Some issues concerning women in senior management: a case study from Ghana

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SUMMARY

This article considers issues concerning women's managerial careers in the Ghanaian Civil Service, which have emerged from an analysis of data collected in Accra as part of a Government of Ghana project supported by the United Kingdom Department for International Development. This examined the position and status of Women in Public Life in Ghana and was known as the WIPL project.[1] Within this project, information was collected from women civil servants, and it is this which is presented here. Copyright © 1999 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

INTRODUCTION

Women have been serving in the Ghanaian Civil Service since 1890. By the 1930s women constituted 8% of public servants, in 1954 they were admitted to the executive class and finally in 1963 they were enabled to enter the top cadre, the administrative class (Harlley, 1995). Within the public sector, 25% of employees are women. Although benefiting only a small number, employment in the public sector represents a relatively secure career for women when considered against the other limited opportunities available. More than 90% of women in Ghana are either self-employed or unpaid farm labour. In Ghana, as in many other countries, women are represented in some numbers in the lower grades of the Civil Service, but the top jobs are predominantly held by men. Table 1 indicates the gender distribution of the top four grades since 1995, when the project which forms the basis of this article was commenced.

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[1]The Women in Public Life project was launched in Ghana in 1995. The then Overseas Development Administration (now DfID) of the United Kingdom provided funds for a two-phase programme, consisting of research and subsequent training and development of information sources. This was supported by the Government of Ghana, who provided both financial and human resources. The research phase concluded in autumn 1997, and the second training and information phase is now progressing.

Table 1. Percentage gender distribution in the top four grades of the Ghanaian Civil Service in 1995.

Grade	Men	Women
Minister	85	15
Deputy Minster	88	12
Chief Director	100	0
Director	90	10

THE STUDY—SOME METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The analysis presented here concerns qualitative data collected by a team of four researchers from 62 women employed in the central Civil Service in Accra, Ghana.[2] At the outset of the research it was decided that, given the limited time and resources available, it would be particularly revealing to interview individuals who were not within ministries which historically were more likely to employ women, i.e. those concerned with health, social welfare and education. It was held that additional insights might be obtained from those who worked in 'atypical' women's roles, and for this reason the departments selected were the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development; an environment agency, where technical officers were interviewed; the Parliamentary Office; the Office for the Civil Service; and the Ministry of Trade. Government administration in Ghana is not unlike that elsewhere, where fewer numbers of women are employed in technical grades and in matters to do with finance and trade. In addition to this selection which was vertically sampled, a number of women ministers and all directors were interviewed irrespective of ministerial specialism.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted and all but three were tape recorded. The key areas covered in the interviews included family of origin background, which also examined parental attitudes to the education of girls and the employment of women; life–career history; domestic arrangements, including attitudes of spouses to such arrangements; attitudes of colleagues, both male and female, towards the interviewee and woman at work—for example, interviewees were asked 'how do your male staff regard women bosses'; positive and negative work experiences—for example, feelings of discrimination or of support and mentoring; projections for future career, and what advice the interviewee would give to a young woman considering entering the Civil Service as a career.

Transcriptions were made of 54 recordings. In addition, notes were made during the interviews, and coding sheets were used to collect simple data for the purposes of providing a descriptive statistical review for the WIPL project.

It was decided during the very early design phases of the project that the bulk of data collection and analysis activities were to be qualitative in nature. The researchers generally took a feminist standpoint and felt, in line with other feminist critique of research methods, that the qualitative approach is often better able to reflect women's experiences (Stanley and Wise, 1983; Harding, 1986, 1987, 1991; Griffin, 1995). In adopting a qualitative methodology, the researchers were thereby accepting the

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[2]These were Dr Amina Mama of Nigeria, an independent scholar and activist, also visiting lecturer to the University of Bradford, UK; Christabel Mills and Hilda Aiken, postgraduate students of the School of Communications, University of Ghana; and myself.

proposition that the aim of the research was generally to create an understanding of a phenomenon and not to posit explanations in the first instance.

In the context of this proposition the objectives of this study were to understand in greater detail factors that played a role in the managerial career development of women in the Ghanaian Civil Service, with a view to developing appropriate training and to setting up an information centre. No claims are made that any findings would be universally applicable, but they may add to the sum of information available about women's career development and trigger further reflection in other contexts and circumstances.

The research and data management techniques used followed a selection of some of the prescriptions for good practice as recommended by Turner (1981) and Henwood and Pidgeon (1993). Research methodology workshops were held amongst the researchers at the outset of the project to agree definitions of terms, design procedures and documents and to share notions about good practice. Regular discussions subsequently took place about both the progress of the research and refinements required in the light of experiences. Partial analysis of transcribed interview tapes was shared as soon as possible after interviews were conducted. Each researcher kept a notebook, as a journal of the research they were conducting. Notes were made not only on the answers to questions but also on incidents, events and contextual details. Further contextual material was taken not only from Civil Service records but also from other media, including press coverage of the issues that were the concern of the research. The first tentative analyses were presented to a focus group of participants for their views on the representativeness and realism of the results.

Without an organizing framework, provided by *a priori* hypotheses, a substantial task confronted during analysis was to make use of considerable amounts of rich but unstructured data. However, as the transcriptions were read, reread, coded and recoded, it was apparent that a number of themes repeatedly emerged. The most frequently occurring are reported here.

THEMES FROM THE CIVIL SERVICE DATA

Briefly, the themes which emerged from the data can be illustrated by the following quotations from the interviewees.
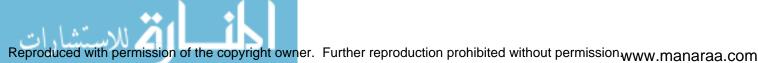
1. 'No woman would choose to be a civil servant if she could get a better place'.
2. 'We have to work harder than men'.
3. 'You have to be seen as respectable'.
4. 'I cope but I feel guilty'.

Each of these four themes is commented on below, together with suggestions for policies and strategies which may begin to address them.

'No woman would choose to be a civil servant if she could get a better place'

Employment as a civil servant was not seen to be particularly worthwhile by many of the participants in the research, and a number of factors seemed associated with this perception, reflecting a less than happy experience of work.

Many of the respondents were so demotivated in the Civil Service that they were considering and hoping for employment elsewhere. A range of dissatisfactions contributed to such demotivation. These can be identified as content and complexity of work well below the capacity of the individual; the failure of the organization to make use of the knowledge and education of the individual; the failure of the organization to provide developmental training, particularly for women; the lack of mentoring; *ad hoc* job placement; and the disruptive nature of organizational change, which had become more frequent in recent years.

Representative comments which illustrate these dynamics include.

- *I want to do something more worthwhile, branching into the law or accounting. I hope to leave the Civil Service.*
- *I am not satisfied with my job because the work just trickles in and I am capable of doing more.*
- *I do the technical work here but feel it is not recognized.*
- *The job does not make use of my education ... I acquired my Master's degree and expected to get more responsibilities but it has not happened.*
- *They never give you a list here* (of the training available), *if I want to get on I have to take a private course.*
- *There is not much of a system here, whether you go up depends on the strings you can pull.*
- *They moved my office, I could not travel that far so I had to go into a lower job.*

These are not unfamiliar factors. Astin and a number of colleagues as early as 1984, in modelling women's career choice behaviour, identify all of these as aspects of what Astin labels the 'structure of opportunity' for women in organizations. The author's work on British women civil servants in the 1980s replicated such findings. Kanter pointed out many of these issues and suggested that a key to the development of women's careers was effective organizational mentoring (Kanter, 1977; Astin, 1984; Hansen, 1984; Wilson, 1991).

Many of the comments from the interviewees, of which those above are typical examples, indicate that the structuring and content of Civil Service work require attention, together with a detailed review of the human resources employed. Such an exercise should theoretically be gender neutral. Roles, tasks and structures need to be considered along with a thorough appraisal of each member of staff's capacity and potential. Thus the recommendations for policy here are a commitment to a review of the organization and content of work within the Civil Service, and the implementation of organizational audits and job evaluation schemes. Training in these processes might be required for selected staff.

It is probable, as other researchers have found, that the under use of education and the lack of developmental training contribute to demotivation (Collinson *et al.*, 1990; McKeen and Burke, 1991; Morrison, 1992; Hollway, 1994). Furthermore, they are symptomatic of a lack of detailed knowledge about the skills of the individuals employed in the Civil Service. Although some records are kept of the educational qualifications individuals hold and are required to have an entry to the Civil Service, it was unclear from the data provided by the interviewees what other information is kept, apart from records of mandatory attendance on courses held at the Government Institute of Management and Public Administration.

If one side of an effective deployment policy is an analysis of the job to be done, the other is an understanding of the human skills within an organization. The implication for policy here is also commitment to a review of the human resource within the service and matching it to the range of tasks to be performed, organizational audits, and the training of personnel to conduct these. In addition, a human resource development programme to enable those currently employed to express and develop skills to match what is required would be useful. This is more likely to be effective if linked to an appraisal scheme to ensure a continuing process of evaluation of staff development needs. At the time of the research programme, many ministries were using standard appraisal forms linked to assessment for pay purposes. Many human resource specialists recommend the separation of appraisal schemes for staff development purposes from those used for assessing remuneration, and this could be a very worthwhile exercise in this case.

The introduction of a mentoring scheme could also be helpful. Literature on the career development of women frequently notes the difficulty women have in acquiring suitable mentors (Kanter, 1977; Burke and McKeen, 1989; Davidson and Cooper, 1992). When asked about this aspect of their career, many women could identify family members, particularly grandmothers, filling this role, but despite probing, very few individuals could identify a formal organizational mentor. Those that could singled out the individuals concerned as exceptional and 'really good'. As Burke and McKeen (1994) point out, although research frequently identifies the importance of organizational mentoring to women, there is often difficulty in finding mentors, often compounded by cross-gender relationship issues. What is required is an effective organizational system for ensuring appropriate mentoring, and here there is a dilemma. If an assignment system is used, as some commentators indicate, this may have a low chance of success (Kram, 1985). On the other hand, it may be that a carefully planned system, which is certainly required, may be successful (Burke and McKeen, 1989).

An additional demotivating problem was the frequent occurrence of organizational change and *ad hoc* job placements, which were reflective of substantial political and economic changes which had occurred in Ghana during the period of the participants' careers. The most frequently mentioned was the freeze on Civil Service promotions which occurred during the early 1980s. The women considered that this had disproportional effects on women, because it was assumed by the (mostly male) decision makers that male jobs had to be protected since males were the family breadwinners. 'They think we are only working for the extras'.

The implementation of an effective human resource deployment system would minimize the frequency of *ad hoc* job placements and would also be a mechanism though which necessary organizational change would be mediated. In the majority of organizational change programmes, reviews of jobs and personnel are necessary, and a system already in place and known to employees would be advantageous in these conditions.

'We have to work harder than men'

A second theme to emerge from the data concerns the belief that, in order to progress in their careers, women have to work very hard at paid employment, and in particular harder than men to achieve the same promotions.

The literature indicates that women often believe that hard work is the key to career success despite the frequent experience of being ignored for promotion. Being passed over also gives rise to the corollary to hard work, that of having to work harder than men to get to the same position. The capacity to successfully negotiate increasingly challenging assignments is frequently seen as a necessary condition for promotion to senior jobs. However, a number of researchers have discovered that women are often more severely tested than men. Morrison (1992), for example, suggests that a dynamic of challenge–recognition–support exists in many organizations, but that women typically experience too little support for the amount of challenge. This is echoed in Collinson *et al.*'s (1990) work within the banking and insurance industry, where, located in a cultural belief of women not being up to the job, one manager's preferred method of testing out women was '(to) come down heavier on women because we've got to see if they can take it'.

Much of this discussion tacitly circles around gender stereotypes, and within the data from Ghana there were many reports of stereotypic attitudes, such as:

- *Women do not make good managers because they are too soft.*
- *People don't like working for women bosses, they are very hard.*

and comments on the qualities of women:

- *Women are much better at finance than men.*
- *Women are more thorough than men.*

and comments on the 'woman problem':
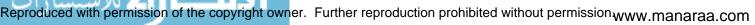
- *Women are very emotional.*

The presence of stereotypes and stereotypical behaviour is often comforting in organizations, since individuals can position themselves with respect to these models and can position others in relation to themselves. A common stereotype concerns the rank of women within organizations. Senior women are rare and therefore remarkable and remarked upon. Not all comments concerning them are positive, and senior women are often victims of both personal criticism and unjust actions. In some cases, simply being in post is sufficient violation of a stereotype for a woman to be treated badly. For example, this can happen to the first woman to be appointed to a particular role, and there was certainly evidence of this.

- *At first they were not willing to accept me as a Deputy Administrative Officer, but when they found out who my husband was they began to change.*
- *They find it strange—a woman in the forefront of things.*
- *They simply would not question a man's private life in the same way* (when appointed to ministerial post).

Within an organization, women themselves hold views about appropriate behaviour, and this to some extent must be conditioned by discriminatory behaviour and sanctions directed towards them, and it is within this focus that beliefs about hard work may be located.

There were two frequently expressed views among the participants of the study with respect to working hard. The first was related to effort and, put simply, was that if a woman worked hard in her job, she would reap a just reward. This belief seemed to exist despite experiences, which many of the interviewees were able to describe, to the

contrary. It may well be the case that some or all of the women who had achieved status had worked hard, but this is not necessarily evidence of a causal relationship. There may be many instances of women who have worked hard who have not achieved status, and men who have not worked hard who have achieved status.

Other commentators do remark on the relationship that women assume between hard work and promotion (Kanter, 1977; Davidson and Cooper, 1992). It is not an uncommon phenomenon for senior women to overemphasize the issue and be highly critical of junior colleagues who do not show such dedication. This was the case here. Most of the most senior women interviewed attributed their success to hard work, and all would give this as advice to young women starting out on a career in the Civil Service.

There is scant evidence in the management literature particularly with respect to women that work hard is positively correlated with promotion, although there is some evidence that working long hours is. There is plenty of evidence that gender is negatively correlated with promotion. However, if women themselves assume it has been their hard work which has resulted in a senior position, they might believe that those women who have not achieved this are not hard workers and not deserving of support (Morrison and von Glinow, 1990; McKeen and Richardson, 1992; Morrison, 1992).

'You have to be seen as respectable'

A third theme concerned perceived sexual propriety. Women, it was frequently stressed, must not engage in or display a range of behaviours at the workplace which are considered to have a sexual element to them. A number of items are included under the notion of 'sexual' here. Thus not only should women be wary of forming relationships with male colleagues, but it was also held to be risky to an individual's reputation to engage in what was referred to as lobbying; that is, asking or petitioning male manager for employment rights and entitlements. Women needed to be very careful across a range of activities. Something as apparently innocuous as undertaking a field trip without being accompanied by a spouse could create considerable difficulties. There appeared to be organizational concerns about putting men and women in task teams together. Women were sometimes not allowed by their organizations to undertake field duties, necessitating travel and being away from home with male colleagues, unless the senior male member of their family (husband, father or brother) gave his written permission. Experience of field work was often a requirement for promotion.

The interviewees indicated that in Ghana, as in many other societies, assumptions of sexual availability may be made about a woman who is not married.[3] Furthermore, she will be prey to some male colleagues and also seen as not respectable. A particularly public example of this was the detailed televised questioning in Parliament of a potential minister about her private life because she was divorced. 'Unrespectable' women may be seen as not worthy of senior posts.

Many of the women had to content with sexual advances from male colleagues.

● *You just have to get on with things and try not to let it bother you.*

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[3]For discussion and overview of issues concerning sexuality and the organization, see as a starting point Hearn and Parkin (1995).

It was remarked that even if a woman was married, if she was attractive or friendly or helpful, or even just working in a male environment, she too may be seen as sexually available or not quite respectable. If a woman engaged in a relationship with a colleague, this may also be seen as immoral.

It was also reported that if the man was in a senior position, then the assumption was that the woman in the relationship was obviously using him to advance her career. It was here that the fear about 'lobbying', i.e. simply asking supervisors for rights within employment, emerged.

- *I do not like to lobby, most of the lobbying is done by men ... Women do not like to lobby even though people think that women use their femininity to lobby ... The fact you are a woman casts a slur on you if you lobby ...*
- *I wanted him to do something for me about the problem I had but he said you are a young women and so pretty so if I was to do it for you people will say that even if you deserved it it was just because I was a woman.*

The women were under very considerable pressure if they wanted to be seen as credible in their career to behave in a very constrained way; one assumed or actual loosening of their guard might well damage their career forever.

As well as decisions being made about a woman's worth as an employee and promotability based on her assumed sexual purity, there was also the related matter of more direct sexual harassment which many of the interviewees had suffered at some time in their career. Women reported being repeatedly asked for dates, where the men concerned were 'just trying their luck'. There were some instances where women were molested.
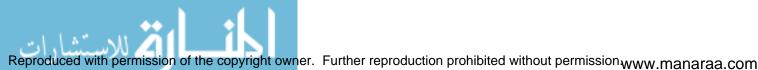
When asked how they felt about such harassment, a common response was that they felt offended and were fearful of negative results with respect to their career. Some women appeared to have generated coping strategies, such as being very firm in their dealings with offenders or arranging to be in the presence of offenders only in the company of others, but most reflected that harassment was particularly difficult for junior women or if it was a supervisor who was the perpetrator.

Sexual harassment can be a serious detriment to the career development of women. As well as the direct aspect of the refusal to promote an individual because she refuses to provide sexual favours to her boss, it also frequently lowers the self-esteem of the individual, affects her work performance and can have marked effects on her health, generating extensive sick leave. None of these will contribute positively to her career development (Hearn and Parkin, 1995; Nicholson, 1996).

Sexual harassment is problematic not only because it occurs but also because frequently it is not clearly identified. A range of behaviours may be included in its definition, and these will vary at the cultural as well as the individual level. One clear aspect of it, however, is that it is often about power, not sex, and is used by some men to control some women.

Organizations can attempt to minimize sexual harassment in the workplace by instituting policies which outlaw the practice and discipline its perpetrators. However, it is probably necessary, because of the difficulties of definition, to involve as many personnel as possible in the formulation of such policy. Both formal training and discussion groups have a role to play here. There may also be many problems associated with implementation of policy, but at the very least, action needs to be

taken both to inform all staff of the issues, procedures and penalties and to ensure that the policy is followed up if there are any breaches.

In viewing women's careers in the Civil Service, it is the assumptions regarding appropriate roles and what one participant described as 'purity' that result in discriminatory and unjust decisions about women which require attention and are particularly difficult to deal with.

It is comparatively easy to promote the idea of a policy that assumptions should not interfere with sound human resource deployment decisions and that individuals should be assessed on their actual capacity or potential to undertake tasks. It is, however, more difficult to challenge assumptions. Methods which might be employed include formal training and less formal discussion groups.

In addition, women themselves have a role to play through networking, personal conscientization and generating support systems for each other, and indeed for men. Networks could be developed by all those who are interested in objective organizational human resource assessment and the removal of inappropriate stereotyping.

'I cope but I feel guilty'

A fourth theme concerned the tensions between career and family. Here the women interviewed accepted the practical problems associated with this and coped with them. What was identified as problematic, however, was that inappropriate assumptions were made by others, in particular supervisors. Typical of this was the generalized belief that because women employees had family responsibilities they could not perform their work tasks adequately. Hence domestic requirements were made to be a bigger issue, by others, than the interviewees felt warranted.

There was another source of family–work tension frequently reported which had little to do with the mechanics of home and work boundary management. This was that many of the women had negative feelings about their adequacies as mothers. They fretted over whether, by going out of the home to work, they were 'good mothers', and expressed feelings of guilt, despite the fact that paid employment was an economic necessity.

Most of the women who were interviewed had worked out mechanisms which enabled them to combine family responsibilities with work.

● *All seven children have their jobs and help with the housework.*

For many this was not easy, but through compromise and acceptance they were able to make adequate physical arrangements. However, it was reported that often supervisors and colleagues believed that an individual could not make adequate arrangements, and took decisions accordingly.

● *The men here say to me when you get married you won't have all the energy to do all this ... I hope to prove them wrong but I just don't know.*

This reflects research conducted in many situations where line supervisors are sceptical of a married woman's or mother's capacity to cope with dual roles (Curran, 1986; Beechy and Perkins, 1987; Collinson *et al.*, 1990; Lewis and Taylor, 1996).

In this study it was reported that assumptions were repeatedly made by managers that under certain circumstances a particular women would not be able to comply

with the demands of a job because of her domestic circumstances. Although this may occasionally be true, many of the participants felt the problems were exaggerated. Moreover, in some cases it seemed as if harder conditions were deliberately applied to women, almost as if they were being tested out. This seemed to be the case particularly with respect to excessive hours. 'I am all right now' one woman reported. 'My kids have grown up, I can work until ten'. The need to work until ten at night was not, apparently, questioned. A number of women complained that there was a 'working late' culture in their office which they could not comply with, but which was frequently necessitated by their male colleagues' inability to get to work on time in the morning, or, whilst at work, not to engage in the activity for which they were employed until after they had read the newspapers. The issue of the relationship between women's work and predominant organizational culture has been widely reported (Lewis and Taylor, 1996).

The interesting question is how do such supervisory attitudes become constructed? Hollway (1994), drawing on Connell (1987), discusses similar dynamics in the Tanzanian Civil Service. Her suggestion is that although the structures of the Civil Service offer formal equality, 'in terms of authority, control and coercion, men's interests win out' (p. 248). Furthermore, this occurs because of what Connell describes as 'the construction of emotionally charged social relationships'. Individuals have an interest in the emotional maintenance of gender difference and of gendered subjectivities or identities. Individuals are not only organizational workers but they are also husbands, wives, fathers and mothers. Male supervisors may well carry into the workplace the attitudes they have as husbands, not least of these the patriarchal notions they hold. Thus, as Hollway asserts, 'the patriarchal model of family relations enters the gender relations of the organization'. (p. 261).

Even though a woman may be able to resolve satisfactorily the physical aspects of work–family tension, many still seem to feel mental and emotional tension, and the possibility of not being a 'good' mother, or indeed wife, if she spends much of her day outside the home. The word guilty is often used by women to represent these emotions, and there was much reporting of this feeling among the interviewees. Again this would seem to be an aspect of what has been constructed by the individual to be the appropriate or comfortable gendered identity. An added insight to this is that many of the interviewees reported that they often acted in a motherly role in the organization, and that in so doing they were behaving appropriately. Some appeared very pleased that their staff related to them in this way.

- *I am a mother to all my boys* (male staff) *and I always help them out with their personal problems if I can.*

This was said by a Director.

The policy implications related to the tension between family and career concern both organizations and the individual. Organizations should be committed to ensuring that they enable all employees to perform effectively. In terms of action this could well mean organizing working practices to take account of the fact that most employees are family members too. Unsocial working hours affect men and women alike and may drive down performance. Working practices should be reviewed to consider both their task effectiveness and effective human resource deployment.

Individual women may need to reassess whether the feelings they have concerning their capacities as a parent, spouse or supervisor are valid, and it is here that informal

supportive networks may have a role to play. Groups of women from the same ministry or grades could give thought to how supporting each other may best be achieved. However, even with such reappraisal it is clear that such issues as the appropriateness of transferring notions of family relations to gender relations within the organization must also be addressed by men, and this is a long journey. On the positive side there were a few examples among the interviewees where small ministry-based networks of women had seen it as their responsibility to open up dialogue with their male colleagues on such matters.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This article has examined aspects of women's career progression to senior posts in the Ghanaian Civil Service. It has not sought to explore the more obvious processes of discrimination against women at work, but has concentrated on listening to the voices of women themselves and drawing out themes. In response to the themes reported here, concerning perceptions of the Civil Service as an employer, women's work effort, women's sexual propriety and the tensions between career and family, suggestions for approaching these issues have been put forward, and to some extent there is a coherence between these.

In some instances it seems some additional human resource management procedures are required. Job analysis, human resource audits and the need for policy definition have all been put forward.

In addition to this there remains a need for personal development. In some cases this relates to women themselves. How can they come to terms with emotions around the issue of home–work tensions, of sexual harassment, of asking for their employment rights? In other cases it relates to the needs of men. How can they learn to deal fairly with women at work and recognize when the assessments they are making are based on assumptions and stereotypes? What can men gain from contributing to the development of more women managers in the Ghanaian Civil Service?

Organization—level development in procedures and individual-level personal development can and perhaps should complement each other. Each requires sponsorship, ownership, leadership and commitment to inaugurate it. Key champions need to be identified, but also a team willing to explore mechanisms to implement any schemes. Training has a role to play, but so too do less formalized discussion groups and networks.

Research was only the first stage of the WIPL project, and the conversion of the findings into actions appropriate to the development of the role of women in senior management in the Ghanaian Civil Service is now being progressed.

As a piece of research contributing to the understanding of the dynamics of women in paid employment, the findings reported here are both similar to those elsewhere and different. For example, in similar projects conducted in East Africa (Hollway and Amos-Wilson, 1994), Bangladesh (Amos-Wilson, 1994) and the United Kingdom (Hansard Society, 1990; Wilson, 1991), what generally seems to emerge is a raft of policies and activities ranging from training for women and men, to revised human resource policies and practices, to the restructuring of organizations. Where such policies have had some time to proceed and develop, changes are beginning to make themselves felt. Drawing on examples known personally to the author, a programme

of action was introduced into the British Civil Service in 1984 and subsequently monitored. It is now a matter of course that equal opportunities statistics are kept, that career breaks are formalized, that flexitime is engaged in and that gender sensitivity training takes place. In Bangladesh a programme of training for senior women public administrators was introduced and some of the participants have subsequently progressed in their careers to levels beyond that of their predecessors. In Tanzania, senior women public sector employees have taken the responsibility of providing gender sensitivity training for their male colleagues.

Differences are related to specific cultural ingredients. For example, in the UK for the past 30 years or so women have not suffered some of the more draconian effects of apparently transgressing 'moral' norms of society, such as being sacked for being a single mother, or censured by colleagues for being a wife working full-time. It is some 50 years since pregnant civil servants were made to give up their jobs. In Ghana, matters are different. There is still a place for gender segregation in much of public life, and strong moves about what is appropriate for a woman to do and the amount of freedom she may have from male control. By contrast, where many of the problems of women in employment in the UK and parts of Europe are bound up in home–work tensions, in particular child care requirements, this is not currently a major issue in Ghana, at least as far as the practicalities are concerned, since the extended family is still in existence.

As a final observation it is hoped that the case study reported here, same and different as it may be, will add to the discourse in this field and provoke further work elsewhere. Such a result would stand as a tribute to those busy Ghanaian women who generously gave up their time and confided their views through taking part in the study.

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