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### **Tutors' Perception about Female Administrators of Colleges of Education in Ghana**

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#### **Abstract**

Women are the cornerstone of sustainable development and are making great impact in administrative positions. The study used the qualitative method to explore the perception Ghanaian tutors had about their female administrators. The findings indicated that the female administrators used democratic leadership style in running the affairs of their colleges. Female administrators are also effective but are intolerant of unethical practices. These findings imply that the administration of Colleges of Education can be greatly improved if more female administrators are appointed as Principals.

**Keywords:** Women, sustainable development, Ghanaian, tutors' perception

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of women in leadership is one of the most researched topics in gender and development literature. In this paper, female administrators include Principals, Heads of Department, Senior Housemistresses and Housemistresses. Women are believed to be the cornerstone for sustainable development economically, environmentally, and socially (Stevens, 2010). Leadership position is a position occupied by senior administrators who control and supervise organizational activities. In both developed and developing countries, women leaders are seen to be more cooperative, concerned about the welfare of entire groups (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005; Kaminski & Yakura, 2008), and are less likely to be tolerant of unethical business practices (Volkema, Fleck & Hofmeister-Toth 2004). They are also mostly transformational leaders characterized by being role models and strategic thinkers (Eagly et al., 2003; Aburdene & Naisbitt, 1993), and are also goal achievers (Catalyst, 2004).

Notwithstanding these influential potentials of women leaders, traditional roles are imposed on women to play subordinate roles and as a result these women are not heard but only seen. This situation exists in many aspects of life. For instance, the proportion of women to men in the Civil and Public Services, medicine, engineering, law and teaching in the Colleges of Education and universities is very small and negligible (Allah-Mensah, 2005). Most parents generally bring up their daughters to conform to their reproductive roles and take care of their children and husbands. These are traditional responsibilities that the woman is expected to perform, whether she is working out of the home or not. Traditionally, if a woman is a failure at home-keeping, no matter how high her academic achievements or standard, she is considered a failure.

These traditional attitudes towards women have contributed substantially to gender discrimination and the 'glass ceiling' effect. Girls, therefore, studied housekeeping and mothering from their mothers and so were not sent to school (Moser, 1986). Those from elite homes attended school but that was mainly to the elementary level. Due to their low level of education, women are unable to enter the universities, leading subsequently to their inability to attain high positions at work places, thus leaving men to rise to the top of the hierarchy. In Ghana women who find themselves in administrative positions still have the primary role of family responsibility (Restine, 1993). The small percentage of women who went through to the universities and teacher training colleges struggled to gain appointments at work places while their male counterparts with the same academic qualifications took up even higher administrative positions. Most of the women who gained employment in companies and other establishments worked mostly at the lower positions as clerical officers and cleaners. In the

educational sector, they are mostly classroom teachers and are gradually promoted through the ranks without much responsibility (Criswell & Betz, 1995; Natale, Wilson & Perry, 1992).

Critical review of literature in leadership showed differences between existing research and this study. Most of the literature focused on administrative practices (Koontz & O'Donnell, 1976; Simon, 1957). For instance, Simon found that the administrative processes in most organizations include planning, organising, commanding, coordinating and controlling (Simon, 1957). Some also tilted towards women in decision-making, while a significantly small number focused on gender sensitivity stereotyping (Ifegbesan, 2010; UNESCO, 2004; Fung & Ma, 2000; Stangor & Lange, 1994). In Nigeria for instance, a study Ifegbesan conducted indicated that most females and males are gender sensitive. It recommended that every teacher education curriculum must be permeated with opportunities for students to acquire gender sensitivity knowledge, skills and develop positive attitudes in the use of resources, responsibilities for activities, discipline, and teacher-students interaction (Ifegbesan, 2010). All these studies are very useful in their own ways but are silent on tutors' perception of female administrators in Colleges of Education elsewhere or in Ghana and how the tutors relate with these administrators.

The main purpose of the study was to explore the perceptions subordinates hold about female administrators of Colleges of Education in Ghana. Besides, the study was expected to highlight these perceptions and bring awareness to women in decision-making positions in higher education to re-orient themselves to address the needs of their subordinates. Specifically the study also sought to examine the female administrator's work ethics and leadership style and its effect on the performance or work output of subordinate staff, especially tutors.

Research questions are as follows:

1. What perception do tutors have about female administrators' leadership style?
2. Does working under female supervision affect work performance of staff members?
3. How do you consider the attitude of female heads/administrators?

Generally, women in management positions are comparatively fewer than men, and are fewer still at the top management levels. Ghana is no exception to that general phenomenon, and the phenomenon in Ghana lends itself to research where records show that the drop-out rate among girls is very high as they progress from the primary to the junior secondary school, example both middle/junior secondary school enrolment rate of female students has remain 40% for ten years while in the senior secondary schools it drop to 32%, and as they move up the educational ladder the female rate

feather reduced drastically (ISSSER, 1997). This state of affairs immediately reduces the proportion of girls to boys who may continue their education at the secondary and tertiary levels. It is after tertiary education that teachers and tutors are either posted or appointed to the teacher training colleges to teach, and may then start to rise to management positions. The study then becomes relevant in attempting to find out how women fare, when they get involved in the management of teacher training colleges.

The study on female administrators in the teacher training institutions is a contribution to the existing body of information on the role of women in administrative positions in Ghana. It is in the view of the researcher that the study would lead to a possible clarification and correction of the negative notion that women in administrative positions are not able to cope well and may be bossy. The study should form the basis for similar studies on women in administrative positions of other sectors in the working domain in the country. It should also help shape policies for organizations and employers on the need for them to recruit and place female graduates who have taken courses in administration in the various universities, especially Cape Coast University at their rightful positions with no spite. Furthermore, the study may be found useful to the Ghana Education Service (GES) and the Ministry of Education (MOE) as a whole, in assisting them with information on how tutors perceive female administrators in the training colleges thus guiding them in some decisions taken concerning women administrators. The information may guide policy makers in formulation of decisions on the appointment of female administrators into key positions in the ministry and other public sectors of the country. Finally, the study may serve as a resource material for female administrators and students who may like to undertake similar or related studies in other sectors.

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the Southern part of the country. The population comprised of all tutors in all the 38 public Colleges of Education spread throughout the country, Ghana. The accessible population was made up of all tutors in the Colleges of Education located in the Southern half of the country, that is Colleges in the Ashanti, Central, Greater Accra, Western, and Volta Regions. The tutors should have either worked or were working under female administrators.

A qualitative approach was used for the study. A questionnaire, based on the research objective and the literature review was developed to collect data. The sample size was 52, made up of 28

males and 24 females, drawn from tutors of the nine Colleges. The Colleges are Komenda College of Education, Ada College of Education, Accra College of Education, Holy Child College of Education, Takoradi, OLA College of Education, Cape Coast, Wesley College of Education, Kumasi, St Francis College of Education, Hohoe, St Louis College of Education, Kumasi and St Theresa's College of Education, Hohoe.

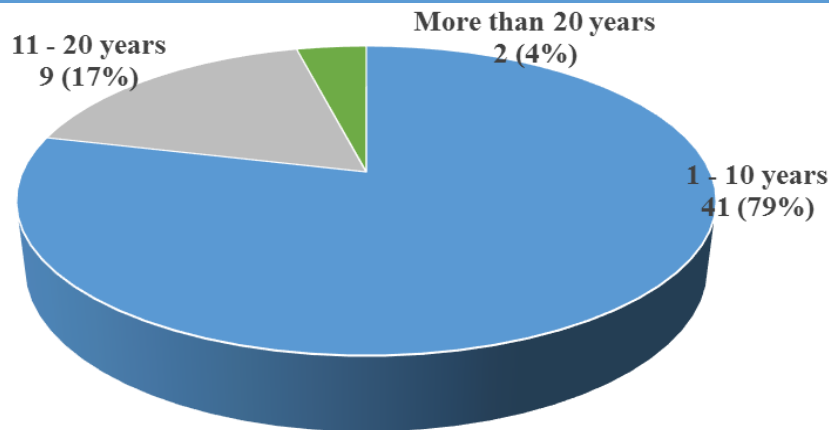
A pre-test was conducted among six respondents from Colleges where there were no female Principals as administrators but as Heads of Department and Hostels. A stratified random sampling method was used to select the respondents in the institutions which had females as administrators. A questionnaire was used to collect demographic information and views on the perception of female administrators' leadership style, their performance and then their work ethics.

The data was collated using the SPSS software and the results presented in tables, frequencies and percentages. The items under each broad area or sub-topic, presented in tables, had 'Always', 'Sometimes', and 'Never' as alternative responses.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Demographic analysis of the respondents

The demographic analysis of the respondents is presented in figure 1. The demography of the respondents indicated that 50% of tutors in the Colleges of Education were between the ages of 36 and 45 years. This finding is in line with the finding that majority of teachers in Australia were in their young and active age (Chapman, 1990). Majority of the respondents (65%) had Masters Degrees, the basic qualification, in various fields. Also, about 57% of the respondents were on the rank of Principal Superintendent, a high rank in the Ghana Education Service. The results concerning work experience under a female administrator indicated that 79% of the respondents had worked for up to ten years with only 21% having done so for more than 10 years (Fig 1). The results further showed that while 56% were working under various categories of female administrators, 44% were working directly under female Principals.



**Figure 1: Work experience under female administrators**

### **Female Administrators' Leadership Style**

Data in table 1 shows that about 79% of the respondents agreed that female administrators always involved others in arriving at decisions that affected them, with 21% seeing them do so sometimes. This finding may be said to be significant because it could make it easier for the tutors to accept, whatever decisions and actions arising out of the discussions, than if they were uninvolved. The finding also seems to suggest that the decisions could either be palatable or unpalatable to them. On the other hand, almost all the respondents (96%) indicated that female administrators regularly held staff meetings and that it was through those meetings that staffs were involved in helping run the affairs of the Colleges. Incidentally, there was no response which indicated that the administrators never held regular staff meetings. Nineteen (99%) percent of the tutors perceived female administrators as always treating all staff with respect while 64% perceived them as sometimes treating all staff with respect. Responses to the item on respect of staff incidentally received the least on the most positive (always) perception, though majority of them perceived the administrators as sometimes treating all staff with respect.

It is possible that the perception on the treatment of staff may be a direct reaction to the attitude of most staff to the female administrators. It is significant to observe that 17% of

the respondents perceived the administrators as never treating staff with respect. The perception of the 17% of the tutors may be extreme and most unlikely in any human institution or organization.

**Table 1: Perception about female administrators' leadership style**

Leadership style	Always		Sometimes		Never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Involves others in decisions that affect them	41	78.8	11	21.2	0	0
Holds regular staff meetings	50	96.1	1	1.9	1	1.9
Treats all staff with respect	10	19.2	33	63.5	9	17.3

The findings are consistent with claims that women leaders are more cooperative and concerned about the welfare of entire groups (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005; Kaminski & Yakura, 2008). The positive aspects of leadership comprise good supervision, communication, management, and programming. This same position was taken by Logon (1987) who states that leadership style could also be exhibited in how best the head of a group involves the group in decision-making. It can hence be deduced that women administrators are democratic in their leadership style while they work hard and impress upon their subordinates that women can handle responsibilities that go with those positions if they are given the chance (Gray & Shein, 1996). In other data collected (Table 2), there was virtually no great disparity between the female and the male respondents' perception about the leadership style of women administrators. For instance, about 88% of female and 96% of male respondents believed that women administrators involved others in decision-making, all female and 93% of male respondents perceived women administrators to be effective supervisors, while 83% of

females and 86% of males claimed that women administrators held regular staff meetings.

### **Females' Administrators' Performance**

The performance of a leader goes a long way to influence the people they lead. Concerning female administrators' performance, data in table 2 shows a significant finding that 50% of the respondents stated that female administrators always worked beyond normal working time while 44% perceived that they did so sometimes. The finding is still positive though 44% indicated that they worked beyond normal working hours only sometimes. The fact that they did not keep to working rigidly within only the working hours is encouraging. Thirty five (35) percent of the respondents perceived the female administrators as always showing no favouritism while 48% said it was sometimes that they showed no favouritism. However, 17% perceived the administrators as showing favouritism, and if it were so, then it does not augur well for smooth administration.

**Table 2: Perception about Female Administrators' Administrative Performance**

Females' Administrative Performance	Always		Sometimes		Never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Easily adapts to changing situations	13	25	33	63.5	6	11.5
Works beyond normal working time	26	50	23	44.2	3	5.7
Shows no favouritism	18	34.6	25	48.1	9	17.3
Gets on well with all staff	19	36.5	28	53.8	5	9.6

On the issue of easily adapting to changing situations, 25% of the respondents perceived their female administrators as always doing so while 61% thought it was only sometimes that they easily adapted to changing situations. The perception of the majority seems to best reflect the reality in life as many administrators are known to be more conservative than easily adapting to changing situations.

There was an item on how well female administrators got along with their staff and the responses were that while 37% of the tutors found them as always getting on well with all staff, 54% perceived them as getting on well with them some of the times, a more probable response in reality. This is a human relationship issue and it is very difficult to get every staff member always getting along well with their heads and vice versa, especially because of differences or disagreements that may arise.

### **Female Administrators' Work Ethics**

The tutors' responses on their perception about female administrators' work ethics is presented in Table 3. On the issue of admission of students, 81% of the tutors perceived administrators as always making sure to admit only qualified students. In adding the responses of those who responded 'sometimes', it may be observed that the female administrators were perceived positively by 89% of the tutors as strictly enforcing admission criteria and admitting only qualified candidates. A major factor regarding the standard of a college is the caliber of students admitted, and this is mostly achieved by not tolerating unethical practices. The results show that female administrators were less likely to be tolerant of unethical practices, which supports Volkema, Fleck & Hofmeister-Toth's findings in 2004.

**Table 3: Perception about female administrators' work ethics**

Work Ethics of Female Administrators	Always		Sometimes		Never	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Admits only qualified students	42	80.8	4	7.7	6	11.5
Promotes cordial relationship among all staff	17	32.7	30	57.7	5	9.6
Ensures students respect college regulations	42	80.8	8	15.4	2	3.8
Shows interest in students' welfare	26	50.0	23	44.2	3	5.8
Is a good financial manager	28	53.8	16	30.8	8	15.4

Thirty three (33) percent of the respondents were of the view that female administrators always promoted cordial relationships among their staff while 58% responded that it was sometimes. The female administrators could be said to have been seen in a positive light on that item. The promotion of cordial relationships among staff could be premised on the assumption that fairness and equity would be at work. In that respect, unethical practices may be very minimal, if any at all. Female administrators are believed to hold very high ethical standards.

Eighty one (81) percent of the tutors stated that the female administrators always ensured that students respected College regulations. In adding the responses of those who responded 'sometimes' to those who perceived their female administrators as always ensuring that students respected College regulations, it may be observed that the female administrators were perceived positively by 96% of the respondents. This perception may indicate that the administrators work ethics are very high and may make students responsibly and law-abiding.

On the issue of female administrators showing interest in students' welfare, 50% said they did so always with 44% indicating that they sometimes did so. This perception is very positive and encouraging. Neglect of students' welfare over a long period could lead into conflict between students and the administration, and that would tarnish the

reputation and image of the college. On the other hand, the women administrators might have shown great interest in students' welfare probably because women are generally believed to have soft spot for people's welfare or because they would like to treat them as they would treat their own children. This latter view, if it were the case, could lead to co-operation and understanding between students and the administration, and thereby provide peaceful and congenial atmosphere for all.

Majority of the respondents (54%) perceived the female administrators as being always good financial managers while 31% saw them as being good financial managers only sometimes. Women are generally perceived to be more prudent than men in managing finances so it may be natural to perceive them as good financial managers in school administration. It may not be out of place to conclude that female administrators actively promote student welfare and manage finances efficiently and prudently. It is most probable that the female administrators are less likely to be tolerant of unethical practices. The findings agree with the conclusion others have made about the democratic nature of women administrators (Gray & Shein, 1996), the effectiveness of female administrators (Calalyst, 2004; Gorton & Snowden, 1993), and good ethical behaviour of female administrators (Volkema, Fleck & Hofmeister-Toth, 2004).

## CONCLUSION

The findings of the study showed that women administrators adopted democratic leadership style most times, had the ability to solve problems facing subordinates, were effective and were less likely to tolerate unethical practices. Females, it may be concluded, are capable of running Colleges of Education efficiently and effectively so it is recommended appointing authorities should appoint more female administrators, especially at the Principal or headship levels.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The style of female administrators, which was largely perceived to be participatory, should be encouraged. Unlike male administrators who do most of the work themselves, the women involve their staff, thus making them play a part in the solution of administrative problems. This positively affects output or performance and also

enhances the tone of the institution. It is thus recommended that more female administrators should be positioned in these institutions to raise the image of all women.

The attitude and behaviours of the society should change towards women administrators. Women should put in more effort at their work places to help erase some of these stereotyped ideas about them, such as they being less competent, only good for house work and women disrupt work with their numerous need for excuses from duty, thus retarding organizational progress.

Finally, it is suggested that future research be done by comparing administrative practices of male and female administrators by tutors of Teacher Training Colleges.

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