



Can Gender Affect Principalship? Lessons from Research in the North West Region of Cameroon

Patrick Kongnyuy^{1*}

¹Department of Sciences of Education Higher Teacher Training College, Bambili The University of Bamenda, P.O. Box 39, Bamenda, Cameroon.

Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analyzed and interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

Article Information

DOI:10.9734/BJESBS/2015/13018

Editor(s):

(1) Doutora Laurinda Leite, Institute of Education , University of Minho ,Portugal.

Reviewers:

(1) Anonymous, Durban University of Technology, South Africa.

(2) Anonymous, , Covenant University, Western Nigeria.

(3) Elaheh Fadaee, English University Master and Translator M.A. of Translational Studies (English-Persian)", Iran.

(4) Anonymous, University of Venda, RSA.

Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sciencedomain.org/review-history.php?iid=656&id=21&aid=6311>

Original Research Article

Received 29th July 2014
Accepted 5th September 2014
Published 1st October 2014

ABSTRACT

Over the years, despite the fact that women constitute two-third of the teaching corps in Cameroon, there has existed gender bias in the appointment of secondary school principals. Today, there is awareness amongst politicians, women scholars and pressure groups alike, that the trend of anomie has to be reversed. The objectives of this paper were to determine if gender affects appointment into principalship; to examine if a significant difference exists in the management of personnel based on leaders' gender; to ascertain the performance of schools based on gender of the leader; and to find out if significant differences exist in supervision of instructions between male and female principals. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study. A sample of 252 respondents from twelve secondary schools in Bamenda Metropolis was chosen using the stratified, purposive and convenient sampling techniques. The chi-square(x²) goodness-of-fit test was used to verify the four (04) hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level. Findings revealed that gender affected the appointment of principals; male principals manage personnel better than female principals; schools managed by male principals performed better in official examinations than schools managed by female principals and male principals performed better in supervision of instruction activities.

*Corresponding author: Email: patrickkongnyuy@yahoo.com;

Keywords: Gender; administration; principalship; leadership; research; Cameroon.

1. PROBLEM AND SETTING

In 1988, precisely in Beijing, women delegated all over the world met to discuss their rights on gender particularly on gender equality and to define their leadership roles. The concept of leadership has been a perennial topic of concern and investigation in many fields. The leadership of the principal is a key factor in the success of any program in the school [1,2]. Knowledge about leadership, therefore, is a prime factor if an individual is to fulfill effectively the principalship role. Principalship is simply the head of a post-primary institution. It can be a secondary school or college.

According to Lipham and Hoeh [1], at least two productive alternative stances may be taken to perform effectively in the principalship. The first and most current view we have is termed 'the foundation of principalship'. It draws heavily on recent theories, constructs and models from the basic applied social, behavioural and administrative sciences to describe and deliberate the antecedents, correlates or predictors of the behaviour of the principal and those with whom he works. The second and most typical views termed the 'functions of the principalship' which focus on the tasks, jobs and activities that occupy the bulk of the principals' time and analyses them according to the major competencies that must be demonstrated by an effective school principal.

The tasks of the principal can be grouped into five categories: instructional program, staff personnel, student personnel, financial and physical resources, and school community relationships [1,3,4,5,6,7,8] summarizes the definition of leadership as a dynamic process in a group whereby one individual influences the other to contribute voluntarily to the achievement of group tasks in a given situation.

Having seen that to be an effective leader depends on a mastery of the theories and functions of the leader, it becomes worthwhile to assess the role of gender in this practice (if there is any). The trait or "Great Man" theory of leadership has failed to gain universal acceptance because of its failure to consider the foundational and functional roles of school administrators. The main focus of an educational administrator is to take leadership in ensuring that each student develops the qualities needed

in order to preserve and strengthen his way of living [9].

In Cameroon, the Handbook for Heads of Secondary Schools [10] stipulated certain guidelines on the role of principals of which included management, leadership, spirit of dialogue, creation of links, team spirit, good relationships, educational planning and decision making. Okorie [11] summarizes the functions of principals into being a visionary, being able to promote and protect values, being able to empower teachers, providing instructional leadership and managing school climate. Similar recaps were made by Tamajong & Fonkeng [7,12].

Unfortunately, gender gap remains an impediment to potential institutional improvements [13]. Even though effective leadership is more behaviorally derived than gender based, gender remains an obstacle to women seeking and obtaining leadership positions [14]. Schmuck [15] identified three sets of concepts that have been used to understand women's representation in senior posts such as principals: the socialization of women; organizational constraints on women promotion and theories relating to gender-based careers, especially in developing countries.

Women in leadership confront barriers that men do not realize to exist. Some myths suggest that women cannot discipline older students, particularly males; females are too emotional; females are physically too weak; and males resist working with females [16]. The scarcity of women in the role of secondary school principals is a worldwide phenomenon. While women make up at least two-thirds of secondary school teachers, they are in minority in secondary school administration.

Nchindo [17] notes that there is a gender bias in the appointment of school heads. A survey of female principals in Cameroonian secondary schools shows that only one-fifth of the women are appointed principals. It seems the age long stereotype sex role identity still remains in full as far as appointments are concerned. There is empirical evidence that very few females are appointed principals in Cameroon and world over [18]. This sluggish growth rate in the number of female secondary school principals and the concern expressed by gender equality activists,

particularly by women, about the nonchalant attitude towards the appointment of female principals necessitated an investigation.

Based upon this backdrop this research study aims at answering the question of whether or not there is gender bias in the appointment of principals in Cameroon.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research intended to:

1. Determine if appointment of principals is affected by gender.
2. Examine the differences in management of personnel between male and female principals.
3. Ascertain the performances in official examinations of schools managed by male and female principals.
4. Examine the difference in supervision of instruction between male and female principals

3. HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses stated at a 0.05 level of significance guided the study:

- Ho₁: Appointments into the post of secondary school principal are not significantly dependent on gender.
- Ho₂: There is no significant difference in management of personnel between male and female principals
- Ho₃: There is no significant relationship between gender of secondary school Principal and students' performance in official examinations
- Ho₄: There is no significant difference in supervision of instruction between male and female principals.

4. RESEARCH MODEL

The study is tailored around the Management by Objectives (MBO) model and Feminist Theory.

4.1 Management by Objectives (MBO)

MBO, also known as management by results (MBR), is a planning technique of achieving results through a process by which superiors and their subordinates participate jointly: in setting objectives; in determining the activities that

should be performed in order to attain the objectives; in setting deadlines for attaining the set objectives; and in establishing the procedure for the evaluation of the performance of the worker with respect to the set of objectives. The philosophy behind MBO is that the ability of an organization to achieve its goals is influenced by the degree to which the workers within the organization are motivated [19,20]. An educational institution, like any other institution is out to achieve some objectives which are dovetail into the national objectives Management by objectives (MBO) is a process of defining objectives within the school milieu so that management (Principals) and employees (teachers) agree on the objectives and understand what they need to do in the school in order to achieve the objectives [7].

4.2 Feminist Theory

There are several views and theories of feminism. Our study is anchored on Legal theory, Communication theory and Feminist Theory of Design.

4.2.1 Feminist legal theory

Feminist legal theory is based on the feminist view that law's treatment of women in relation to men has not been equal or fair. The goals of feminist legal theory, as defined by leading theorist Claire Dalton, consist of understanding and exploring the female experience, figuring out if law and institutions oppose females, and figuring out what changes can be made [21]. This is to be accomplished through studying the connections between educational policies (as well as appointment policies) and gender.

4.2.2 Communication theory

This view of communication promoted a "deficiency model" asserting that characteristics of speech associated with women were negative and that men "set the standard for competent interpersonal communication". Feminist communication theorists are concerned with methods used by those in power to prohibit women from achieving a voice in political discourse and consequently being driven from the public sphere [22]. The theory also encompasses access to the public sphere, whose voices are heard in that sphere, and the ways in which the field of communication studies has limited what is regarded as essential to public discourse. This was instigated by women such as Christine de Pizan in the 15th century

and Mary Wollstonecraft in the 18th century. The theory was historically dominated by the middle-class white women from Western Europe and Northern America, which aimed at understanding differences and gender inequality and fixates on gender, politics and sexuality. The theory focuses on providing women rights. They are liberal feminists and radical feminists all advocating workplace rights including equal pay and equal opportunities for careers. They have opposed domestic violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault [22]. They maintain that women are oppressed in organizations including the school set up. Thus, women should be given equal opportunities to hold the positions of principalship as male counterparts.

4.2.3 Feminist theory of design

According to this feminist theory, men and women will construct different types of structures about the self, and, consequently, their thought processes may diverge in content and form [2,22]. This division depends on the self-concept, which is an important regulator of thoughts, feelings and actions that governs one's perception of reality. This implies that female principals have some ingenuity in them which may enable them inject new ideas into the educational system [16].

5. METHODOLOGY

The study was carried out in Bamenda metropolis of the North West Region of Cameroon with the highest number of secondary schools in the Region. It adopted a descriptive survey design. The population consisted of all secondary school principals and teachers found within the Bamenda Metropolis distributed among government, mission and lay private schools. The purposive sampling technique was used to select twelve (12) secondary schools. That is, two secondary schools from each Sub-Division. This was to ensure that at least a school from each of the Sub-Divisions in Mezam was represented in the sample of the study. The selected schools included seven (07) public, three (03) Mission and two (02) private schools. All the twelve (12) principals were chosen for the study. Equally, 20 volunteer teachers were selected from each of the secondary schools. That is, those who were readily available to fill the questionnaire. This gave a total sample size of 252 respondents. The instrument used for data collection was a 39-item questionnaire. It focused on male and female practice of principalship in terms of appointment policies,

personnel management, students' performance in official examinations and supervision of instruction. This instrument was validated by an expert in measurement and evaluation. A test-retest on another sample of 20 respondents gave a correlation value of 0.99 between the two tests, indicating that the questionnaire was reliable. The Chi-Square (χ^2) goodness of fit test was used to verify the hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance (alpha level). SPSS version 20.0 was used in computing the data.

5.1 Decision Rule

When the χ^2 calculated is greater than the χ^2 critical value, we retain the alternative hypothesis (H_a) and reject the null (H_0).

6. FINDINGS

Hypothesis One (H_{01}): Appointments into the post of secondary school principal is not significantly dependent on gender.

6.1 Decision

Table 1 revealed that the calculated χ^2 value is 42.8. This value is greater than the critical value of 7.82. Thus, we retain the alternative (H_{a1}) hypothesis and reject the null (H_{01}), meaning that the appointment into the posts of principalship significantly depends on gender. The contingency coefficient of 0.6 indicates a strong positive relationship between gender and appointment into posts of principalship. That is, more men are appointed into this post than females. This indicates that appointment is greatly dependent on gender (by about 100%).

Hypothesis Two (H_{02}): There is no significant difference in management of personnel between male and female principals.

6.2 Decision

According to the decision rule, we retain the alternative (H_{a2}) hypothesis and reject the null (H_{02}) since the calculated χ^2 (36.4) obtained in Table 2 is far above the Critical χ^2 value (7.82), meaning that a significant difference exists in the personnel management styles of male and female principals. Again, a contingency coefficient of 0.6 indicates a strong positive relationship between personnel management styles of male and female principals. That is, men manage their institutions better than their female counterparts. This shows that the management of personnel is greatly dependent

on gender (by about 100%). We conclude that there is a significant difference between gender and school personnel management.

That is, schools managed by male principals performed better in official examinations than those managed by female counterparts.

Hypothesis Three (H_{03}): There is no significant relationship between gender of secondary school Principals and students' performance in official examinations.

Hypothesis Four (H_{04}): There is no significant difference in supervision of instruction between male and female principals.

6.3 Decision

Table 3 above revealed that the calculated χ^2 value is 27.3. This is greater than the critical value of 7.82. Thus, we retain the alternative (H_{a3}) hypothesis and reject the null (H_{03}) since the calculated χ^2 (27.3) is far above the Critical χ^2 value (7.82). Thus, there is a significant relationship between gender of principal and students' performance in official examinations. The C.C value of 0.1 is low, indicating a weak positive relationship between the gender of principal and students' academic performance.

6.4 Decision

We retain the alternative (H_{a4}) hypothesis and reject the null (H_{04}). This is seen from Table 4 above as the calculated χ^2 (22.8) is far above the Critical χ^2 value (7.82). Thus, there is a significant relationship between gender of principal and supervision of instruction. The C.C value of 0.3 is low, indicating a weak positive relationship between the gender of principal and supervision of instruction. Thus, the practice of supervision of instruction is better handled by male than female principals.

Table 1. 6 x 4 Contingency table of gender influence on appointment of secondary school principals

Categories	Observed frequency (O)	Expected frequency (E)	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
SA	87.1	63	24.1	580.8	9.2
A	26.9	63	-13.6	1303.2	20.7
D	49.8	63	-13.2	174.2	2.8
SD	88.2	63	25.2	635.0	10.1
Total	252	252	0	2693.2	42.8

Degree of freedom (df) = 3; Level of significance= 0.05=; Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.6; χ^2 Calculated = 42.8; Critical χ^2 value = 7.82

Table 2. 6 x 4 Contingency table of gender effects on secondary school personnel management

Categories	Observed frequency (O)	Expected frequency (E)	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
SA	91.7	63	28.7	823.7	13.1
A	35.1	63	-27.9	778.4	12.4
D	44.1	63	-18.9	357.2	5.7
SD	81.1	63	18.1	327.6	5.2
Total	252	252	0	2286.9	36.4

Degree of freedom (df) = 3; Level of significance= 0.05=; Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.4; χ^2 Calculated = 36.4 Critical; χ^2 value = 7.82

Table 3. 6 x 4 Contingency table of gender effects on performance in official examinations

Categories	Observed frequency (O)	Expected frequency (E)	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
SA	92.8	63	29.8	888.1	14.1
A	70.9	63	-7.9	62.4	0.9
D	49.5	63	-13.5	182.3	2.9
SD	38.8	63	-24.2	585.6	9.3
Total	252	252	0	1718.4	27.3

Degree of freedom (df) = 3; Level of significance= 0.05=; Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.1; χ^2 Calculated = 27.3 Critical; χ^2 value = 7.82

Table 4. 6 x 4 Contingency table of gender effects on supervision of instruction

Categories	Observed frequency (O)	Expected frequency (E)	$O - E$	$(O - E)^2$	$\frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$
SA	65.3	63	2.3	5.3	0.1
A	37.3	63	-25.7	660.5	10.5
D	59	63	-4	16	0.3
SD	90.4	63	27.4	750.8	11.9
Total	252	252	0	1432.6	22.8

Degree of freedom (df) = 3; Level of significance= 0.05=; Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.3; χ^2 Calculated = 22.8 Critical; χ^2 value = 7.82

7. DISCUSSION

Findings based on hypothesis one revealed that appointment into the post of secondary school principal is significantly dependent on gender, meaning that men are preferred to women in the running of secondary schools. The million dollar question is ‘why is there this disparity when women have the same skills, experience, competence and qualification as their male counterparts?’ Aspects like women instability, non-authoritative voice, opposition to posts of responsibilities, lack of self-esteem and domestic responsibilities were identified. Though these findings are in contrast with the idea that women are better rulers [23], they are in congruent with the legal feminist theory which reveals that law’s treatment of women in relation to men has not been equal or fair. Besides, Aiseberg and Harrington [2] had earlier noted that women lack confidence in their management skills.

Secondly, findings based on hypothesis two (Ho2) revealed that gender seriously affected personnel management strategies. Male principals were found to manage personnel better than their female counterparts. This again, ties with the Feminist communication theory which stipulates that men and women will construct different types of structures about the self, and, consequently, their thought processes may diverge in content and form. It is equally matches with the findings of Schmuck [15] and Cornner [24]. However, [12] did not show any effect of gender on personnel management of schools as both men and women understood the functional values and theories beneath.

Hypothesis three (Ho₃) wanted to know whether gender of principals affected students’ performance in official examinations. Findings revealed that schools managed by male principals performed better than those managed by female counterparts. This is in line with [25] who had earlier stressed the fact that women are

always occupied with domestic affairs. However, [12] had noted that selection, orientation, placement and counseling of students constitute an important function of school principals not depending on gender.

Finally, findings from hypothesis four (Ho4) revealed that male principals supervised instruction better than female principals. Supervision of instruction is very important for teacher effectiveness [26,27]. Again, this is in line with the Feminist communication theory which says that men and women will construct different types of structures about the self, and, consequently, their thought processes may diverge in content and form. Thus, according to [8,27], effective supervision requires good working relationship between supervisor and supervisee. This implies that female principals seldom build such relationships with their personnel that could favour effective supervision of instruction.

8. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, even though empirical findings revealed that male principals perform better than female principals in personnel management, supervision of instruction and that students managed by male principals may perform better in official examinations. Statistically significant differences were found between teachers’ perceptions on male and female principals’ competences to carry those types of tasks. These perceptions of teachers were expected based on the theories that inform this research but they may be stereotyped perceptions. Besides, it is important to note that one of the most important functions of educational leaders or administrators or principals is that of financial management (Mbua, 2003) where women have been found to be reliable, trustworthy and excellent (Njila, 2006).

Based on the foregoing discussion, the following recommendations are made:

1. The government and other educational stakeholders should appoint principals based on qualification, hard work, experience, capability and moral rectitude. Again, gender equality should be ensured and competent and qualified women should be given this responsibility.
2. In-service training should be given to female teachers to ensure gender balance in administration. Equally, tertiary education should be opened to both genders to ensure similar representation especially at post graduate levels. Professional school counseling should also be intensified to encourage female teachers to take positions of leadership.
3. The self-defeatist attitude of women should be discouraged in staff meetings. Equally, female principals should work in collegiality with their male counterparts and be ready to adopt participatory decision-making approaches [28]. This would develop potential female principals and build team spirit.
4. Teachers should be advised to give equal support and cooperation to their principals irrespective of gender, feminist ideology and stereotype attitudes.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

REFERENCES

1. Lipham J, Hoeh J. The principalship: Foundations and functions. New York: Harper and Row Publishers; 1974.
2. Aiseberg N, Harrington M. Women of academe: Outsiders in the sacred grove. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press; 1988.
3. Ndu A, Ocho L, Okeke BS. Dynamics of educational administration and management. Onitsha: Meks Publishers; 1997.
4. Ogunu M. Introduction to educational management. Benin City: Mabogun Publishers; 2001.
5. Mgbodile TO. Fundamentals of Educational Administration and planning. Nsukka: Magnet Business Enterprises; 2004.
6. Nwankwo JI. Educational administration: Theory and practice. New Delphi: Vikas Publishing House; 1982.
7. Tamajong EV, Fonkeng EG. Secondary school administration and principalship. yaounde: Presse Universotaired' Afrique; 2003.
8. Olagboye AA. Introduction to educational management in Nigeria. Ibadan: Daily Graphics; 2004.
9. Kartz RL. Skills of an effective administrator. Harvard Business Review. 1975;33(1).
10. MINEDUC-Cameroon. A handbook for heads of secondary and high schools: Yaounde; 1995.
11. Okorie AN. The school administrator's many hats: A new conception of leadership roles and responsibilities. Studies in Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA). 1998;1(2).
12. Mbu FN. Educational administration: Theory and practice. Limbe-Cameroon: Press Print Ltd; 2003.
13. Chliwnaik L. Higher education leadership: Analyzing the gender gap. Washington: George Washington University; 1997.
14. Getskow V. Women in community college leadership roles; 1996. 12/02/14: Available:www.gseis.ucla.edu/ERIC_Digests/ed340273.html.
15. Schmuck PA. Changing women's representation in school management: A systems perspective. Lexington, MA: Lexington; 1980.
16. Whitaker KS, Lane K. What is a woman's place in educational administration?" Education digests. 1990;56(3).
17. Nchindo A. Gender inequality in the appointment of females. Retrieved on 20/03/2013. Available:<http://www.elvidit.com>
18. Njila TI. Mastering modern school administration. Bamenda: T-Tam Printers; 2006.
19. Arinze FO. Application of management by objectives (MBO). Onitsha: Meks Publishers; 1997.
20. Mali, P. How to manage by objectives. New York: John Willey and Sons; 1975.
21. Felman S. What does a woman want? Hopkins: Johns Hopkins University Press; 1993.

22. Griffin C. Feminist communication theories. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc; 2009.
23. Anonymous. As Leaders Women Rules. Retrieved on 23/04/2014: Available:<http://www.burnersweek.com/zoso/0047/63708145.htm>.
24. Conner NL. Restructuring schools: Will there be a place for women? Clearing House. 1992;65(6).
25. Marshall K. Analysis of difference between male and female administrators; 2009. Retrieved on 12/02/14: Available:<http://www.fags.org/copyright/a-comparative>.
26. Glickman CD. Supervision of instruction: A developmental approach. 2nd ed. Toronto: Allyn Bacon; 1985.
27. Anonymous. Administration. Retrieved on 12/02/14. Available:<http://www.b/s.gov/oco/ocos007-htm/Educational>.
28. Anonymous. Analysis of Difference between Male and Female Administrators. Retrieved on 12/02/14: Available: <http://www.fags.org/copyright/a-comparative>.

© 2015 Kongnyuy; This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Peer-review history:

The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
<http://www.sciencedomain.org/review-history.php?iid=656&id=21&aid=6311>