Original Research Article

CAN GENDER AFFECT PRINCIPALSHIP? LESSONS FROM RESEARCH IN THE NORTH WEST REGION OF CAMEROON

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, thereisawareness amongst politicians, women scholars and pressure groups alike, that the trend of anomie has to be reversed.The objectives of this paper were: ~~was~~ 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 ~~see~~ 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(x^2) 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.

Key Words: 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(Lipham&Hoeh, 1974)[9][1]. 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 (1974)[9], 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 whomhe works. The second and most typical views termed the 'functions of the principalship' which focus~~es~~ on the tasks, jobs and activities that occupy the bulk of the principals' time and analyse~~i~~s 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 (Lipham and Hoeh, 19749[1]; Ndu et al, 1997[14]; Ogunu, 2001[17]; Mgbodile, 2004[12]; Nwankwo, 1982[16]; Tamajong&Fonkeng, 2003[21] and Olagboye, 2004[19]).Ogunu (2001)[17] 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 (Kartz, 1960)[8].

In Cameroon, the Handbook for Heads of Secondary Schools (1995)[13] 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 (1998)[18]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(2003)[21] and Mbua (2003)[11].

Unfortunately, gender gap remains an impediment to potential institutional improvements (Chliwnaik, 1997)[3]. Even though effective leadership is more behaviorally derived than gender based, gender remains an obstacle to women seeking and obtaining leadership positions (Getskow, 1996) [26]. Schmuck (1986)[20] 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 (Whitaker & Lane, 1990)[22]. The scarcity of women in the role of secondary school principals is a worldwide phenomenon. While women make up atleast two-thirds of secondary school teachers, they are in the minority in secondary school administration.

Nchindo (1997)[28]notes that there isagender bias in the appointment of school headsschools. 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 stereotypesex role identity still remains in full as far as appointments are concerned. There is empirical evidence to atleast the fact that very few females are appointed principals in Cameroon and world over (Njila, 2006)[15]. 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.

It is bBased upon this backdrop, that thisresearchstudy aims at has a problem to 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:

Ho_1: Appointments into the post of secondary school principal are ~~is~~ not significantly dependent on gender.

Ho_2: There is no significant difference in management of personnel between male and female principals

Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between gender of secondary school Principal and students' performance in official examinations

Ho_4: 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 ~~realize~~ the objectives; in setting deadlines ~~the target dates~~ for attaining ~~the realization of~~ 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. An educational institution, like any other institution is out to achieve some objectives which are dove-tail 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 ~~to~~ the objectives and understand what they need to do in the school in order to achieve the objectives (Tamajong&Fonkeng, 2009)[21].

4.2. Feminist Theory

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

FeministLegal 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 ~~committed to~~(Felman, S. 1993)[5]. This is to be accomplished through studying the connections between educational policies (as well as appointment policies) and gender.

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(Griffin, 2009)[7].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

instigatedbywomen 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 ~~fixatesson~~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 (Griffin, 2009)[7]. 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.

*Feminist Theory of Design:*According to this feminist theory, m~~M~~en and women will construct different types of structures about the self, and, consequently, their thought processes may diverge in content and form. 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.

5. Methodology

The study was carried out in Bamenda metropolis of the North West Region of Cameroonwith the highest number of secondary schools in the Region. It adopted a ~~the~~ descriptive survey design. ~~The instrument used for data collection was a 39 items questionnaire.~~ 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 stratified into seven (07) public, three (03) Mission and two (02) private schools. All the

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twelve (12) principals were chosen for the study. Equally, 20 teachers were selected conveniently from each of the secondary schools. This gave a total sample size of 252 respondents.The instrument used for data collection was a 39-items questionnaire. This instrument was validated by an expert in measurement and evaluation.Atest-re-test on another sample of 20 respondents gave a correlation value of 0.99 indicating that the questionnaire was reliable. The Chi-Square (x^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.

Decision rule: When the X^2 calculated is greater than the X^2 critical value, we retain the alternative hypothesis (H_a) and reject the null (H_o).

6. Findings

Hypothesis One (Ho_1): Appointments into the post of secondary school principal is not significantly dependent on gender.

Table 1: 6 x 4 Contingency Table of Gender influence on appointment of secondary school principals

Categories	Observed frequency (0)	Expected frequency (E)	$0 - E$	$(0 - E)^2$	$\frac{(0 - E)^2}{E}$
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 X^2 calculated = 42.8

Level of significance= 0.05= Critical x^2 value = 7.82

Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.6

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Decision: We retain the alternative (Ha_1) hypothesis and reject the null (Ho_1), meaning that the appointment into the posts of principalship significantly depends on gender. The contingency coefficient of 0.6 indicates a strong positive relationship. That is, the appointment is greatly dependenton gender (by about 100%).

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Hypothesis Two (Ho_2): There is no significant difference in management of personnel between male and female principals

Table 2: 6 x 4 Contingency Table of Gender effects on secondary school personnel management

Categories	Observed frequency (0)	Expected frequency (E)	$0 - E$	$(0 - E)^2$	$\frac{(0 - E)^2}{E}$
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	52
Total	**252**	**252**	**0**	**2286.9**	**36.4**

Degree of freedom (df) = 3 X^2 calculated = 36.4

Level of significance= 0.05= Critical x^2 value = 7.82

Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.4

Decision: According to the decision rule, we retain the alternative (Ha_2) hypothesis and reject the null (Ho_2) since the calculated $X^2$is far above the Critical x^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. That is, management of personnel is greatly dependent on gender (by about 100%).We conclude that the significant difference existing between gender and school personnel management is very high.

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Hypothesis Three (H_{o3}): There is no significant relationship between gender of secondary school Principals and students' performance in official examinations.

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Table 3: 6 x 4 Contingency Table of Gender effects on performance in official examinations

Categories	Observed frequency (0)	Expected frequency (E)	$0 - E$	$(0 - E)^2$	$\frac{(0 - E)^2}{E}$
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 X^2 calculated = 27.3

Level of significance= 0.05= Critical x^2 value = 7.82

Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.1

Decision: We retain the alternative (Ha_3) hypothesis and reject the null (Ho_3) since the calculated X^2 (27.3) is far above the Critical x^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 lowindicating a weak positive relationship between the gender of principal and students' academic performance.

Comment [L18]: Who is favored by it? students having male or female principals?

Hypothesis Four (Ho_4): There is no significant difference in supervision of instruction between male and female principals.

Table 4: 6 x 4 Contingency Table of Gender effects on supervision of instruction.

Categories	Observed frequency (0)	Expected frequency (E)	$0 - E$	$(0 - E)^2$	$\frac{(0 - E)^2}{E}$
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 X^2 calculated = 22.8

Level of significance= 0.05= Critical x^2 value = 7.82

Contingency coefficient (C.C) = 0.3

Decision: We retain the alternative (Ha_4) hypothesis and reject the null (Ho_4) since the calculated X^2 (22.8) is far above the Critical x^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, students managed by male principals perform better in official exams than those managed by female principals.

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7. Discussion

Findings based on hypothesis one revealed that appointment into the post of secondary school principal is significantly dependent on gender, being men preferred to women. 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, lack of self-esteem and domestic responsibilities were identified. Thesefindingsare in congruent with the legal feminist theory which revealsthat law's treatment of women in relation to men has not been equal or fair.Besides, Aiseberg and Harrington(1988)[1] had earlier noted that women lack confidence in their management skills.

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Secondly, findings based on hypothesis two (Ho_2) revealed that gender seriously affected personnel management strategies. Male principals were found to manage personnel better than theirfemale counterparts. This again, ties with the Feminist communication theory which stipulates thatmen and women will construct different types of structures about the self, and, consequently, their thought processes may diverge in content and form.It is equallyinconssitent~~gruent~~ with the findings of Schmuck (1986)[20]and~~;~~Cornner (1992)[4]. However, Mbua (2003)[1] did not show any effect of gender on personnel management of schools ~~so far~~ as both ~~each~~men and women understood the functional values and theories beneath.

Hypothesis three (Ho_3) 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 withMarshall (2009)[28]whohad earlier stressed the fact that women are always occupied with domestic affairs. However, Mbua (2003)[11] had noted thatselection, orientation, placement and counseling of students constitute an important function of school principals not depending on gender.

Finally, findings from hypothesis four (Ho_4) revealed that male principals supervised instruction better than female principals. Supervision of instruction is very important for teacher effectiveness (Glickman, 1985)[6]. 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 (Olagboye, 2004)[19], effective supervision~~, according to (Olagboye, 2004)[19]~~requires~~necessitat~~es good working relationship between supervisor and supervisee. Maybe females do not have enough time to build it.

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8. Conclusion and Recommendations

Having probed into the meaning of leadership, school administration and principalship, one can see that they all mean the same thing. However, it has been noticed thatwomen, despite their very high population amongst teachers, are always left behind in principalship appointment, which depends on a very large extent,offoundational social science,administrative theories and functional values. 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~~. T~~theseperceptions 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 function of educational leaders or administrators or principals is that of financial management where women have been found to be more reliable, trustworthy and excellent than men~~.~~

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 women above child bearing age 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 ~~all sexes~~ to ensure similar representation especially at post

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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. This would develop potentials 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.

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