

Women in Educational Leadership within the Tamale Metropolis

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Abstract

Within the Tamale Metropolis, it is observed that only a few women occupy top level management positions within the Ghana Education Service (GES). A descriptive survey was therefore conducted in 2013/2014 academic year to assess the factors affecting the gender disparity in educational leadership within the Service. Specifically, the study sought to examine if factors such as low educational qualification, traditional beliefs and cultural practices were limiting to women leadership in educational institutions within the Metropolis. A sample size of 250, comprising 200 teachers and 50 administrators from selected Basic, Senior High Schools and Colleges of Education was involved in the study which used questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The study revealed that there were more males than females in the teaching profession in the Metropolis. The male teachers also had better professional and academic qualifications than their female counterparts. Thus, more males qualify for appointment into leadership positions than their female counterparts. The situation is compounded by the cultural and traditional milieu of the people that relegates women into subservient positions in society. The study therefore recommends vigorous educational campaign through workshops, seminars and symposia for teachers, educational administrators and the general public to emphasize the importance of higher education for women as well as the important roles women could play in national development. GES council could introduce intensive family life education and gender neutral curriculum as a means of minimizing gender stereotypes and promoting progress towards enhanced gender equity within the society.

Keywords: Educational leadership, participation, challenges, gender equity, traditional beliefs

Introduction

Education is a significant indicator of women's status in a given society. Educational level and work experience are most crucial to ultimate status attainment for both men and women. According to Hulton and Rose (2001), education particularly of girls, has been found to be highly correlated with improvements in health as well as reduction of fertility, infant mortality and morbidity rates. To them, education can empower women to play significant roles in decision-making within the family, community and society at large.

Dine (1988), identified cultural and religious values as factors which affect female education. She observed that in Arab states, cultural and religious norms led to strict segregation of the sexes at school and at work, with girls taught in single sex schools by female staff and restricted to a curriculum which favored home economics more than science and mathematics. To her, this did not prepare girls for full and equal participation in the workforce and thereby limited their career horizons. Dine (1988), also observed that parental interest and encouragement constitute major factors in the retention of girls in schools. In traditional societies, parents have low occupational aspirations for their daughters and even see education as risky for women. His survey of rural wives in Pakistan showed that it was acceptable for girls not to receive formal education. In another study he conducted in Papua New Guinea, he found that educated girls would not be good mothers because they tended to respect tradition, parents and husbands less than they should. A similar research conducted by him in Syria revealed that most of the parents wanted their daughters to be housewives or seamstresses

Eagly (1987) argued that the expectation is a central aspect of the socialization process. That is people behave according to societal expectations about their gender role and the expectation that women will be more caring and relationship-oriented than men largely accounts for different approaches to leadership based on gender. From a female perspective, the downside of this process is that the view of women as nurturing may lead to a justification of women holding supportive roles, leaving men typically to play leadership roles.

Though women generally occupy subordinate positions, they contribute greatly towards nation building. They constitute the bedrock of society and just like their male counterparts, have the talents and capabilities that enable them to perform leadership functions and duties effectively. Women's contribution to development of various fields of human endeavour is itself a testimony that cannot be over emphasized. Throughout history, women have contributed significantly towards the survival and development of their nations. For instance, Nana Yaa Asantewaa, the queen mother of Ejisu stood firm to protect the rights of her people during the pre-independence era of Ghana. Margaret Thatcher of Britain, Indira Ghandi of India assumed responsibilities as Prime Ministers of their nations. Queen Elizabeth II of England is the most prestigious and longest serving monarch in the annals of world leadership history.

In recent times, many more women carry the mantle of leadership. Within the United Nations (UN) system, women are few in leadership positions. For example, in 1993 only six out of the 179 member states were

governed by women (Spectator: February 13, 1993). In 1995 there were only six women out of the 184 Ambassadors and seven as at mid-1997. Also, only four out of 32 UN specialized agencies were headed by women (Ghanaian Times: August 10, 1995). In Ghana, a former Speaker of Parliament, Justice Bamford-Addo, a business executive and computer programmer, Madam Elizabeth Villars and the current Chief Justice Mrs. Justice Georgina Woode are a few celebrated examples of women with enviable leadership reputation.

Despite the achievement of many women worldwide -both in ancient and recent times- women still lag behind men in leadership positions in various human endeavours. Within the political scene in Ghana, only a few women occupy notable leadership positions despite the fact that they form 51.04% of the total population of the country (Ghana Statistical Service, 2002). The gender composition within the parliament of Ghana since the inception of participatory democracy has consistently been male-dominated. In 1994, out of 12,869 Assemblymen/women, only 348 were women, a situation depicting poor women representation. The situation is not different within the educational sector. The participation of women in the administration of educational institutions in Ghana is quite low. Within the Ghana Education Service (GES), only a few women occupy top level management positions. Women commonly dominate the nursery and primary schools as teachers with only a few of them being heads. At the Junior High School (JHS) and Senior High school (SHS) levels, only a few women serve as heads. The situation is not different at the Colleges of Education and Polytechnics where the number of female managers is almost insignificant compared to their male counterparts. Thus, the number of female administrators in educational institutions nationwide is relatively small compared to their male counterparts within the teaching field. Though the situation is gradually changing as more females acquire higher education, gender imbalance is still obvious in leadership positions in the Service. For example, 1999 national statistics showed that there were 43 women heads out of 438 heads of SHS. In the Colleges of Education, only eight out of the 38 Principals were women. Additionally, there were only 52 female Directors out of the 153 Directors working in different designations, from headquarters to the district offices throughout the nation (GES, 1999). Since the establishment of GES in 1974 till date, the only female Director General was in December 2002.

With particular reference to the Tamale Metropolis in the Northern Region of Ghana, the issue of women in leadership positions is a reflection of the national situation as the number of women in educational leadership positions is woefully low. For example, as at 2015 there were only two female Heads out of twelve Heads of SHS in the Metropolis. It is however not clear as to whether women qualified to be leaders and had actually contested the leadership positions.

Thus, some questions that come to mind bother on why there are only a few women in leadership positions: Do women in the Tamale Metropolis have the drive to become administrators in educational institutions? Is there the need to place qualified women in managerial positions within educational institutions to enable them contribute fully to national development?

Statement of the Problem

Within the Tamale Metropolis in particular, it is believed that traditional and cultural practices are strongly opposed to female leadership in educational institutions. Majority of such positions are thus reserved for males. These beliefs, coupled with low academic and professional qualifications of women in the Metropolis, appear to have relegated women to the background of administrative positions within the GES. It is against this background that the authors chose to investigate possible factors that hinder women advancement in leadership positions within the Metropolis.

Objectives

The study sought to:

- (a) Examine if low academic and professional qualifications are limiting factors to women leadership in educational institutions.
- (b) Investigate if traditional beliefs and cultural practices in the society affect women's participation in the leadership of educational institutions within the Metropolis

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent do academic and professional qualifications set limit to women leadership in educational institutions within the Tamale Metropolis?
2. What traditional beliefs/ cultural practices affect women participation in the management of educational institutions in the Tamale Metropolis?

Methodology

The research design adopted for the study was the descriptive survey, a type of qualitative research design.

Merriam (1998) stated among other things, that the key concern of descriptive research design is for the understanding of the phenomenon of interest from the participants' perspectives, not the researcher's. In the current study, it was assumed that there was either inadequate or unavailable information on challenges to women advancement to educational leadership and that it would be possible to generate the necessary information with this type of design. It is expected that data gathered from the field through a descriptive survey would provide relevant information to policy-makers on what the actual situation is in the Tamale Metropolis.

With descriptive research, in-depth follow up questions can be asked and items that are not clear can be explained depending on how the questionnaire is administered. It can be used with greater confidence which is of special interest and value to the authors. Descriptive research however has some disadvantages which include the difficulty of ensuring that questions to be answered during interviews have exact wording (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993). In spite of the disadvantages, the descriptive research design was considered most appropriate for carrying out the study because it provides a meaningful picture of events and seeks to explain people's perceptions and behaviour on the basis of information obtained at a point in time.

The target population for this study comprised all female teachers, female school heads and female educational administrators within the Tamale Metropolis. The choice of Tamale Metropolis was based on the researchers' familiarity with most of the educational institutions within the Metropolis. In order to give a true representation of views of both sexes, there was a purposive sampling of schools to obtain a representative sample of institutions headed by males and females. The study involved twenty (20) institutions within the metropolis. The sample size was 250 respondents comprising of 200 teachers and 50 administrators. The purposive sampling technique was used to select the respondents for the study. The rationale behind this choice was that the authors intended to collect data directly from people affected by female leadership challenges within the metropolis.

Information was obtained through the administration of questionnaires on challenges faced by women who advance to educational leadership as well as views on the role women play in administration. The Likert scale format was used for most of the questions while a few close-ended and open-ended items were also used for others. The Statistical Package for Software Solution (SPSS) computer package (version 16) was used to group the data into frequencies and percentages. Other emerging issues and the relationships between the variables were then described.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: To what extent do low academic and professional qualifications set limit to women leadership in educational institutions within the Tamale Metropolis?

The data examined here include gender and professional qualification of respondents. Table 1 provides information of respondents by gender.

Table 1

Distribution of Respondents by Gender

Gender	Teachers		Administrators	
	No.	%	No.	%
Male	144	72	35	70
Female	56	28	15	30
Total	200	100	50	100

Source: Field data, October 2013

While more than 70% of the teachers were males, less than 30% were females. Table 1 also indicates that only 30% of school administrators at both the basic and the second cycle levels were females. This observation is consistent with findings by Dugbaza (1984) that there has always been less percentage of female participating in education than males in Ghana. He stated that the inequality was keenly felt after basic education. Participation rate of women in higher education is generally low and this, he said, accounts for the small number of women in leadership positions. Bayo (1986) supported that the gap between boys and girls get much wider as they enter the highest level of education. He argued that the low numbers of females in comparison with males at all levels undoubtedly hinders a large number of women from occupying leadership positions. He advocated for the closure of the gender gap in educational participation at all levels.

Table 2 is a representation of the highest professional qualification of respondents.

Table 2

Distribution of Respondents by Professional Qualification

Professional Qualification	Teachers				Administrators			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Cert A	9	6.3	5	8.9	-	-	1	6.6
3-year Cert 'B'	3	2.1	5	8.9	-	-	1	6.6
Diploma	26	18.1	23	41	5	14.3	6	40
PGCE/PGDE	17	11.8	3	5.4	7	20	1	6.6
B.ED	69	47.9	20	35.7	18	51.4	6	40
M.ED	6	4.2	-	-	4	11.4	-	-
Total	144	100	56	100	35	100	15	100

Source: Field data, October 2013

The data in Table 2 show that while 52.1% of male teachers had either a first degree or higher, fewer female teachers (35.7%) had attained such professional qualification. The table further indicates that 62.8% of the male administrators had first degree or higher whereas only 40% of the female administrators had such qualifications. The table also reveals that as many as 41% of female teachers and 40% of female administrators had only Diploma as their highest professional qualification. Compared with this the table shows that only 18.1% of male teachers and 14.3% of male administrators have Diploma as their highest qualification. According to the Ghana Education Service (GES) policy, one requires at least a first degree in education to be appointed into a leadership position in a second cycle institution.

Currently, preference is given to GES members with second degrees when it comes to appointment to leadership positions. Based on the GES policy, it appears more men qualify to be appointed to leadership positions in educational establishments in the Tamale metropolis. This confirms the observation of Anamuah-Mensah (1995) that education is an important leverage for pushing women into public office. It further supports the observation by Gyekye et al. (1998) that lower educational and training qualifications make women uncompetitive in the job market and elective offices.

The researcher sought respondents' views on some criteria for selecting and appointing heads of educational institutions. The findings are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Teachers' Preferred Criteria for Selecting Leaders of Institutions

Criteria for selecting leader	Most important		Important		Least Important	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Academic qualification	130	65	62	31	8	4
Professional qualification	140	70	54	27	5	2.5
Work experience	95	47.5	83	41.5	23	4.5
Gender	16	8	33	16.5	126	63
Age	22	11	38	19	140	70

Source: Field data, October 2013

Table 3 shows that while 140 (70%) teachers preferred professional qualification for selecting leaders of institutions 130 (65%) of them regarded academic qualification as most important in selecting leaders. The table further shows that teachers feel work experience should also be taken into consideration when selecting leaders. From the table 95 (47.5%) teachers viewed work experience as most important with regards to the appointment of educational leaders. The table further shows that as many as 126 (63%) and 140 (70%) respectively, considered gender and age as least important in the selection of leaders. This might probably mean that teachers consider professional qualification, academic qualification and work experience rather than gender and age as the requisite requirement for appointment to educational leadership. Asamoah (1997) and Acheampong (1999) revealed from their studies that low educational attainment of women led to the low participation in educational management in the Tamale Metropolis. The observation is also in line with the findings of Brown, Ghartey and Ekumah (1996) that poor or complete lack of education and training for effective performance in the modern sectors of the political economy as location, education and training appear

to exert important influence on a person's accessibility to opportunities in all walks of life including leadership.

Anamuah-Mensah (1995) identified education as an important leverage for pushing women into public office. According to him, several attitudes in the society tend to discourage higher educational attainment among females. As women climb the academic ladder, their participation continues to dwindle. People behave according to societal expectations about their gender role and the expectation that women will be more caring and relationship-oriented than men largely accounts for different approaches to leadership based on gender. From a female perspective, the downside of this process is that the view of women as nurturing may lead to a justification of women holding supportive roles, leaving men typically to play leadership roles.

Research Question 2: What traditional beliefs / cultural practices affect women participation in management of educational institutions in the Tamale Metropolis?

The respondents were required to respond to items on traditional beliefs and practices affecting women in their advancement to educational leadership. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Traditional Beliefs/Practices that affect Women Participation in Educational Leadership.

Traditional	Agree		Disagree	
	No.	%	No.	%
Early Marriage	174	87	26	13
Men are supposed to protect women	173	86.5	27	13.5
Women are not bread winners	101	50.5	99	49.5
Women are not expected to hold leadership positions	74	37	126	63
Women are supposed to care for the family	133	66.5	67	48.5
Educated girls to belong to another family	78	39	122	61

Source: Field data, October 2013

The responses indicate that 174 (87%) teachers regarded early marriage as a very important factor that affects women's advancement to leadership positions in education. Early marriage and care for the family were constraints on women's progress in education. This observation of early marriage supports the opinions of Stromquist (1993), Harding (1992) Adu (1999) and Awumbila (2001) that early marriage is one of the challenges to women's advancement in education.

It was also observed that 173 (86.5%) teachers regarded men as being responsible for protecting women, another possible factor affecting female advancement in educational leadership. This seems to support the findings of Nukunya (1998) that women should always be under guardianship of men. A good percentage, 133 (66.5%) respondents felt that women's care for the family affects their advancement in educational leadership. The table seems to suggest that once a woman gets married and bears children, family care and other domestic responsibilities take precedence over her educational ambitions. Early marriage and care for the family were constraints on women's progress in education. This observation of early marriage supports the opinions of Stromquist (1993), Harding (1992) Adu (1999) and Awumbila (2001) that early marriage is one of the challenges to women's advancement in education.

The views of the respondents on how self-imposed constraints affect women's advancement to educational leadership are presented in Table 5

Table 5
Self-imposed Constraints of Female Advancement to Educational Leadership

Self-imposed Constraints		Agree		Disagree	
		No.	%	No.	%
Women prefer caring for the family	T*	162	81	38	19
	A**	49	98	1	2
Women generally do not strive hard for educational attainment	T	103	52.5	97	48.5
	A	41	82	9	18
Women do not aspire to take up administrative positions	T	92	46	108	54
	A	28	56	22	44
Women generally lack confidence	T	85	42.5	115	57.5
	A	17	34	33	66
Women become bossy when they get to leadership position	T	130	65	70	35
	A	20	40	30	60.0
Women heads often suppress their female subordinates	T	139	69.5	61	30.5
	A	25	50	25	50
Women generally are not able to enforce discipline	T	52	26	148	74
	A	24	48	26	52

Key :* T = Teachers, **A= Administrators. Source: Field data, October 2013

Family responsibility of women takes precedence over their leadership ambition (Tables 5). According to the respondents 139 (69.5%) teachers and 25 (50%) administrators were of the opinion that female Heads were noted for suppressing their female subordinates, a habit which is likely to be a major constraint to female advancement to educational leadership. This finding is similar to Asamoah's (1997) finding that female Heads often suppress their female subordinates. In the opinion of some respondents [130 (65%) teachers and 20 (40%) administrators], women tend to be bossy when they are in leadership position, an attitude which perhaps limits their chances of being put in leadership positions. The table also indicates that 103 (52.5%) teachers and 41 (82%) administrators noted that women generally do not strive hard for educational attainment. If this weakness is anything to go by, then it is only logical to observe a low trend in women's participation in educational leadership. This is in line with the observation made by Adu (1999) who commented that women are to blame for their low representation in leadership positions. She observed that some women have accepted the fact that they must always play the role of a subordinate. Many women do not even care furthering their studies for promotion but want to be promoted on long service or when their bosses have become intimate with them. She stated that women who are favourites of bosses often become backbiters who undermine all efforts of other ladies at the workplace. Many women themselves have accepted the fact that whether they further their education or not their place is in the kitchen. Women with such thoughts do very little to raise their dignity and status in their workplace. Adu added that women must try and realize their special potentials and make the effort to study and rise genuinely to the top in spite of the challenges.

Paradoxically, 148 (74%) teachers and 26 (52%) administrators indicated their disagreement with the statement that women generally are not able to enforce discipline. Furthermore, 115 (57.5%) teachers and 33 (66%) administrators disagreed with the assertion that women lack confidence. These findings however are contrary to Asamoah's findings that women lack confidence and are not able to enforce discipline. The study therefore suggests that women can enforce discipline and that they also have the confidence to be educational administrators. Both Teachers and Administrators were of the opinion that women generally do not strive hard for educational attainment.

Conclusion and recommendation

The study showed that there were more males than females in the teaching profession in the Tamale Metropolis. The male teachers also had better professional and academic qualifications than their female counterparts. Thus, more males qualify for appointment into leadership positions than their female counterparts in the Ghana

Education Service. The situation is compounded by the cultural and traditional milieu of the people that relegate women into subservient positions in society. This poses a challenge to women in competition for leadership in the educational institutions within the Metropolis. In their efforts to compete favourably for such positions, women would seek to attain higher educational levels which confirms the findings of Anamuah-Mensah (1995) that education is an important leverage for pushing women into public office.

There should be increase in female participation at all levels of educational ladder. This could be achieved if District Assemblies and NGOs could sponsor more girls to study at all levels as with their boy counterparts. Additionally, there should be vigorous educational campaign for parents and communities to support female education. Such campaigns could highlight the benefits of female education in order to motivate parents and communities not only to enroll but make efforts to retain their female children in schools. Educational campaign through workshops, seminars and symposia could be organized for teachers and educational administrators by the Human Resource and Man-power Division of the Ghana Education Service (GES) on women's education and leadership. Such fora could be specifically designed to emphasize the importance of higher education for women as well as the important roles women could play in development. The campaign should be launched on a regular basis to encourage more women to strive for higher academic and professional qualifications necessary for educational leadership. This has the potential of reducing the unfavorable home and school environments leading to high enrollment and retention of females in schools, especially at the highest level of educational ladder.

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