we got to interview four female councillors. Two of the councillors, F4 and F6, were first-time candidates and asked by their political parties to candidate for local election mainly due to their gender. The other two, F3 and F5, have candidated before with F3 also having previous experiences as an elected councillor. Before their position as council members, they were all housewives. Prior to becoming a councillor, F5 and F6 were also business owners.

4.1.3 Vacoas-Phoenix

The interviews in the third municipality, Vacoas-Phoenix, were held with three female councillors and one male councillor, F7 to F9 and M3. All of the respondents were first-time councillors. F7 got asked to candidate in 2012 but as she wanted to focus on her newly started business, she had to decline. She got asked again in the next election in 2015 and as the business was rolling on its own, she gladly accepted to candidate. F8 worked in the media and, due to her young age, got the opportunity to enter politics as a way to have a more diverse council. F9 has worked in the education system. She did social work and during that time met politicians and became an activist in two elections. In the latest election, she was asked if she could run for councillor where she got elected. M3 was actively involved in his political party. He candidated for local election because he wanted to be able to help the society even more.
4.2 Politicians’ stance to gender quota and women’s representation in politics

The respondents from the three municipalities have different views when asked about their standpoint on gender quota and women’s political representation. Some of them have a positive outlook on gender quota as a means to increase women’s representation and as a first step towards equal gender representation in politics. The argument of fairness is frequently used as a reason to increase women’s representation in politics, which is what Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008), Phillips (1995), and Bacchi (2006) have brought up in their studies. The respondents believe that there should be more women involved in politics seeing as it is a question of giving equal opportunities to them since that is their human right. The respondents from Vacoas-Phoenix wishes for women to have the same conditions as men to participate in the political world and be able to represent their citizens. All respondents from Curepipe agrees with this statement as they point out that in their experience, men are unwilling to work beside women and believes quota is a good way to encourage them to share their place in politics and to collaborate with women:

Men do not like to give [up] their seats for women in Mauritius. It’s like they are stuck to their seats. They will not accept that women are much better than [they think we are].

Councillor F5 in Curepipe

According to the respondents of Curepipe, there is no better method to ensure men and women working parallel in the municipal council, and without gender quota, they are convinced that there would not be an increased women’s representation in politics. Councillor F3 from Curepipe agrees with F5’s above statement and also adds:

You have to look at the facts, before gender quota there were no female mayor or deputy mayor, and now there have been several.

Councillor F3 in Curepipe

Councillor F7 and F9 from Vacoas-Phoenix’s municipal council regards as though women and men should be equally represented in terms of quantity in political assemblies and explains that organisations right now is empowering women and fighting for laws to further increasing women’s representation in politics. Since the local government act is still fairly young and has only been through two municipal elections where the latest one resulted in a total of 34.21% elected women, councillor M2 from the municipal council of Quatre Bornes sees a need for gender quota to further increase women’s representation in politics. He asserts that if there would not have been a gender quota then maybe an equal political representation could be achieved, but this would however have taken at least another five to ten years, he claims, even with the overall women’s empowerment which is happening in the Mauritian society. Both councillor M2 from Quatre Bornes and councillor F9 from Vacoas-Phoenix does not reckon that the current law of having one third candidates of another gender is enough and wishes to see a quota demanding 50% women in the political assemblies.

The remaining three respondents from Quatre Bornes do not consider that women’s political representation should increase due to striving for equal gender representation in politics. Instead, their argument for increasing women’s representation is for the reason that women have experiences and knowledge concerning children and household which they can use in the political world. According to the respondents, women can apply these experiences to contribute with other points of views than their male counterparts in the decision-making process. Councillor F2 from Quatre Bornes also state that it is not only authority that is needed in decision-making but also empathy, which according to her, women have more of. These
reasoning for wanting women in politics coincides with the second argument in political theory which Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008) brought up, the argument of resource which states that women have specific knowledge and experiences and that these should be used in shaping the society. Councillor F2 also considers women’s work ethic to be considerably higher than men’s where women strives and pushes for assignments to be accomplished:

If there were more women [in the council], work would be different. There would be more fighting and chasing for the work to be done.  
Councillor F2 in Quatre Bornes

All respondents from Curepipe conceive in the same manner that because women care for their home and family while men only have their political assignments to think about, then women and men bring different perspectives in politics and that is why they should work parallel to each other. Councillor F6 in Curepipe asserts that women in decision-making sits and pays attention to the problem to find the solutions, while men, instead of listening to the citizens and finding the correct answer likes to stand and give orders. The respondents of Vacoas-Phoenix have different opinions of what women can contribute to politics. Although all agree that there should be an increase of women’s representation in politics, only councillor F8 and F9 in Vacoas-Phoenix think that there should be more women for the reason that they bring other knowledge and experiences.

The respondents of Quatre Bornes also believe that more women in politics can change the perception that the citizens have on the council. This is because they presume that the citizens perceive women in politics as more trustworthy, straightforward, and polite than their male counterparts. Councillor F7 from Vacoas-Phoenix adds that citizens perceive women as more empathic who can understand people’s problems better. This coincides with Phillips’ (1995) argument of role model that the presence of women in politics has a symbolic value and that female politicians can become role models for female citizens. Similar to the respondents of Quatre Bornes, the respondents from Curepipe also expresses that there should be more women in politics since they perceive that citizens treat female councillors with more respect than their male counterparts, because they think citizens have more faith in women getting the job done. The respondents do not perceive that the problem lies among the citizens but instead on the male politicians:

The powers [have not decreased] for men even though there are more women [now] in politics. We need to empower women first, they need to be more involved. Women get things done faster than men. Citizens respect us more as women but the problem is men, they do not want to share their place with women. With more women, this would change. We have to work hard [to prove ourselves that we are as competent as men].  
Councillor F6 in Curepipe

Councillor F6 in Curepipe claim that the reason to increase women’s representation is to change men’s perception of women in politics. According to her, women do not have the same opportunities as men to climb further on their political career, since men do not wish for women to be equal or above them. Changing the views of women in politics is an ambition. Councillor F3 in Curepipe explains that women are overlooked and being treated as second-class candidates, and that parties as well as citizens always give the advantage to men when possible:

[There are] lots of things to change, even in the decision-making. You sometimes feel that men are more privileged than women, but [the situation] is changing.  
Councillor F3 in Curepipe

Councillor F6 from Curepipe state that more women in politics is empowering women and inspiring other women to enter and be actively involved in the political world. This too
corresponds with Phillips’ (1995) argument of role model to encourage more women to be politically active and thereby reducing the assumptions of traditional gender roles.

The respondents often use the argument of fairness as an argument for promoting gender quota, which Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008), and Phillips (1995) highlight as the most important reason to increase women’s political representation. They feel that the entire population should be equally represented in political assemblies in terms of gender and cultural diversity but some of them feel that women have been excluded from the political world. One female respondent from the municipal council of Vacoas-Phoenix state that there should be a higher number of women involved in politics, even though she does not believe that more women could actually make a difference in the political world. All respondents agree that it is important to increase women representation in politics, however not all of the respondents believe that gender quota is the right way to go. Most of the respondents only accept gender quota as a first step to improve women’s representation in politics. Although the argument of fairness is the main argument for gender quota, the majority of the respondents also use the argument of resource as a mean to increase women’s representation, meaning that women contribute with different experiences and knowledge. According to the respondents, as a result of women being responsible for their home and family, they have better managing skills and therefore are more effective and thorough in performing their political work assignments. However, none of the respondents acknowledges the argument of interest as a reason seeing that the respondents do not believe that women and men wishes to focus on different issues. Women being less corrupted is some of the respondents’ additional reason for wanting an increased women’s political activity:

Women are not easily corrupted [in politics]. Anywhere you go is corruption, at least you know women cannot be corrupted.

Councillor M1 in Quatre Bornes

Councillor F1 from Quatre Bornes’ municipal council agrees with her colleague M1’s statement and adds that citizens will not approach women or will at least think twice before approaching women in attempting to bribe them. According to the respondents that believe women are less corrupt, more women in politics would lead to a more honest government. The reasoning that women would be less prone to corruption falls in with Stensöta, Wängnerud and Svensson’s (2015) study where they found a connection between gender and corruption. According to the researchers, the statistics of political assemblies that have more women have shown a lower level of corruption. Goetz (2007) explain that the view of women being less corrupt exists due to women’s attributes of nurturing, caring, and wanting to help, which could also run with the respondents’ beliefs that women have specific knowledge and experiences concerning the family, meaning the argument of resource that women and men contribute with different things in politics.

However, councillor M2 from Quatre Bornes as well as councillor F7 and M3 from Vacoas-Phoenix disagrees with their colleagues that corruption would be gender-related. Councillor M3 from Vacoas-Phoenix expected that with more women, there would be a ‘cleaner’ politic, but that was not the case since he had not experienced any differences between how women and men act as politicians regarding corruption. Councillor M2 from Quatre Bornes alleges that it depends on the person, as both women and men can be corrupted if, as he claims, they join politics for their own advantage. He states that even though the track-record of men being corrupted is higher than women, he disagrees that women would be less corrupt since women have not been in politics for long and as such does not get involved in those situations. He
implies that battling corruption should not be the reason for increasing women’s representation. This statement coincides with the reasoning that Goetz (2007) have where she claims that no scholar actually suggests that women in reality are less corrupted than men, therefore, women’s display of less corrupt behaviour can be explained due to their exclusion in politics. Goetz’s (2007) study argues that a reason for women not coming in contact with corruption might be because they are excluded from the positions where corruption takes place, hence, increasing women’s political representation as a way to achieve a more transparent government can be a huge leap of faith. As Goetz (ibid) state, the assumption that more women is equal to less corruption can change over time with more women becoming politically active.

Although all respondents agree that women’s representation should increase, they all have different opinions as to why it should increase. Some of them also argue if gender quota is really the right approach to increase women’s political representation. Most of the respondents consider gender quota as a useful first step towards equal gender representation. The respondents from Quatre Bornes see gender quota as an official announcement to the public that women are accepted to participate in the political world, but the majority of them do not feel as though gender quota is continuously needed:

I cannot understand why quota should be implemented. If [the nomination process] is left open, more women would be more involved [in politics]. If there is a quota, once you fill the lot, it is enough. Why should there be a ratio?

Councillor F2 in Quatre Bornes

This reasoning is agreed by the councillors M1 and F1 from Quatre Bornes as the three of them believe that gender quota is not the only way to ensure equal political representation since they claim it can be achieved without implementing acts. The majority of respondents from Quatre Bornes do not feel as though gender quota is at all needed, for the reason that having a limitation would only prevent more women from entering the political world as it limits their chances. They argue that the reason is that parties would be satisfied when reaching the quota and would not consider more women for the remaining positions. They think that gender quota is a barrier for reaching true equal representation of 50%, which is what Dahlerup (2006) emphasise as a possible underlying motive behind a 30% quota. However, the respondents cannot explain why the number of women were so low prior to implementing the government act. Even though the latest municipal election resulted in mere 35% elected women in Quatre Bornes, councillor M1, F1, and F2 do not recognise any hindrance for women in Mauritius to enter the political world and therefore do not think that gender quota is needed. The statement is shared by councillor F7 from Vacoas-Phoenix as she does not either see a problem with gender equality in Mauritius. According to her, women can make their own decisions just like men, and both women and men have the same opportunities in life to strive for. These reasoning for being against gender quota can be compared to Phillips’ (1995) explanation of men’s monopoly of the political world that with no obstacles which prevents certain groups to enter politics, the seats would then be equally distributed between men and women, and therefore legislations ensuring equal political representation such as gender quota would not be needed. The respondents claim that women in Mauritius have the conditions to enter the political world should they want to but do not offer any explanation on how an equal political representation can be naturally achieved without the government’s interference or why women’s representation was so low previously. The statement that women face no obstacles when entering the political world seems to not be true in reality since women in Mauritius are highly underrepresented in the political assemblies.

According to the respondents that are adversaries to gender quota, competence should be the main priority and not gender, which coincides with what Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008) state.
However, the respondents that advocate for gender quota feel that competence is not the issue, and some respondents in Curepipe even claim that the issue is unwillingness from male politicians to share the political positions with women. Councillor F7 and M3 from Vacoas-Phoenix as well as councillor M2 from Quatre Bornes does not consider gender as meaningful and instead acknowledges competence as more important:

I am against [gender quota]. I am for merit and for competence, and I do not feel limiting something to a quota is a good thing. I do not mind having all [female] councillors, if there are a hundred competent women, why limit to thirty? Maybe [gender quota] is the first step but we do not have that issue [of gender inequality] in Mauritius. […] If in 2015, we still need quota to have more women in politics, then there is something wrong with the society.

Councillor M3 in Vacoas-Phoenix

Even with the support for gender quota from the majority of the respondents, there is still a strong resistance from the rest of them. Although the respondents explicitly uttered that gender quota is not a discrimination against men, their reasoning implies that this notion is in reality their beliefs. Councillor M3 from Vacoas-Phoenix claim that problems regarding gender equality does not exist and therefore there is no need for gender quota. He considers in other words that gender quota is an argument against fairness as it is a reversed discrimination where men are disregarded because they do not possess the sought-out gender. Councillor F7 from Vacoas-Phoenix state that the number of women does not matter, but what matters instead are what those women contribute to the political world. Councillor M2 from Quatre Bornes values competence before gender but he also suggests that if women have the same qualification then they should have the opportunity to represent the citizens.

This argument against gender quota is what a great many debaters deliberate, according to Dahlerup and Freidenvall (2008). They explain that the debaters argue about quota as a form of reversed discrimination since competence is more important than having a politician of a specific gender. Even though all the female respondents from Vacoas-Phoenix are for gender quota, they also stress competence as the prime factor for being elected as a councillor, which is why they think that women should get more educated as a way to empower themselves and prove themselves that they are qualified as political candidates. If the problem of a low women’s political representation would have been due to competence, then, according to Dahlerup and Freidenvall (ibid) measures to enhance their qualification would be applied and in that way increase women’s representation. All respondents agree that women are as competent as men in the decision-making process while some would even say that women are more educated than men concerning their number and their performance in exams. For that reason and because there does not exist a criteria on the level of education in becoming a councillor, then the question of competence deteriorates and we can conclude that the problem does not lie in women’s education. Gender quota is then a legitimate way to increase women’s representation in politics as it is a quota in the nomination process and not on the political positions, which means that women get the opportunity to candidate for local elections where citizens vote for them if they perceive the female candidates as qualified enough to represent the citizens, rather than having equally distributed political positions for the reason of having equal numbers. Equality of result is not equality in regard to women and men’s conditions to candidate as they would either benefit or be at a disfavour when it comes to their gender. Some councillors are aware that women are excluded due to their gender, but even though some are fairly optimistic and believe that an equal political representation can be achieved naturally in Mauritius, others feel that gender quota is necessary as it is the only way to ensure that women’s representation in politics will increase.
The relevance of gender quota as an instrument to increase women’s political representation has differed depending on which municipal councillor the view derived from. The respondents of all three municipal councils support the idea of having more women in politics, but not all of them agree that it should be done the way it is implemented today. The respondents that are positively inclined towards gender quota seems to have been brought up in a family with traditional values, while respondents whom are against affirmative actions come from a family with more modern views. Not having faced gender-related obstacles in their upbringing could be the reason why they do not see a problem with gender equality and therefore are against gender quota.

Gender quota is a tool for increasing political participation for underrepresented groups in society. Yet, the respondents considered it as a means to specifically help women to join the political world when the government act is in reality a gender neutral quota, which means that at least one third of the parties’ candidates must be of a different gender. Gender neutral quota is by other words not aimed at an explicit gender, hence, it could also mean that the parties must have at least one third male candidates. The respondents advocating for the affirmative action underline the fact that the representation of underrepresented groups like women has considerably increased with the help of gender quota. Some even claim that by introducing gender quota in the nomination process meant that the opportunities for women has increased, as it is in the end the citizens who vote for the candidates whom they see fit. Most of the respondents’ view is that an increased women’s political representation will change the society’s opinion of women’s lack of capacity to perform political assignments and to argue for an issue.

The municipal councillors we interviewed whom supported gender quota used numbers as an argument for supporting the law. The reason to maintain the quota system is to increase the amount of politically active women since they consist of half of the population and so should also have half of the seats in the political assemblies. Some also pointed out that women are valuable assets in the political world and brings distinguishing resources which women contributes with in politics. Women are seen as a force to battle corruption, to improve the image of politicians, and as repeated by the respondents on numerous occasions, to perform political assignments effectively. None of the respondents argued that women’s political representation should increase because women would have other interests in comparison to men or that they work with gender-specific assignments. This can however be explained that the amount of women in the municipal councils is not yet quite large so any differences between the genders might go unnoticed. The results which have been brought through this study does not deviate from previous researches. The arguments that the respondents use for supporting gender quota concur with Dahlerup and Freidenvall’s (2008) as well as Phillips’ (1995) stated motives for increasing women’s representation in political theory. Competence, which is often used by the respondents as an argument against quota, too coincides with the scholars’ statement.

Those respondents for gender quota support it in behalf of achieving an equal gender representation in the political assemblies, that is, they wish for an equality of result. Whereas those opposing the affirmative action does not regard gender as important and prefer everyone to have equal opportunities to enter the political world without being discriminated because of their gender. The adversaries do not realise that an affirmative action in the nomination process has been implemented for the reason to give equal opportunities for both genders. Research studies have shown that women without gender quota are discriminated since without the law,
men would be in favour and given an advantage due to their gender rather than their competence.

The respondents often emphasised competence as the most important factor in becoming an elected politician rather than ones gender. However, no male respondent was questioned if they are competent enough to represent the citizens despite their lack of previous political experiences. This uncertainty has only been embedded on women in politics. Leader roles have traditionally belonged to men so regardless of a great number of both male and female councillors are newly elected without any prior political experiences, women face more hardships as an inexperienced politician than male councillors do and female politicians have a harder time than men getting to a leader position. According to the respondents of Curepipe, women do possess competence and it is men’s perception of women that needs to be changed so that they can acknowledge their competence. Since competence is, according to the respondents, what matters most, gender quota is therefore implied by some to be a form of reversed discrimination. The respondents against affirmative actions perceive the Mauritian society as gender equal where women have opportunities in life which corresponds to men’s and where women do not face any obstacles to enter the political world should they want to. This reasoning is why they do not support gender quota as a means to increase women’s numbers. Most of the respondents cannot offer any explanation as to why Mauritian politics have been male-oriented if what they claim about women not being excluded from politics is true. The views that people have in a traditional society are nevertheless not easy to change. The respondents do not either explain why male politicians are deemed to have more competence than women in the decision-making process.

The reality in Mauritius is quite different than how these respondents perceive it. If it truly were no obstacles for women to join politics then, as Phillips (1995) stipulate, the political positions would be distributed among the genders with little deviation. Women in Mauritian politics are therefore highly underrepresented on account of barriers excluding them to be involved in the political world. Some of the female respondents still face obstacles in entering the political world. The councillors that come from families with traditional values recognises these obstacles more easily and can therefore more easily criticise the lack of women in politics. Politics has, in the Mauritian society, for long been seen as men’s territory. It is a career which previously almost only men have participated in, but that image still persists even with todays increased women’s representation.

4.3 Difference in political agenda

Councillor F9 from Vacoas-Phoenix argues on the importance of having more women in the municipal council. She claim that having more women in politics would consequently mean having a better support system, as opposed to being the only woman and thereupon having difficulty to be endorsed. The idea that an increased women’s representation in Mauritian politics could encourage women more and helping each other out corresponds with the theory of critical mass which says that a minority can make a difference when operating in a certain amount of number. Not all respondents concur that having more women in politics would necessary mean a change in the political world. Although councillor F7 and M3 from Vacoas-Phoenix want to increase women’s representation, they do not deem that it would mean a difference in the political agenda. The respondents do not view as though large differences between the way women and men act in politics exists and denotes that more women in politics may therefore not actually change anything:
I personally have not seen a change with more women in politics. Women and men should bring the same thing into politics, [there is] no difference.

Councillor M3 in Vacoas-Phoenix

They point out that it is not ones gender that matters but the person itself and what political acts he or she contributes with, rather than the quantity of their gender. The emphasis on ones contribution of political acts goes with Dahlerup’s (2006) research on critical mass. The theory of critical mass state that a 30% minority can man a significant difference, but the results from Dahlerup’s (ibid) study concludes that there is no specific amount of minority where they can make a change since her results show that a minority less than 30% also have the possibility to make a difference depending on the acts they implement while a group of over 30% does not always guarantee a significant change for they might not be able to or even want to make any differences. Dahlerup (2006) asserts that focus should instead be put on critical acts and the politicians’ contribution. Councillor F9 from Vacoas-Phoenix’s municipal council goes on with women’s contribution to politics and explains that women have managing skills which they bring to the political world. According to her, women can for example even without education still manage the household effectively. Management is a valuable skill which she claim women possess, and one that can be used in doing their political assignments. So having more women in politics comes with a lot of advantages:

With more women in politics, there would be new laws. When you educate a boy, you educate only the boy. But when you educate a girl, you educate the whole nation. There would be lots of positive changes. There would be many more things and many more developments. Men often say that this will be done, that will be done… But nothing is being done. If looking at the ministries where there are women, you will notice that the work there [is being] done faster.

Councillor F9 in Vacoas-Phoenix

Councillor M3 in Vacoas-Phoenix have sensed a change in the political work environment since the increase of women’s representation. He reveals that men now are more restrained and do not use vulgar language when women are present. Councillor M3 have noted that the council tend to focus and listen more closely when women speak in meetings:

Women are more mature than men, so when men are around them they are a bit [calmer]. Women have more resilience [since] they have been fighting for all their life. There is a lot of things to learn from them, and that is what they bring into politics.

Councillor M3 in Vacoas-Phoenix

He further announces that women in the council, when arguing for an issue, use facts and numbers rather than relying on emotions. Even though there are more women today involved in politics than before, the respondents of Curepipe consider there is a need for an even greater women’s involvement since all four of them have perceived some male councillors’ unwillingness to listen to their ideas. They claim that when they talk, the male councillors would talk even louder as a way to assert their power. Councillor F5 from Curepipe also explain that her experiences with male politicians is that they think that women join politics as a way to meet men instead of working on the political assignments that is given to her. The respondents have by other words felt that they have not gotten the respect they deserve from some of their male colleagues. Increasing women’s power in number would then be a good way to be supported and to make a difference:

Since women nowadays do not want to stay at home anymore but instead [transform] the politics, they want to make their voices heard of what they feel should be done with the country. Women could change things. More women in politics can contribute to the country’s progression.

Councillor F4 in Curepipe
Councillor F4 from Curepipe’s municipal council believe that female councillors today are given more impact and being heard even more than men, since the council have had enough of men the last decade and now wants to listen to women. However, the opinion of women’s impact in politics is not shared by the other respondents from Curepipe. As Karam and Lovenduski (2005) state, since parliaments are established and run by men, even if there are no rules that directly prohibit women’s involvement, there are still some that view politics as male only. In Mauritius, this unspoken view that politics is men’s territory can, according to the respondents, explain the reasons for women not giving a deeper thought to be a part of the political world since they might not feel welcomed to participate in the political assemblies. Councillor F5 from Curepipe have experienced in the beginning of her mandate some male colleagues trying to lead and take the power. As Karam and Lovenduski (ibid) explain, men establishes, organises, and dominates political assemblies. The way that political processes takes place can exclude women and as a result women may struggle to influence as councillors. Councillor F5 state that this was quickly resolved when it was clear that there had to be a collaboration between the councillors and that a municipal council cannot function without good teamwork.

The changes that occur when increasing women’s representation can affect different aspects, according to Dahlerup (2006). Some of these aspects where a change has been noted by the respondents are in the reaction to female politicians, the political culture, and the empowerment of women. Even if female municipal councillors in Mauritius consist of over 30%, they have yet to make any differences in politics, according to the respondents. This further concurs to Dahlerup’s (ibid) conclusion that critical acts leading to gender equality is more important than the number that the minority come in. The idea that women can participate in the political arena is relatively new in the Mauritian society, and it is therefore still too early to detect any differences in the political agenda. Although all interviewed councillors claim that there are no differences in the political agenda between women and men, and that more women in politics have not necessarily meant that they have influenced politics, there are subtle differences that point in the other direction. The increase of women’s representation has, according to the respondents, led to male politicians working harder to secure their place in politics as well as learning to share their positions in the council with women. The value of having women in politics is underlined by several of the respondents. One councillor states that it is easier to be endorsed now that there are more women and another claim that women are heard more because of the way they present an issue by using numbers and facts rather than their emotions. Still, some of the councillors point out that gender does not matter in politics and that it all depends on personal characteristics.

4.4 Councillors’ view on women’s political assignment

When it comes to political assignments and how it is distributed between the councillors, all the respondents in Quatre Bornes underline teamwork as important where they help each other out within and between the wards:

> We do not have specific work assignments as councillors, we are supposed to cater to our people. Whatever concern they have, we have to address it. […] We work as a team, it is teamwork.
> Councillor F1 in Quatre Bornes

Although she claim that there are no specific work assignments, councillor F1 had an experience in the beginning of her mandate that since she is a woman, the other councillors urged her to work with women’s issues and to focus on things such as gender-based violence, similarly to Wängnerud’s (2009) research that female politicians are expected to represent and to be better equipped in handling women’s interests. Since councillor F1 did not want to
concentrate on problems concerning only women, she refrained from the suggestion and instead turned her attention to every citizen in the municipality, indicating that female councillors do not want to be seen as representatives only for their gender but as viable contenders in politics. The question of giving more awareness on gender-specific issues did not occur for the male respondents.

The councillors in Quatre Bornes explain that they are responsible for all that concerns the government and although there are no differences in the type of political assignment between male and female councillors, they do specify that women have a different approach in performing them, as they claim women have a higher work ethic and more commitment. The statement that women do their job more effectively than men is mentioned repeatedly by the female respondents during the interviews:

Women get the job done. They push more.  
Councillor F1 in Quatre Bornes

Councillor F1 adds that there may arise different opinions in the council, but it is important to accept each other’s viewpoint and come to an understanding to move forward. Councillor F1 also highlights teamwork and how the council as a whole work together, which according to her is more important than being gender-conscious. The other respondents from Quatre Bornes agree with the previous statement and add that whoever is qualified should be able to become an elected politician without its gender becoming a hindrance.

The respondents from Quatre Bornes admit that there should be more women in the political world since women have experiences and knowledge concerning children and household which they can use in the political world. According to them, women can apply these experiences to contribute with other points of views than their male counterparts in the decision-making process. Both councillors F1 and F2 from Quatre Bornes consider that there is no place in politics for sensitivity or too much emotions in decision-making and reckon that some women in politics are too sentimental. According to F2’s own personal experiences, she was astonished that the term ‘women’ used when calling for help from her female councillors contributed to the women being offended. The female respondents feel that women should be more resilient when bringing up an issue. Councillor F2 have also experienced as though women are unprepared to face the world of politics. None of the researchers that have been brought up in the theoretical framework discussed women’s emotion as an argument neither for nor against increasing women’s representation in politics. Even when women are given better opportunities to be actively involved in politics, the respondents claim that parties can sometimes have difficulty in finding politically interested women who can dedicate their lives to the political world and at the same time be a wife and a mother. This could influence the amount of women’s involvement in politics. Valdini’s (2012) research which state that female candidates in societies with traditional gender norms are not seen as good leaders. Parties will by other words not want to include more women in the candidacy list than necessary to avoid damaging their party image and in that way receiving less support. Women in these societies will be at a disadvantage when their ‘female’ attributes of nurturing, caring and sensitivity is seen as misplaced in the political world. The reason behind the low amount of politically interested women might be because of the parties’ unwillingness to seek out women to join them.

The work assignments in the municipal council of Curepipe are, according to the respondents, the same for women and men. All respondents also bring up teamwork as an important factor in performing their assignments and alleges that it does not matter what gender the councillors have when presenting motions. Both councillor F3 and F5 in Curepipe state that in spite of both
gender performing the same type of political assignments, women operate in a faster and more effective manner. Councillor F3 elaborates her claim by explaining that women act differently than men in politics as a result of having to work double: focusing and planning on their political assignments as well as caring for their home, implying that women have better managing skills than men. Councillor F5 also explain that men act impulsively while women think twice before making a decision. This characteristic, as well as acting politely, is according to her valuable in the political world.

Although the respondents claim that gender does not matter in the political world, by arguing that women act differently and being more effective in performing their political assignments contradicts their statement. The politicians seems to not have well thought-out or logically coherent approaches to the significance of gender in politics, due to the account that they have stated that women do indeed change politics for the better. Wängnerud (2009) state that several studies have shown differences between women and men in politics, for example women being more in favour at introducing affirmative actions such as gender quota. This is true for the respondents of Curepipe, but it is the opposite in Quatre Bornes considering that the female respondents are opposed it. But we can argue that the women of Quatre Bornes are represented in a smaller number then in Curepipe where the respondents claim that the municipality has women power since women here have attained higher political positions. It can also be argued that female councillors in Quatre Bornes do not feel comfortable to be seen as radical and that they are more influenced for their party than their gender.

An obstacle for more women to enter the political world can be the presumption from the political parties that having more women will endanger the parties’ image. As Valdini (2012) state, political parties in societies with traditional gender norms will choose the amount of candidates that is enough to fill the ratio and show that the party has diversity, but not more. In Mauritius, women are regarded as sensitive and in some cases too emphatic, they are however not recognised as natural-born leaders, which is taken into consideration in the nomination process.

The respondents see the increase in women’s representation as a tool to inform male politicians that women are equally capable to perform the same political assignments as their male counterparts. Councillor F6 from Curepipe also claim that the reason to increase women’s representation is to change how men perceive women in politics. According to her, women do not have the same opportunities as men to climb further on their political career, as men do not wish for women to be equal or above them. Changing the views of women in politics is an ambition, councillor F3 describes that women are overlooked and being treated as second-class candidates, and that parties as well as citizens always give the advantage to men when possible:

> [There are] lots of things to change, even in the decision-making. You sometimes feel that men are more privileged than women, but it is changing.  
>  
> Councillor F3 in Curepipe

Similar to the respondents of Quatre Bornes, the respondents in Curepipe also expresses that there should be more women in politics since they perceive that citizens treat female councillors with more respect than their male counterpart, as they believe citizens have more faith in women getting the job done. Since the respondents do not perceive that the problem lies among the citizens but instead on the male politicians:

> The powers [have not decreased] for men even though there are more women [now] in politics. We need to empower women first, they need to be more involved. Women get things done faster than men. Citizens respect us more as women but the problem is men, they do not want to share
their place with women. With more women, this would change. We have to work hard [to prove ourselves that we are as competent as men].

Councillor F6 in Curepipe

The respondents of Vacoas-Phoenix’s municipal council too alleges that they have not experienced as though there exist gender-specific political assignments:

No, we should do similar things [since] we are paid similar. It should be the same here.

Councillor F7 in Vacoas-Phoenix

Yet councillor F9 in Vacoas-Phoenix claim that women show more empathy and in turn focuses more on women’s issues. She further note that since women have many other responsibilities like looking after their home and their children, men would have more time to focus on the political assignments. She also consider that women have more respect than men and thus both men and women come to female councillors for their problems. Despite claiming that male councillors can bring more attention to the assignments, councillor F9 asserts that women do their job properly since they believe in hard work and strive much more than men.

Councillor F8 from Vacoas-Phoenix agrees that women wants work to be done, as she considers women to be more disciplined and straightforward. She believe that gender matters in the political world since women are the one that can bring changes. With more women in politics, they could change the mentality of people because Mauritius is still a patriarchal country. Councillor M3 agree that Mauritius has been a male-oriented society for quite a long time which is an issue for some people. He explains that there still exist people who think women should not be politically active, but says that this is gradually changing. Councillor F9 shares the same opinion and adds that if there were no law for women to candidate in local politics, then women would not be given the same opportunity as men to enter the political world. She explains that politics being considered a male domain is now changing. This concurs with Kittilson’s (2015) research explaining that women benefit more from having rules that promote women’s representation, specifically in societies with traditional gender norms like Mauritius. Due to these power-sharing electoral rules, parties come in contact with a larger number of women which leads to male politicians becoming aware of women’s competence thus resulting in male politicians having to work harder to secure their two-third share of positions in politics. Since there are more women today entering the political field, male politicians are compelled to share their place in politics with women, which leads to a change to the perception that politics is a man’s playing field.

Wängnerud’s (2009) research explain that many studies have concluded that gender matter in the political world with the difference being the magnitude of its impact. The respondents have alleged that male and female councillors are being treated in similar fashion when bringing up an issue, but we can deduce that there exist slight differences. Councillors from different municipalities have diverse experiences regarding how female councillors are being treated in the political assemblies. The respondents from the municipal council of Vacoas-Phoenix has stated that men listen more intently when female councillors speak while in Curepipe some of the men would instead overpower them by speaking even louder. There is no indication that this difference comes from the number of female politicians elected in the municipality or what political party they belong to since they are from the same alliance. Instead it could be because the council in Curepipe has a larger number of the older generation who are more traditional and governed by old values that politics would be a male district. Female councillors are also often described as more empathic, trustworthy and effective by some of the respondents, adjectives that are not used to describe their male counterparts. According to the respondents,
the increase of women’s representation has led to male politicians working harder to secure their place in politics as well as learning to share their positions in the council with women.

It has been pointed out by Valdini (2012) that women in societies with traditional gender norms are not seen as great leaders and, because of the attributes they have of being nurturing and caring, are often excluded from participating in the political world. There has been a notable change in Mauritian society where these attributes are instead used to argue for increasing women’s political representation. The respondents have often stated that women contribute to a more peaceful work environment, push and strive more for the job to be done, and by being caring, influences the image that citizens have on politicians to a positive one.

Despite the beliefs that some respondents have that Mauritius is a gender equal society, this research have shown that women do not have equal opportunities as men to enter and participate in the political world. Several respondents has emphasised education as a method for women to empower themselves and become qualified enough to candidate for municipal councillor. However, none of the respondents mentioned that men should also get educated so that they will become competent enough, even though there are no differences in the education level among women and men in the municipal councils. So why do the politicians claim that women need to be more educated to be seen as qualified enough to become a politician? It seems that the respondents want to empower women and to improve their role of image to participate in the political world. Female candidates striving for a political position have often been discriminated and are constantly challenged to work harder and to prove themselves that they are qualified enough to partake in the political world. Women and men in Mauritius have the same level of education, both go through the same course of study in becoming a municipal councillor and have received equal certificates for engaging as a politician. The problem of low women’s representation in Mauritius is then not a question of competence, but instead the systematic excluding of women.

The view on female politicians differs very much between municipalities but there exist an overall positive attitude, even though the political world is still not an equal playing field for women and men. Female politicians are judged more harshly, are generalised and are constantly needed to prove themselves, even though male politicians with no earlier political experiences are not questioned if they are competent enough. To change the social norms, women would need to be encouraged to strive for a leader position from a younger age, be that as a class president or any other leader position in school or social life. This will help women to be more open to and more accepted by the public to seek out leader roles later in social life.
5 Conclusion, contributions, and recommendations

Here we will present what we have concluded from the findings of this research, the theoretical and practical contributions, and the future recommendations for further researches in the field.

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of this bachelor thesis was to understand and comprehend the municipal councillors’ view on gender quota as a means to increase women’s representation, if and how women’s increased political representation has influenced the political agenda, and what women’s increased representation has meant for the attitudes towards women in politics. Interviewing the 12 respondents from the three different municipal councils that we selected and researching their outlook on women in the political world has given us the opportunity to analyse and answer the research questions.

There are a lot of positive and negative deductions made by the respondents which depends on whether they support or are against gender quota. However, they are all in agreement that the quota system has had a great positive impact on the political representation of women and the perception of women operating in politics, as women have for the first time been sought out by parties and considered for positions in the municipal councils. Regardless of the fact that they are for or against quota, all the respondents agree that it has led to an increase in female representation. Implementing gender quota in the nomination process has maybe for the first time in Mauritian history increased the opportunities for women to actively participate in the political world.

The increased women’s representation has helped improve the view that politics is a strictly male domain and although women are now more accepted to participate in politics, there are still obstacles that prevent them from being fully accepted members in the political world.

The results from the bachelor thesis indicate that there has not been a noteworthy alteration in the political agenda. Many of the newly elected women are furthermore new in politics and maybe lack important experiences that is needed to influence the political world. Another reason could be that it has not been that long since women’s representation has increased and therefore not enough time has passed for any significant differences in the political agenda to have happened.

Women in Mauritius have come a long way since the implementation of gender quota but they still have a long way to go. The Mauritian politics would only be truly equal if there were no obstacles for underrepresented groups to enter the political world, but when a government act is needed gives evidence that gender equality issues exist in Mauritius.

5.2 Theoretical and practical contributions

With there being no extensive researches on women in Mauritian politics or the consequences with implementing gender quota in Mauritian politics means there is a theoretical knowledge gap where this bachelor thesis can fill. By acknowledging the Mauritian government of the results enables them to become practically aware of their politicians’ perception of women in politics and what female politicians contribute with, as well as their stance to gender quota. They could consequently use the research results as a foundation to further equal the gender representation in politics. This study can later also be used by other researchers as a starting point or as a comparison in future researches.
5.3 Future recommendations

Since we decided to delimit village councils from this study due to their extensive volume, it can be an area to execute future researches for they have after all also implemented gender quota on their level. The village level can show different results than the study we have conducted on municipal councils. The implementation of gender quota is furthermore relatively new, there is a need for a follow-up to study if there is a change from the results that we have presented. At the time of carrying out the interviews, the municipal councillors have only had their positions for a few months so there is need for a follow-up after a few years when the newly elected councillors will have a few years of political experience, to see if there is a change in the political process and agenda concerning gender. There is also a proposition to implement the gender quota on the national level which could be another field where further research is needed to see the effects it has on a national level. These effects can differ from the consequences women’s increased representation had on the local level presented in this bachelor thesis.
References


Attachment

Interview questions

1) Questions about the respondent
   a) Can you tell us a little bit about yourself? (Family situation, former occupation etc.)
   b) How did you get involved in politics? When? Why? What circumstances?
   c) What are your experiences as an elected politician?
   d) Was it your first time running as a candidate for the local election?
   e) How is it being a woman in politics?
   f) Does gender matter in the political world? Why/why not?
   g) Do you experience any difficulties that you think have to do with you being a woman?
   h) Do you think there are any differences between how women and men experience being a politician?
   i) Besides representing your party, do you also feel like a representative for your gender? Why/why not?

2) Questions about political assignments
   a) What are your main political assignments?
   b) Do you experience that there are gender-specific political assignments?
   c) Do you believe that women and men have equally influential positions in your municipality?
   d) Do you sometimes feel that you are perceived as unqualified in the decision-making process?

3) Questions about gender equality
   a) How do you define gender equality?
   b) Should the political assemblies represent the different groups in the population proportionally? For example 50% women?
   c) Do you feel that gender quota is needed? Why/why not?

4) Questions about gender quota
   a) What do you feel about gender quota being implemented? Good or bad? (Some might feel they are discriminated, what about you?)
   b) Why do you think that women’s representation have not increased prior to the implementation of gender quota?
   c) Did you experience any personal changes when gender quota was enforced?
   d) Have you experienced any differences since there has been an increase in female politicians?
e) Do you think that an increased proportion of women in politics makes it easier for women’s opportunities to act as politicians? In what way? Do female politicians support each other? How?

f) Have you experienced an increased political interest among female citizens?

g) Does more female politicians mean that things are changing in politics? What changes? Why not do you think?

5) Questions about political agenda

a) Do you believe female politicians have other experiences and knowledge? What kind of experiences/knowledge? Are those experiences relevant in politics?

b) Do you think it would be easier to bring up “women’s issues” when there are a bigger proportion of female politicians? Why? How?

c) Have “women’s issues” gotten more attention after women’s proportion in politics have increased?

d) Do you experience that either gender is given more impact in e.g. meetings and agendas?

e) Do you believe that an equal gender representation could be achieved without implementing gender quotas? How long time do you think it would take?

f) Has the increased women’s representation lead to a decrease in men’s power in politics?

6) Is there anything else you feel is important which you want to share with us?