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A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ADMINISTRATIVE PRACTICES OF MALE AND FEMALE EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

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Abstract

This study was an attempt to compare administrative practices of male administrators with those of their female counterparts. It was prompted by a widespread view held in Ghana that administrative effectiveness was not only influenced by the style of the leader, but more importantly, gender of the incumbent. The objective of the study was therefore to determine whether the issue of gender characteristics had any impact on the perceptions held by subordinates and students of an educational leader.

Sample for the study comprised teachers in basic and secondary schools as well as student leaders of senior secondary schools selected from four different districts in the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, namely Accra and Tema Municipalities, Dangme-West, and Ga-Rural districts. The sample comprised five hundred randomly selected teachers in basic and secondary schools who had worked under their present heads for a minimum of three years and forty-five student leaders in senior secondary schools who had male and female heads. A total of four hundred and seventy-five (475) and forty (40) fully completed questionnaires were received respectively from teachers and student leaders.

Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the responses. Major findings include the fact that male and female administrators equally involve their teachers in decision making. Female administrators delegate power and authority more than male administrators, and that both male and female administrators supervise school activities on equal basis.

Introduction

Education is not only a human right and indispensable for every person, but also a vehicle for individuals to lift themselves up the social ladder. In fact, if any nation ignores education of its citizens, that nation can end up encountering social misfits whose activities will adversely affect the development of that nation. Education can be imparted properly only if educational leaders manage it effectively and efficiently. Every educational leader is expected to adopt workable plans, principles, policies and practices to achieve goals for his/her institution. This means a systematic arrangement of human and material resources available for education as well as their careful and effective use for the achievement of educational objectives (Navokafor & Ogunsanwo, 1998).

The manner in which educational administrators manage human and material resources available to them will contribute to the level of development which a nation can attain. The type of trait and behavior exhibited by an educational leader such as intelligence, openness, respect for all as well as personal warmth go a long way in establishing and maintaining relationship among the people in a school. Do these types of traits have anything to do with an educational leader's gender?

Statement of the Problem

A general perception held by many people is that there are significant differences between the leadership practices of male and female administrators mainly as a function of gender differences. The literature also supports this view. Are there, in fact, any notable differences in the ways in which male administrators and female administrators run their schools? What are the impacts, if any, of these differences on the success of these schools in terms of goal achievements?

Review of the Related Literature

Mankoe (2002:1) refers to administration as a process of directing and controlling life in a social organization. It is process of getting things done through the efforts of other people. Thus the administrator does not actually do the job but ensures that the job is done and done well. John Walton, cited in Mankoe, defines administration as an activity that concerns itself with the survival and maintenance of an organization and with directing the activities of people working in the organization and the reciprocal relations with a view to attaining the overall purpose of an organization.

On female administrators, Chiawa and Bernadette (1997) argue that women administrators possess the competencies needed to perform their tasks, but one-

fourth of these administrators need proper pre-service training to become competent. According to Swepe and Sharon (1994), women administrators are always at the centre in context, speaking their own language, illuminating constructed interpretation and realities. They maintain that power in women is an infinite multiple dynamic social process which is negotiated and transited politically. McGrath (1992) also observed that women administrators demonstrate higher level of skills in communication, problem solving, instruction and curriculum than males in the area of administration. Meshin (1994) held the view that male administrators make concluding decisions and follow pre-established structures to a greater degree in problem solving. They take more terminal action than female administrators. Female administrators are seen to use more information with their subordinates and also show greater concern with individual differences as well as social and emotional development of their students much more than their male counterparts do. Hurty (1993) pointed out that women administrators share information and power with their subordinates. They demonstrate care and commitment with their subordinates much more than male administrators.

On leadership responsibilities, Acheampong (1999) contended that women become too bossy when they assume leadership responsibilities. They depict characteristic of the autocratic leadership style. Pugliana (1994) observed that both male and female leaders use similar interpersonal and managerial micro-political leadership behaviour. Men are attributed with more authoritarian behaviour than women. Shakeshaft (1989) asserted that female educational administrators help new teachers as well as supervise them directly more than their male counterparts. Female educational administrators create a school climate conducive for teaching and learning more than male administrators. In this connection, the American Association of Educational Administrators in Austin came out with the notion that both male and female school administrators express confidence in their ability to manage operational facilities and finance their organizations, but female administrators possess more expert information in this area of administration than male school administrators. Dilating further on male and female administrator differences, the Association emphasized that there is a significant difference in the

academic performance in schools headed by male and female administrators, that academic performances in schools headed by females are higher than those headed by males. In the same vein, Bobson (1991) ranked female administrators higher than male administrators in the area of budgeting. Female administrators, according to Clinch (1996), share decisions, break down educational jargons as well as build consensus than their male counterparts. Shakeshaft (1987) has also observed that female administrators exhibit democratic participatory style that encourages inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness in schools. They involve staff and students, ask for and get higher participation and maintain closely knit organization than male administrators. Helgesin (1990) contended that because of women's early socialization process, they develop values and characteristics that result in leadership behaviour that is different from the aggressive, competitive, controlling leadership behaviour of men. He also observes that women typically bring to administrative position an approach to leadership style that is consistent with developmental, collaborative, relationship-oriented behaviour. He emphasizes that women are more effective administrators than men.

Referring to administrative responsibilities, however, Bass (1990); Eagly et al. (1990) argued that given equivalent levels of responsibilities within an organization, men and women exhibit the same leadership behaviour. Socialization within the organization, self-direction of those who choose administration and constraints of administrators' responsibilities override any adherence to general gender-differential styles or gender bias.

Research Design

Descriptive survey was adopted for this study. The researchers considered the descriptive survey as important because it helped them to secure a wide evidence concerning the differences that exist between administrative practices of male and female school administrators. It also facilitated the development of appropriate questionnaires for the study. Two sets of questionnaires, one set for teachers and another set for student leaders, were designed for the study.

Sample

Sample for the study comprised five hundred (500) randomly selected teachers in basic and senior secondary schools who had worked under their present heads for a minimum of three years as well as forty-five (45) student leaders in senior secondary schools headed by male and female heads. Five basic schools were selected from each of the districts selected in the Greater-Accra Region. One senior secondary school from Dangme-West and Ga-Rural districts and two from Accra and Tema Municipals were also selected. In all, ten teachers were selected from each basic school and twenty teachers from the senior secondary schools. A total of completed four hundred and seventy-five (475) teachers' questionnaire and forty (40) student leaders' questionnaires were returned.

Instrument

The instrument adopted for this study was questionnaire. Two sets of questionnaire, one for teachers and another for student leaders, were designed. Each set was divided into two sections A and B, made up of twenty-one and thirty-one open-ended items respectively. Sections A of the teachers' questionnaire required respondents' background information which included age, sex, educational qualification, professional rank, and teaching experience. Section A of student leaders' questionnaire required information on students' age, sex, school and office held. Section B of both sets of questionnaire required information on personal opinions and qualities of headmasters/mistresses and how they become effective leaders.

Validation and Reliability of the Instruments

The researchers made sure that each item on both questionnaires related well to the issue being investigated. The drafted sets of questionnaire were given to colleagues who read through and made appropriate modifications. The reviewers made appropriate modifications to ambiguous or difficult questions.

Data Gathering Technique

The researchers obtained permission from heads of the selected schools. The researchers and some heads of schools helped to distribute the questionnaire to selected teachers and student leaders. One week was

allowed for completion of the questionnaire after which the researchers went to collect them.

Procedures and Analysis of Data

Completed questionnaires were grouped into male and female heads. A simple frequency count method was used to obtain the recurrences of each range of responses in both the male and female heads. The chi-square test was used to test the significance of the responses related to both male and female heads.

Frequencies and percentages were used to analyze the raw responses, while chi-square test was used to test the significance level. This analysis was based on the total of four hundred and seventy-five (475) teachers' and forty (40) student leaders' returned questionnaires which made a total of 515 responses. Analysis of the teacher respondents indicated that 87.2% of male and 96.8% of female head respondents based their decisions on consensus at formal staff meetings, while 9.6% of male and 2.4% of female head respondents based their decisions on informal meetings with individual or groups of staff. Only 1.6% of the male head respondents noted that their heads used suggestion box to arrive at decisions. On power delegation, 55.6% of male head and 72.8% of female head respondents stated that their heads delegated power while 16% of male head and 7.2% of female head respondents said their heads did not delegate power. The chi-square used to test significance indicated that the chi-square value of $X^2 = 5.646$ is far greater than the table value $X^2 = 3.841$. This implies that there is a significant difference in the way heads delegate power to their subordinates. It was therefore concluded that female administrators delegate power to their subordinates more than male school heads. This finding is supported by Hurty (1993)'s finding that female school administrators share power with their subordinates more than their male counterparts.

Apart from the role which decision making and power delegation play in the efficient administration of a school, effective supervision in any educational institution helps to ensure the maintenance of minimum standard, attainment of the highest possible standard in teaching and learning as well as the overall management and ethics in the institution (Certo, 2002). Commenting on the heads' supervision, majority of the respondents, 83.2% of male headed schools and

(93%) of female headed schools described their heads' level of supervision as being very good while 12% of the male headed schools and 6.4% of the female headed schools described the level of supervision as being average. The chi-square calculated value $\chi^2 = 4.9$ at $p=0.05$, $df=7$ is less than the table value of $\chi^2 = 7.815$. This implies that there is a significant difference in the school heads' level of supervision. We therefore conclude that female school administrators do more effective supervision than male school administrators.

Furthermore, school administrators' behaviour has a lot of influence on their subordinates' extent of participation in school activities. Analysis of the raw data indicated that 45.4% of male and 50.4% of female head respondents observed that the extent of teacher participation in their schools was good. On the other hand, 29.6% of male and 40.8% of the female head respondents indicated that teachers' participation was not good. The chi-square used to test the level of significance of responses showed that there was no significant difference in the level of teachers' participation in school activities under male and female heads. This finding, however, refutes Sicina (1996)'s assertion that there is a significant difference in staff participation in schools headed by males compared with schools headed by females.

Regarding information flow in the schools, quite a large number of male head respondents (63.2%) and a greater number of female head respondents (92%) indicated that there was free flow of information in their schools. Elaborating further, they stated that their heads informed them about progress of their school all the time. However, smaller number, 24.8% of male heads and 8% of female heads, lamented that information flow in their schools was not good at all.

In connection with orienting new staff members by heads, 52.2% of male head and 68.8% of female head respondents said their heads were very good at orienting new staff members. On the contrary, 37% of the male and 35.2% of female head respondents pointed out that their heads were not good at all in giving orientation to new staff members. The chi-square used to test the significant level of responses showed that the calculated value $\chi^2 = 1.055$ at $P = 0.05$, $df = 1$ was smaller than the value $\chi^2 = 3.841$. This means that there is no significant

difference in the heads' behaviour of orienting newly appointed staff members.

Another issue dealt with was whether school administrators used constructive criticisms over their subordinates' mistakes. On this issue, 72.8% of male and 69.6% of female head respondents agreed that their heads were very good at the use of constructive criticism when any subordinate went wrong. On the other hand, 22.4% of male and 16% of female head respondents noted that their heads used very harsh words on subordinates any time they went wrong. The result of the chi-square test, however, showed no significant difference between male and female heads' use of criticism on subordinates' mistakes.

One of the most common and daily practices of heads is communication between them and their staff members. Majority of the male respondents (72%) and female respondents (91.2%) said they communicated with their heads very well while 23% of the male respondents and 8.8% of the female respondents graded their heads' communication as poor. The chi-square test showed that the calculated value $\chi^2 = 10.922$ is far greater than the read value $\chi^2 = 3.842$. This indicated a significant difference between the way male and female administrators communicate with their staff. It can therefore be concluded that female school administrators communicate better with their subordinates than male administrators. This conclusion agrees with McGrath (1992)'s assertion that women administrators demonstrate higher level of skills in communication than men administrators.

It was also important to determine whether there is difference between the level of motivation which staff receive from male heads as compared with the level of motivation workers receive from female administrators. Mankoe (2002) defines motivation as the process of moving oneself and others to work towards the attainment of individual and organizational goals. He went on to say that motivation is the extent to which a person's persistent efforts are directed towards organizationally relevant outcomes. A greater number of respondents rated both male and female heads' motivational behaviour as very good. Only a small number of respondents rated the issue as below average. The chi-square test revealed that there was no significant difference between the male and female school heads' motivational behaviour. This implies that

men and women administrators motivate their subordinates equally.

With regard to whether or not heads' impose ideas on their subordinates, majority (71.2%) of male head and 82.4% of female head schools noted that their heads did not impose ideas on teachers. Very few respondents, that is, 23% of male and 14.4% female heads said their heads imposed ideas. The chi-square test showed that the calculated value $X^2 = 11.558$ is greater than the table value $X^2 = 3.841$. This finding depicts a significant difference in the way in which male and female heads dealt with ideas. That is, male school heads imposed ideas more than female school heads. This finding is, however, inconsistent with Acheampong's (1989) finding that women leaders are too bossy and autocratic.

A large percentage (92%) of male heads and 76.8% of female head respondents attributed their school's academic performance to the good administrative practices of their heads while only 26.4% of male head respondents and 23.2% of female head respondents felt their schools' academic performance of heads to other factors. The statistical analysis showed no significant difference in the way in which academic performance was influenced by male and female administrative practices.

The raw data also indicated that only 6.7% of male head respondents and 33.3% of the female head respondents said their heads cared for their students' welfare. On the other hand, 66.6% of the male head respondents and 40% of female head respondents stated that their heads did not care much about students' welfare. The chi-square analysis revealed that there is no difference between male and female heads' interest in students' welfare. Both heads showed equal interest in students' welfare.

On the issue of students complying with school rules and regulations, 33.3% of the male head respondents and 26.7% of the females head respondents pointed out that students complied with rules and regulations. However, a greater percentage, 66.7% of the male head respondents and 73.3% of the female head respondents observed that students did not comply with school rules and regulations. The statistical test showed no

significant difference in the extent to which students abided by school laws.

Major Findings

Major findings of the study are summarized as follows:

1. Male and female school administrators equally involve their teachers in decision making. This finding, however, refutes Meshin (1974)'s assertion that female heads involve their teachers more in decision making than their male counterparts. The study also revealed that school decisions were made at staff meetings by consensus under female administrators more than under male administrators.
2. Female administrators delegate power and authority more than male school administrators. This finding agrees with that of Hurty (1993) that female school heads delegate power to their subordinates more than male school heads.
3. Both male and female administrators supervise school activities on equal basis. This finding, however, refutes that of Meshin (1974) that female heads exert more supervisory control in the profession than male school heads.
4. The staff of female school administrators participate more in school activities than the staff of male school administrators. This conclusion agrees with Shakeshaft (1989)'s finding that the staff of female administrators are more engaged in school activities more than the staff of male administrators.
5. Female school administrators possess better human relations than male school administrators. Female school administrators relate better with their subordinates than male school administrators. This conclusion supports Glickman (1998)'s finding that female heads possess good human relation qualities more than male heads.
6. Both male and female school administrators are effective at orienting new staff members. This finding, however, refutes Gages (1994)'s position that female administrators exhibit more superior orientation behaviour than male administrators. Another conclusion from the study is that both male and female administrators help their subordinates in solving problems. This is, however, in disagreement with Shakeshaft's assertion that female heads care more about their staff's individual differences and that female heads are more concerned with staff problems than male heads.

7. Academic performance of students in female administrator schools is far better than students' performance in male administrator schools. The academic performance is influenced by administrative practices of the school administrators. Also, students in female administrator schools are more disciplined than students in male administrator schools.

8. Information flows more freely in female administrator schools than of male administrator schools. Female administrators communicate with their subordinates better than male administrators. However, both male and female administrators release information on task accomplishment freely to their subordinates.

Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing findings, we make the following recommendations:

1. All school administrators should endeavour to update their administrative practices so as to improve on various aspects of their school management. This call is particularly crucial for male administrators. Such improvement can be attained through post graduate programmes in educational leadership offered in some universities..
2. The Ministry of Education in conjunction with the Ghana Education Service should organize workshops at short intervals in school administration and management, for example, at the Ajumako Ghana Education Service Staff Development Institute (GESDI) for the benefit of school heads.
3. School-based administrators should organize staff development programs for their staff to equip them with knowledge on how to participate in the management of the school as they improve upon their own administrative practices.
4. Heads of schools should decentralize administration by transferring some administrative powers to their hardworking subordinates. Delegation of authority should be their watchwords. This is for the mutual benefits of the heads and teachers.
5. Male school heads are advised to improve on the relations with their staff, parents and students as a matter of urgency in order to encourage them to participate actively in school management.
6. Principals, headmasters/mistresses and headteachers of pre-tertiary institutions should constantly explore

strategies on how to motivate their staff to engage in both curricular and extra-curricular activities. They should be proactive in mobilizing internally-generated funds for this all important purpose

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