PERCEPTIONS OF TOP MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST STAFF OF THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

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Abstract

The study sought to explore factors influencing the low representation of women in management positions in the University of Cape Coast. An exploratory qualitative research design was employed to undertake the study. Data was collected through interviews with forty-one workers in management positions and analysed using the N6 package for analysing qualitative research. Generally, the respondents were of the view that women are not well represented in management positions. Notable reasons they gave included lack of requisite qualifications on the side of women and the University not being gender sensitive. The problems women in management positions faced were stressful career workload and domestic/family responsibilities and these kept them from climbing the managerial ladder. The respondents were of the view that women needed more opportunities to excel and aspire for management positions. The situation can be improved if institutions formulate policies geared toward fast tracking women with leadership potentials.

Introduction

Women are capable of performing duties and functions just as men do. They, like men, have the talents and capabilities of contributing effectively to nation building. Prominent historical examples of women leaders are Deborah, the judge, in the Old Testament, Joan of Arc, leading the French army, and Yaa Asantewaa, leading the Ashantis to fight the British (Addo-Adeku, 1992). Women have assumed responsibilities as Prime Ministers of nations, such as Golda Meier in Israel, Indira Ghandi in India, Benazir Bhutto in Pakistan, Margaret Thatcher in Britain, Helen Johnson Sirleaf as President of Liberia and only to mention a few. We can also talk of the late Dr (Mrs.) Esther Ocloo, one of the leading industrialists in Ghana. The brilliant feats of leadership exhibited by these women are enough proof that women are capable of holding effective leadership roles given the opportunity and co-operation.

Although there are considerable variations in the respective roles of women and men in different cultures in recent times, there is no known society in which women are more powerful than men (Adu, 1999). To a large extent, there exists a highly even distribution of sexes within all sectors of the labour force and public offices where women find themselves located in lower paid and less skilled jobs. Perhaps the most dramatic change that has occurred is the increase in the number of both men and women receiving formal education, and thus becoming available for formal sector

employment. In the early years after Ghana's independence, it became for some a matter of national pride to have women in highly placed positions, as was the case when Nkrumah appointed three women ministers to his cabinet in 1985 (Adepoju & Oppong, 1994).It is a truism that some years past, women were not known in the circles of authority. Gender roles and attitudes towards them prevented women from getting into managerial positions. They were relegated to the background most probably because society at the time believed the woman's place was in the kitchen and all her time was taken up with bearing children, bringing them up and supporting the family. Therefore, all activities and positions that were considered to be the most important and accorded the highest prestige were defined as the special province of men and especially appropriate for men. This was the time when only few women had the opportunity of pursuing formal education and when only few women managed to attain university education. Women all over the world appear to have been exposed either covertly or overtly to discrimination in various ways – at work, in the home, at school and in local and international politics. In fact, even within the UN system, women are conspicuously fewer in leadership positions.

Although there are now many highly-qualified women in Ghana, they do not have equal representation in leadership positions in the educational sector. Dr Gloria Nikoi, former Chancellor of UCC has been the only woman Chancellor ever in the memories of Universities in Ghana,

and it was only recently (2008) that a woman in the person of Professor Naana Jane Opoku Agyeman was appointed the Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Coast. A few of them have also been appointed as Deans, Heads of Departments, Faculty Officers, Deputy Registrar and Senior Assistant Registrars in Ghana's public and private universities.

Theoretical Orientation

The study finds the liberal feminist theory most suitable as the framework within which the findings of this study will be discussed. Liberal feminism according to Anderson (2006) is rooted in the history of liberalism as a mode of political theory , one that developed particularly over the course of the nineteenth century and it is centred on the premise of equality and the capacity for existing democratic social institutions to create equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Rooted in thought over 200 years ago, liberalism is the foundation for democracy, it promotes the removal of particularistic barriers, that is, practices that discriminate based on particular characteristics such as gender, race, and religion. Liberal feminism is characterized by an emphasis on individual rights and equal opportunity. It assumes that the inequality of women stems both from the denial of equal rights and from women's learned reluctance to exercise their rights. In effect, the goal of liberal feminism is equality that is the construction of a social world where all persons can exercise individual freedom (Anderson, 2006). Although to many, this seems like an ideal solution for promoting gender

equality, it also has some fundamental limitations. Even with its strengths, liberal feminism can be criticized for its focus on individual autonomy and the absence of an analysis of structured inequality. The theory, like the liberal philosophy on which it is based, does not include an analysis of race or class differences and assumes that the basis for inequality lies mostly in past tradition, not in the continuing operation of systems of power and privilege. However opponents of affirmative action argue that the theory fails to explain the institutionalized basis for race and class oppression. By claiming that all persons regardless of race, class, or gender should have equal opportunities, liberals accept the existing system as valid, often without analyzing the structured inequality on which it is based (Anderson 2006). Eisenstein (1981) also argued that the goal of liberal feminism is equality, but in saying that women should be equal to men, liberal feminism does not specify which men women want to be equal to, thus it glosses over the class and race structure of societal relations. He further argued that liberal feminism leaves much unanswered because it does not explain the emergence of gender inequality nor can it account, other than by analogy, for effects of race and class stratification in women's lives. Its analysis for change tends to be limited to issues of equal opportunity and individual choice. As a political philosophy, it insists on individual liberty and challenges any social, political and economic practice that discriminates against persons on the basis of group or individual characteristics.

Another critique attacks liberal feminism because it emphasizes the rational above the emotional while humans need both. It also questioned liberal feminism's focus on the individual and not on the community. Liberal feminists believe that their philosophy positively answers each of these critiques and though liberal feminism at one time was racist, classist, and heterosexist, it has overcome these issues. With its focus on gender justice and its ability to adapt, liberal feminism is here to stay (Eisenstein 1981).

The liberal feminist theory informed the study mainly because its assumptions and arguments are in line with the findings of the research. The findings revealed that women were in the minority in the senior management positions due to discrimination, sexism, inequality and others that liberal feminists posit. Their main argument is individual rights and equal opportunity and these appear to be part of recommendations given by respondents.

Review of the literature

Gender and gender inequality
Feminist scholars continue to disagree on how gender inequity is defined, and how gender equity can be achieved. However there is agreement that the concept of gender is socially constructed, that women and their experiences have historically been excluded from the development of knowledge, and that feminists in all their diversity demand that the balance of power relationships be changed politically, structurally, and interpersonally (Schmuck, 1996). Until the

first-wave feminist critique took place, gender was not considered important in society and was subsequently ignored. Women were wives and mothers in a stratified patriarchal society, deriving their status from their fathers and husbands, and, therefore, did not need to be heard, nor studied. The first-wave feminists, with a limited focus on the rights of middle-class women, argued against inequality and a corrupt social system maintained by and for the benefit of men. Mary Wollstonecraft was one of the earliest Western women to articulate an understanding of the depth of gender inequality in her society, and believed that if socialized equitably, both men and women would develop character and virtue. She was very clear that the cause of women's oppression was men (Wollstonecraft, 1992).

By the late nineteenth century, the major influence on society was Darwin's ideology of the survival of the fittest, which included the sexual selection of men as the more evolved, and more varied, sex (Solomon, 1985). This positioned men as being in control of society to bring order over the "simpler" women (middle and upper class) who were placed on a pedestal and "protected" from having to labour outside of the home, for which they would need an education. Accordingly, feminists promoted a separate but equal life for women, reflecting two other current strains of thought prevalent at that time.

Voice and silence have been used by feminist scholars as metaphors for "women's views of the world and their place in it" (Belenky, Clinchy,

Goldberger, & Tarul, 1986). Women are beginning to claim back the power of their own lives but continue to face many obstacles. Men dominate work place conversations just as they control classroom discussion (Sadker & Sadker, 1994). Men's reinforcement in the skills of interruption and speaking with confidence, received through their educational experience, render women powerless in the boardroom. A workplace culture of male dominance is continued and becomes more likely to reproduce itself, when men are supported and promoted because of the historical mores of society and the institution. In a landmark work, Joan Acker (1990) argued convincingly that all organizations are inherently gendered and not gender neutral, as they might appear. Lundgren and Prah (2010) also believed that many organizations, including universities are gendered in the sense that they are dominated by male values and interests, which permeate relationships between women and men. Through the largely unconscious, systemically constructed, gender inequity reproduced in part by institutions of higher education, society has difficulty breaking the cycle.

History of Women in Higher Education

Within higher education, women have struggled against gender inequity in ways that mirror the wider societal movements. From separatist strategies of the early women's colleges, through the development of co-education, women and some men within institutions of higher education have challenged the resistant discourse of

gender difference. In the past, girls were educated, but primarily in domestic studies, so that they could assist their husbands and educate their sons (Rudolph, 1962). College education was considered unnecessary for women, as it was for most young men, due to its emphasis on the classics. However there were individual resistors to the societal norms, these were men and women, who developed colleges for women and accepted women into previously all male institutions. The growth of the state universities and the establishment of the land-grant colleges in the U.S gradually popularized co-educational higher education, starting in the West and then gaining acceptance in the East (Rudolph, 1962). Between 1902 and 1912 there was a large increase in the numbers of women enrolling in co-educational institutions (Solomon, 1985). This produced a new fear that women would take over and, by implication, devalue the education that colleges provided. One solution to this threat was to encourage segregation through the curriculum, with the division of courses into "those which were useful, full-blooded, and manly, and those which were ornamental, dilettantish, and feminine" (Rudolph, 1962; 324). The curriculum became a battleground for faculty concerns over 'student enrolments, with the view that unless men enrolled in a course in large numbers the subject would be devalued (Solomon, 1985).

The historical gendering of the curriculum and the subverted ideology that women do not need to be in institutions of education can be resistant to change in many forms. Sadker et al (1994) found that the most gender biased teaching practices in education occurred not in high school, but in the college classroom. Men are twice as likely to monopolize the class discussions and women are twice as likely to be silent. At Harvard, Krupnick (1985), also discovered a phenomenon where males perform, and females, even the most academically talented ones, watch the performance. When females did speak they were more likely to be interrupted. They were also more likely to preface their comments with self-deprecatory comments. Hall and Sandler (1982) found that professors gave males more nonverbal attention as well as increased eye contact, waited longer for an answer, and were more likely to remember the names of the males. However, despite the many barriers that existed and continue to exist, education has been, and continues to be, the way for women to uncover gender inequity and to redress the balance of power (Solomon, 1985).

The Ghanaian case is not very different. Several researchers argue that socio-cultural factors are important barriers to female education. According to Awumbila in Tsikata 2001, women were disabled from applying for clerical and administrative jobs, whiles the few who went to school were trained in home making. As if that was not enough, science and technology subjects, such as, physics, mathematics and engineering have become the preserve for males. Any female who ventures into such an area is viewed as having encroached (Andam, 1993; Anamuah-Mensah, 1995 in Brown et al 1996).

The low percentage of female participation in tertiary education, according to Prah (2002), needs to be understood as an end result of the more general constraints that women face in education.

In higher education "old-boy" networks have been in existence since the seventeenth century (O'Leary & J.M., 1990) where they were called the "invisible college." This was the group of favoured scholars who controlled finances, reputations, and the fate of new research and scientific ideas (Prize & Beaver, 1966). This pattern has continued both formally and informally since with challenges to its existence only emerging in the late 1970s/1980s (O'Leary & Mitchell, 1990). Several scholars have noted the exclusion of women from these networks in both the research and departmental arenas (Mitchell, 1987; Simon, Clark, & Galway, 1972; Zuckerman & Cole, 1975). Mitchell's study (1987) suggested that women were beginning to rely on female colleagues forming an "old girl" network of connections.

Professional organizations, including the Association for Women in Education and other women movements, have provided women with significant networking and leadership opportunities (Jones & Komives, 2001). Examples in Ghana includes: The Women's caucus of The University of Cape Coast and old girls Associations of various schools in Ghana women's wings from the already existing organizations such as the Trade Union Congress (TUC), Ghana National Association of Teachers (GNAT), Registered Nurses Association, Ladies Associations in work places as well as Women's Self Help Associations and religious-based Women's Associations (Tsikata, 1989; Manuh, 1993 in Tsikata 2001).

The glass ceiling is considered an almost impenetrable, invisible barrier preventing women, minorities and men who do not fit the bill from obtaining senior management positions. Cracks by the small numbers who do achieve, soon repair themselves. It can be penetrated again but as equality and diversity boredom or denial is met with political ill will - recruitment, selection and training and promotion imbalance is less likely to be transparent or properly scrutinised for discrimination. It is apparent in higher education where women faculty are rarely full professors, and, if they are, it is in the humanities. As a general rule, the lower the faculty rank, the higher the percentage of women (Headlee et al, 1996). Structural gender bias, that is organizational bias existing within the policies and procedures of the university, is one explanation given for the slow rise of women into positions of authority.

Women's failure to move up to higher managerial positions is attributed by Kottis (1993) in Brown, Anokye & Britwum (1996), to the way in which power is acquired, maintained and exercised in bureaucratic organizations. In order to perform successfully and advance in their careers, managers have to acquire informal power associated with their positions. Informal power is developed on the basis of a network of relationships.

Other attitudes that promote the "Glass Ceiling" are male views about the capabilities, attributes, roles and aspirations of women which Kottis (1993) in Brown, Anokye & Britwum (1996), describes as outmoded. Such male views however create a situation where women have to work harder than men in order to gain the esteem of their male superiors, peers and subordinates.Women are judged by a criterion which is entirely different from those applied to their male counterparts: a criterion that reflects dominant cultural perceptions about what women's roles and attributes should be. Hardworking women are labelled as being "unfeminine". those who try to find a middle way between their career and personal life are "criticized as not being adequately committed to their work"(Kottis 1993 in Brown, Anokye & Britwum 1996).The "glass ceiling", according to Still (1992) is not always erected by external forces alone. It is also self-imposed by women who have imbibed the dominant male culture into which they have been socialized.

Mentorship, as reported by O'Leary and Mitchell (1990), derives from Greek mythology and describes support and guidance given by an older adult to a younger adult to help them advance through life and work. Today, mentoring is described as a hierarchically structured relationship whose function is to sponsor and coach the younger person towards career goals and to provide the psychosocial functions of role-modelling, acceptance, counselling and friendship (Kram, 1988). For women, a variety of different types of mentorship relationships have been described such as short-term mentors, peer mentors, and horizontal mentors who may be older and with longer job experience at the same level as the person being mentored (Duff, 1999). Another reported reason for the failure of women to support other women at work through mentoring has been called the "Queen Bee" syndrome. Queen Bees were described by Staines, Travis, and Jayerante (1974), as women who have achieved professional success, are strongly individualistic, and tend to deny the existence of sex discrimination. They were in positions of power but failed to help other women succeed. Various explanations have been offered as to why the Queen Bees were not supportive of other women. Kanter (1977), suggested that they feared other successful women challenging their power.

Study Area

The University of Cape Coast (UCC) is the study area. It is situated 5km west of Cape Coast municipality, and is located on a hill overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, it operates on two campuses, northern campus (new site) and southern campus (old site). It was established in 1962 out of a dire need for highly qualified and skilled personnel in education to provide leadership and enlightenment in the educational sector. The University started with a small intake of about 160 students distributed over three faculties, namely: Arts, Education and Science. The University now has a total student population of 37,162 and 320 teaching staff. The students take degree and diploma programmes in six faculties, which also offer post-

graduate programmes, such as master's and doctorate degrees (UCC diary, 2011).

Methods

The study employed exploratory and qualitative design. Exploratory qualitative research was chosen because it is designed to familiarize a researcher about the topic. The representation of women in management positions is better explored using this approach. This is because the study explores the reasons why there are few women in management positions and finds approximate answers to the research problem. This was to help satisfy the researcher's curiosity and also help test the feasibility of undertaking a more extensive study. The study population comprised all people in management positions in UCC. They include the Vice- Chancellor, the Pro-Vice Chancellor, Registrar, Deputy Registrars, Assistant Registrars, all Deans of Faculties and Schools, Heads of Institutes, Departments, Sections, as well as Hall Masters and Wardens. No sample size was taken due to the limited number of respondents. Thus forty-eight respondents were interviewed. The study used interview schedule as the research instrument to collect the data. The data collected was edited, coded and analyzed for common themes. All the data that was generated was analyzed using the N6 Package for analyzing qualitative data.

The data

Socio-demographic background
Forty-one people in management positions were interviewed, with 25 males and 16 females representing sixty-one percent and thirty-nine percent respectively. Their ages ranged from 30-79, with the majority between ages 50-59, representing 49%. The mean age calculated was 50.4 and this happens to be within the majority age range of 50-59. This implies that the average age of people in management positions in UCC is 50.4. The academic qualification of respondents ranged from 2nd degree to doctorate with the majority, holding second degrees and the minority (39%) holding doctorate degrees. This appears to indicate that the university appoints people with higher degrees to management positions. Most of the respondents had 2nd degrees compared to those who had doctorates with 61% and 39% respectively. Almost all the respondents were married except two who were single with percentages of 95.1 and 4.9 respectively. On positions held, Heads of Department and registrars (Deputy and assistant registrars) accounted for majority of the respondents. They represented 39%, followed by heads of depart-ments with 34.2% and then faculty officers with 12.2%. Respondents' years of work in the University ranged from one to twenty-five years. Nine respondents had worked for more than 20 years in the university. They included eight males and one female, representing 32% and 6.25% respectively. The average number of years of work for males was 15 and 10.2 for females. This implies that males in management positions work for longer years than their females counterparts.

Appointment and promotion of staff into managerial positions

Respondents reported that, they came to occupy their position by merit. The majority [80%] of the respondents reported that, academic qualification accounted for their appointment into managerial positions. The rest [20%] reported that they were in their positions as a result of their work experience. Most of the women (65%) admitted that they had ever been promoted. However, (15%) reported that they had not been promoted. Those who had been promoted believed that they were promoted based on qualifications they had acquired over time. On the other hand those who had not been promoted gave varied reasons. The reasons were that some had just got employed and were awaiting promotion, others blamed themselves for not acquiring the requisite qualifications for promotion, while others blamed it on service conditions and cumbersome promotion requirements.

Representation of women in managerial positions

The majority (68%) of the respondents were of the view that women were not well- represented in management positions. However, some respondents reported that women were well-represented. Those who thought women were not well represented in management positions were asked about factors that might have accounted for that situation. They indicated that women did not have the requisite qualifications, were saddled with family responsibilities, were discriminated against, and failed to apply for managerial positions.

Job Satisfaction among Women Respondents

Six, out of the seventeen women interviewed were not satisfied with their current positions because they felt discriminated against by men. The eleven remaining were satisfied with their positions and believed their positions had helped improve their lives, and made their voices heard. For one respondent, the position she occupies now has made her achieve her dreams and given her opportunity for carrier growth. Lack of mentorship and lack of formal preparation in the form of professional development programs and scholarship appear to have been the major constraints for women in this study. Very few of them experienced mentorship. What is noteworthy is the women's strong belief in learning –by – doing or on the job training. Institutional advertising policies, which make it difficult for women to compete fairly, can also be as much of a hindrance.

Attitudes towards Women in Management

Attitudes of people in management towards others could be a barrier or a springboard to their achievement. Respondents therefore were asked about the attitudes of both men and women towards them. To the women, there were two types of attitudes that men exhibit. While the majority of the women believe that men were encouraging in their behaviour towards them, few of the women believed that men were arrogant towards them and looked down upon them. The women who also answered questions about the attitudes of their female colleagues towards them as managers had interesting reports.

Almost all the women interviewed reported that their women colleagues were jealous of their positions. Even those who claimed their female colleagues are supportive and encouraging, could not help but add jealousy as an attitude showed by other women.

Problems Women Face in Management Positions

Two main problems were mentioned. These were stressful career workload and domestic/family responsibilities. Whereas (50%) of the women respondents believed domestic/family responsibilities posed a great challenge to them, the other half did not see that as a challenge in their management positions. Those who believed domestic/family responsibilities posed a challenge to their positions further explained that by virtue of the fact that they were married, they had less time for both their work and families and this indirectly affected their career achievement. Respondents, who did not see their domestic/family responsibilities as a challenge to their career, explained that they had understanding husbands who encouraged and gave them the needed support for their career achievement. The responses indicated that women in management positions faced a lot of problems. This was a contributing factor to their low representation.

Effects of Problems on the Positions of Women

The women respondents were asked how the problems they have mentioned affected their aspirations and rise to their current positions. This was necessary to help find out if

problems reported really affected the women in attaining their positions. Surprisingly, almost all the women admitted that the problem they had reported had little or no effect at all on their rise to management positions. To these women, though there were problems, they were able to overcome. Some (40%) women stated that the problems they mentioned made it difficult for them to occupy managerial positions. To them, such problems caused delays in getting promoted and in some cases, the abandonment of promotion offers.

Summary and conclusion

The aim of this study has been to investigate the reasons for the low representation of women in management positions in University of Cape and to make recommendations regarding what could be done to change the situation for the better. The absence of women in senior positions of management at the universities is well documented and so are the barriers that prevent women from advancing into management positions. The findings revealed that women were in the minority in the senior management positions. Although statistics show a positive trend toward the representation of women in the University of Cape Coast, the situation is different when it comes to women's representation in management positions. Obstacles still exist. However, there are strategies that women themselves and institutions can adopt to overcome these obstacles.

Significant findings which emerged from the study seem to suggest that the women who participated in the study

experienced little or no challenges and constraints before they advanced to management positions. For instance the majority of them did not find it difficult to move to their various positions as they were self-motivated and had adequate support from their colleagues and family. They got into their positions based on their qualifications and publications they had made. Moreover, they were motivated to accept the job chiefly by a desire to make a contribution to the development of their departments and the University. Lack of mentorship, lack of formal preparation in the form of professional development prog-rams and scholarship appear to have been the major constraints for women in this study. Very few of them experienced mentorship. What is noteworthy is the women's strong belief in learning –by – doing or on the job training. Consequently mentoring, training and scholarship for women should be advocated in the university. It would also be advisable for mentees to be proactive and flexible in their choice of a mentor.

One of the main obstacles to their advancement seems to be the dual role of career and family. The findings indicate that starting all academic careers late in life is as much an impediment to career advancement as lack of experience or lack of good research profiles. Institutional advertising policies, which make it difficult for women to compete fairly, can also be as much of a hindrance. Various strategies for overcoming obstacles to career advancement such as networks, mentoring and the like are suggested in the literature. The main strategies suggested by the respondents in this are determination and perseverance.

Change has come slowly. The number of women in managerial positions has increased over time. There are still insufficient women beyond the level of management positions in universities. However, more women seem eager to advance themselves despite the odds against them. More effort is required then, to ensure that more women are mentored into taking up leadership roles. Universities should also earmark a percentage of scholarships for women who aspire to move up into management positions.

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