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An exploration of socio-cultural and organizational factors affecting women's access to educational leadership

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Recent global reports indicate that women have made tremendous improvements in educational enrolment and labour participation but are woefully underrepresented in top leadership positions. Moreover, studies have shown that feminine leadership strategies are embraced but leadership is still perceived as a prerogative of men in many societies. This study therefore sought to explore the socio-cultural and organizational factors influencing the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership within the Ghanaian cultural context. It also aimed at finding possible strategies for increasing the number female educational leaders in Ghana.

The qualitative case study research method was employed for the realization of the purpose of the study. Four female principals, two female teachers, two male teachers, and one officer of an education directorate were purposefully sampled to respond to semi-structured interview questions. The data were analyzed through a data-driven qualitative content analysis and a descriptive approach was used to present the results.

The study revealed some factors which hinder women's access to leadership and also hamper their interest in leadership. Prominent among these factors include: obnoxious cultural beliefs and practices, low educational attainment, gender role socialization, some inherent characteristics of women, inflexible organizational rules and regulations, and a lack of stronger ethical leadership at the top leadership of Ghana Education Service. Moreover, the study found that Ghanaian women enact transformational ethical leadership suitable for dealing with educational challenges and improving educational outcomes. Androgynous socialization, prioritization of girl child education, cultural modernization, improvement in the local economy and social infrastructures, among other things, were suggested as ways forward towards bridging the gender gap in educational leadership in Ghana. Finally, I contend that the present educational needs of Ghana require human-oriented ethical leadership strategies which are abound in women. Women's biological and social roles serve as the basis for the acquisition of such leadership qualities.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABREVIATIONS

ADA	Assistant Director of Administration
EFA	Education For All
GES	Ghana Education Service
JSS	Junior Secondary School
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
PD	Power Distance
PMTTC	Post Middle Teacher Training College
TV	Television
UN	United Nations
WB	World Bank
WDR	World Development Report

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1 INTRODUCTION

The gender of an individual determines the opportunities that one experiences right after birth throughout all the developmental stages (Leaper & Friedman, 2007, p. 561). The World Development Report (WDR) of 2012 shows that women and girls have made tremendous improvements in terms of development in general, and with a specific reference to educational enrolment, labour participation and life expectancy. However, there is still a persistence of deep-seated gender inequalities in some domains such as economic opportunities, participation in decision-making and leadership representation, especially within the developing countries. (World Bank, 2011, p. xxi.) The 2011 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report (EFA, 2011, p. 5) indicates that gender inequality continues to impede improvement in education, especially in the Sub-Saharan African countries. The report also points out that those countries that condone gender inequality tend to deny themselves of creativity that abounds in girls and women, and this phenomenon is very prominent in developing countries (EFA, 2011, p. 14).

Statistically, women are far below men in terms of managerial representation, in spite of the progress made so far (Cuadrado, Navas, Molero, Ferrer, & Morales, 2012, p. 3083). For instance, globally, women occupy only 25% of senior management positions, hence gender inequality persists and women continue to face discrimination on the job market (United Nations Millennium Development Goal (UN/MDG) report (2008/2009). Leadership in every institution or organization has an overarching impact since the leader's decisions affect many facets of the institution or organization, but in many leadership contexts, especially at the top, women are not adequately represented (Hoyt, 2010, p. 484). Education has been used as a tool to create gender parity but women continue to be underrepresented when it comes to leadership in educational institutions/organizations (EFA, 2011, p. 15). In many societies people have negative

prejudices about women's leadership abilities. Consequently, women are concentrated at the low level of the organizational structure but disproportionately form the minority in the senior or leadership positions. (Broadbridge, 2007, p. 3).

The persistent debate about the underrepresentation of women in school leadership has mostly focused on differences between male and female leadership behaviours, although there is no empirical evidence about the level of quality of these gendered leadership roles (Kruger, 1996, p. 447). Moreover, some researchers believe that the disproportionate representation of men and women in the higher authority positions in many organizations is due to biological differences and the historical precedence of the hunting and gathering era (e.g. Archer & Lloyd, 2002, p. 3; Durkin, 1995, pp. 168-169; Elliot, 1991, pp. 25-33; Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 51-53; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, pp. 137-138). Therefore a research direction towards other domains, such as the influence of societal cultures on gendered leadership, should be taken as a good step towards progress.

Due to its overarching impact on the global community, the issue of gender and leadership has been investigated intensely by many researchers these days. For example Oplatka (2006) researched into women in educational leadership within developing countries. Smith (2011) used the life history interview of 40 female secondary school teachers to find out what influences women's career decisions. Shapira, Arar, and Azaiza (2011) investigated into biographical, social, political, and professional aspects of female school principals in the Arab education system in Israel. Most of these researchers share the sentiment that women are disproportionately underrepresented in the leadership positions in organizations. This underrepresentation is attributed to some societal cultures that ascribe leadership roles as masculine and organizational cultures that give more advantages to men than women (Bolman & Deal, 2008, pp. 354-355). It has also been found that women are good leaders in the sense that they are more democratic, caring listeners and among other things good communicators (Agezo, 2010, pp. 700-701; Bolman & Deal, 2008, p. 352).

Northouse (2007, p. 29) states that women are not less educated than men, but they handle more domestic duties which results in less work practice and more job disruptions. Culture has long been assumed to be the backbone of the high political success chopped by Scandinavian women as compared to their colleagues in other parts

of the world, but this factor has not been fully dealt with (Pippa & Inglehart, 2001, pp. 136-137). Agezo (2010, p. 689) also points out that female principals in Ghana are transformational leaders and thus possess leadership qualities required in the twenty-first century organizations. However, in the Ghanaian society the ability of women to perform their domestic responsibilities is more valued than their effectiveness in their careers.

One significant factor which is usually missing in researches focusing on African leadership is the impact of African cultural background within which management and leadership is practiced. Some elements of African societal cultural practices and values permeate into organizations and inhibit effective leadership. There is therefore an urgent need to pay attention to the influence of African culture on leadership of organizations to accelerate the development of the continent. (Kuada, 2008, p. 21.) Thus in most African cultural contexts gender roles are explicitly spelt out right from the home to the larger community level. Women are supposed to care for the home and ensure the continuity of the lineage. Men are considered to be strong, knowledgeable, skilful, risk-taking and powerful and are therefore supposed to work to be breadwinners. (Dolphyne, 1995, pp. 5, 43-44.) These perceptions in most African societies have resulted in the underrepresentation of females in educational leadership in Ghana (Agezo, 2010, p. 689).

Justice is the pivoted tenet of this research work. This is to say that the researcher believes that the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership is a result of societal cultures and structures which disadvantage women; hence it is tantamount to injustice against women. It is also a kind of barrier to national development since the leadership competencies in women are being underutilized. Moreover, the researcher believes also that to ensure a high-quality, effective and efficient education in Africa as a whole and in Ghana in particular, women should not only be emancipated from factors which serve as barriers to leadership development, but should also be motivated to assume leadership positions in educational institutions and organizations.

In some industrialized nations, gender differences and inequality are vehemently discouraged and this has impacted positively on their socioeconomic progress and cultural modernization (Pippa & Inglehart, 2001, p. 137). The researcher is of the view that replication of this phenomenon in the Ghanaian context is highly feasible. As

human beings, women and men deserve to be treated equally. Women thus need to be given equal rights, access and representation in all institutions, including education. It is no exaggeration to say that the caring attitude in women makes them transformational leaders and this is the kind of leadership which is required in educational institutions.

Moreover, most researches on leadership trace their history and background to the United States and China (Chao & Tian, 2011, p.65). Once again the need to fill the research gap in the African context cannot be overemphasized. Hence, the purpose of the study was to explore the views and experiences of female educational leaders and teachers (both males and females) on the gender representation of educational leadership in relation to the Ghanaian cultural context, and to find out the need to increase the number of female educational leaders in Ghana. The study also aimed to find strategies to increase the number of female educational leaders in Ghana. The research therefore sought to answer the following questions:

1. How has culture influenced the gender representation of educational leaders in Ghana?
2. What cultural, organizational and social factors serve as obstacles which prevent women from getting leadership positions in Ghana?
3. Why are female leaders needed in the Ghanaian educational system?
4. How can female representation of educational leadership be increased in Ghana?

2   GENDER

Gender is very fundamental in our everyday interactions and this has led to the plethora of theories about it, especially in the field of human sciences (Durkin, 1997, p. 162). Theories are generally abstract and can therefore be true or false, but can help us gain more insight into the phenomena under study and also influence our behavior (Mbua, 2003, p. 26). Two distinct theories which attempt to explain gender-related issues in humankind are the *bio-evolutionary theory* and the *social construction theory* (Durkin, 1997, p. 162; Elliot, 1991, pp. 25-33; Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 51-53.) Thus the focus of this chapter is to present some existing theories on gender with a specific reference to biological, social and cultural perspectives.

2.1   Biological perspective of gender

According to the biological perspective, gender is believed to be an inherent characteristic in the individual (Acker, 1992, 408-409; Berger et al., 1995, pp. 2-3). Biologists term biological distinctions between male and female as *sex*. These biological distinctions are based on the individuals' genitals and other physical attributes and some behaviors. The biological perspective of gender is rooted in natural predispositions. Biologists believe that being born as male or female is not by choice and thus our biological attributes naturally predispose or equip us to have an ability to perform certain activities and behave in a certain pattern. This constitutes the genesis of gendered roles in human societies. (Durkin, 1997, pp. 162, 168-169.) Moreover, the biologists attribute differences between males and females in terms of performance of certain activities to differences in genes, hormones, cognitive organization and some

environmental controls in the individuals. (Durkin, 1997, pp. 168-169; Penner, 2008, p. 4).

According to the bio-evolutionary theory, women's role as child bearers enables them to be good rearers and nurturers of children. The breadwinning responsibility of men enables them to have greater physical strength and be more aggressive. Moreover, the theory argues that the human's survival history was based on hunting and gathering. Men were supposed to go game-hunting to feed the young ones and women, and also defend them against any physical attacks. These activities required men to be strong, courageous and also have high visual sharpness. Women's role as child bearers and rearers required fine motor skills (dexterity), physical and emotional endurance and persistence. The adaptation to these roles for a very long period was then incorporated into the human genetic constituents and resulted in men and women having the ability to learn and develop different specific skills. (Archer & Lloyd, 2002, p. 3; Durkin, 1995, pp. 168-169; Elliot, 1991, pp. 25-33; Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 51-53; Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010, pp. 137-138). We are no longer in the hunting and gathering society but the replica of the scenario is in our modern industrial era where men dominate in higher authority positions in institutions and organizations. In other words, the domination of men in the high authority positions in the modern society is the historical precedence of the hunting and gathering era. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 137-138.)

Another dominant view of the bio-evolutionists is the influence of the male and female sex hormones on human behavior. It is believed that these sex hormones affect the brain as well, and contribute to the psychological and behavioral differences between men and women. For example, the female hormones responsible for pregnancy, childbirth and lactation help women to develop tendering skills for caring for babies. The testosterone in males on the other hand is associated with aggression and anti nurturant behavour. (Durkin, 1997, pp. 168-169; Elliot, 1991, pp. 25-33; Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 51-53.) It should be noted that all these are laboratory experiments which were mostly conducted using animals and thus their authenticity in humans is sometimes questionable (Elliot, 1991, p. 27). These biological explanations do not in any way devalue women, neither do they imply that women cannot perform certain functions in the society (Durkin, 1997, pp. 170).

Running alongside the above explanations is the creationists' view which posits that the differences between males and females in appearance, behavior and roles had been put in place by the creator of mankind, God (Graves & Powell, 2003, p. 152). Archer and Lloyd (2002, p. 3) also state that in the Christian and some other major religions, women are considered as men's helpmate based on the story of creation, and this is buttressed by the biological perspective of sex roles. Consequently, the bio-evolutionary theory thus suggests that men are programmed to have more power due to the biological roles they play. This has given them the opportunity to be dominant in political, economic, military, leadership and other arenas in the present human society. Women on the other hand are predisposed to be nurturers and home-keepers and this also has permeated into our modern human society. Leadership and the like are thus considered a replica of the hunting and defensive roles played by historic primitive men. (Elliot, 1991, pp. 25-33.)

Graves and Powel (2003, p. 53) suggest that biological determinants of subjects cannot easily be changed successfully and that their effects cannot be ruled out, but a study into role differences of male and female should be focused on how boys and girls are socialized into their respective roles at adult stage. According to Elliot (1991, p. 27), the biological argument and hypothesis do not fully determine sex roles, especially in the modern industrial era. The bio-evolutionary theory only suggests that the nature provides a base for the social system to be built on (Elliot, 1991, p. 27). The biological argument seems to be convincing enough since it conforms with the observable differences between men and women, also it is congruent with some traditional and religious beliefs (Durkin, 1997, p. 172).

Based on biological assertions delineated above, all societies through socialization prescribe roles and behaviors for males and females. Consequently, this social phenomenon to some extent determines one's chances in life. (World Bank, 2011, p. 46.) Berger, Wallis, and Watson (1995, pp. 4-5) for instance claim that gender identity has not only coerced men and women into standardized segregated roles and heterosexuality, but has also resulted in oppression, repression and denial, and women are always the victims. People's perceptions about sex differences have not only over-projected patriarchal values but have also resulted in subservice and underachievement

of women in many societies (Archer & Lloyd, 2002, p. 4). This point thus sets the pace to look into the social perspective on career pattern of men and women-

2.2   Social perspective of gender

Gender has been conceptualized from the perspective of socialization. To many writers from the social perspective, gender refers to a socially constructed distinction between female and male, feminine and masculine (eg. Acker, 1992, p. 408; Archer & Lloyd, 2002, p. 17; Berger et al., 1995, pp. 2-3; Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 3-4; Triandis, 1994, p. 49). Gender is culturally constructed and children are socialized to become either men or women through the upbringing (Butler, 1990, pp. 6-7; Thorne, 1993, p. 3). Gender describes cultural characteristics rather than biological (Archer & Lloyd, 2002, p. 17). Kimmel (2000, p.1) also opined that gender does not only embody a system by which biological males and females are sorted, divided, and socialized into corresponding sex roles, but it also represents the entire inequality between women and men. These presuppose that gender ideologies create social differences between men and women and consequently, these differences raise men as superior to women.

According to the social construction theory, right from the childhood, children are socialized to adopt certain personality traits, behaviors and roles that are considered to be acceptable within their culture. Thus boys and girls are expected to follow a separated life style and carry on with that to adult stage. Children are made to believe in what it meant to be an ideal man or a woman and therefore are encouraged to develop towards that. For instance children are given names, presented with clothing, toys, colours and games based on their sex. By so doing, they (children) become very conscious and stereotyped about masculinity and femininity. The stereotype and gender consciousness has disadvantaged women in the labour market in the sense that women have a low social standing in many societies. (Elliot, 1991, pp. 27-29.)

Concluding his analysis, Elliot (1991, pp. 32-33) admits that as long as men and women have biological differences, differences in their social experiences are relatively inevitable. The inequalities which arise from these differences are influenced by the culture of the people, political and economic situations. It can be argued that the high value that some societies place on the various social roles played by men make men

more powerful than women. Thus if women's role is valued as equally important as that of men, they (the women) would certainly enjoy preferences and privileges that are given to men in the labour market. (Elliot, 1991, pp. 32-33.) In a similar argument from the Ghanaian perspective, Baah-Boateng (2007, p. 61) observes that women by their nature show more interest in domestic activities than men and this negatively affects their educational attainment. Their interest and aspirations are shaped by their social experiences in childhood. This consequently contributes to the concentration of women in low and less prestigious occupations, although they constitute the majority of the labour market in general (Baah-Boateng, 2007, pp.75-76).

2.2.1 Gender role socialization

Socialization is the process of learning and acquiring practices and values in a culture through participation in that culture (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 522). Gruce and Hastings (2007, p. 1) also view socialization as the process of assisting individual(s) to become member(s) of a social group. The process involves acquisition of rules, roles, standards, and values of the social group. It is an ongoing process in one's life time and occurs through interaction with the environment, parents, teachers, peers, siblings etc. (Gruce Hastings, 2007, pp. 1-2.) Socialization is the determinant of almost all gender roles (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 151). The kind of social interactions children are exposed to and the activities they engage in contribute to the development of gender differences in values, preferences, skills, and expectations (Leaper & Friedman, 2007, p. 162).

Some researchers are of the view that who we are is determined by the society, thus the systematic oppression of women can be attributed to the culture of the society. Butler (1995, pp.31-32) argues that no one is born as a man or a woman but rather, we imitate and perform gendered roles, appearance and behaviors which are the product of our culture. She affirms her earlier preposition in 1990 that both gender and sex are culturally constructed and imposed on the successive generations, and that gender is a sort of social ritual that is performed variously within various cultural contexts. By the standard created by many cultures, a perfect woman is required to be in a heterosexual and maternal frame. Also in most cultures women are expected to exhibit certain masculine characteristics in order to be accepted in a male dominated field. (Butler,

1995, pp.31-32.) Thus the societies assign roles and occupations which then become stereotypes in the society.

As boys and girls are socialized to learn and admit their place in the society, most people prefer to maintain the way they have been socialized and even pass it on to their descendants (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 151). Thus in many societies there are *sex-role standards*. A sex-role standard is a set of behaviors which are considered more appropriate for one sex than the other. Hence, people are expected to take roles that conform to their gender identity and the roles are always assigned to conform to the individual's biological characteristics and reproduction roles. Specifically girls are socialized towards the expressive role (nurturing, kind, cooperative and empathetic) in order to be good mothers and wives. Boys on the other hand are supposed to be good husbands by being able to provide the material needs of the family, and are therefore socialized to take the instrumental role (dominant, independent, assertive, and goal oriented. (Shaffer, 1996, pp. 505-506.)

Vance (1995, p. 38) argues that the pervasive gendered characteristics and roles that have been accepted as natural are not really natural, but are rather products of long and persistent socializations that have led to the acceptance of certain characteristics and roles as the natural standards for masculine or feminine. Thus Acker, (1992, pp. 413-414) further delineates that the understanding of a gendered organization should go beyond the organizational level into the society in the sense that organizations are substructures of the society and therefore the gendered relations and patterns of the society permeate into the organizations. What roles then do the agents of socialization play in the women's career development?

2.2.2 Agents of socialization and how they influence gender roles

In spite of many factors which contribute to the socialization of children into their expected gender roles, *family, peers, school* and the *mass media* have been identified as the main agents of socialization (Graves and Powell, 2003, p. 53; Leaper & Friedman, 2007, pp. 563-564). The authors report that these agents contribute immensely towards shaping children to become useful citizens, nevertheless they (the agents of socialization) entrench gender stereotypes and role stereotypes in the society. Eccles (2011, p. 195) admits that the education and occupational choices people make are

always influenced by the individual's expectation of success and subjective task value, and argues further that these factors are also influenced by gendered socialization at home, in school, and among peers.

Being the first immediate environment of the child and for that matter the first agent of socialization, *the home* has got an important role to play in the child's development as a whole and in the career development of the child in particular. The way the child is mentally programmed at home is difficult to change. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 68.) The parents' attitudes and beliefs about their children and sex roles influence the children's interests and abilities, and thus go a long way to determine to a very large extent what the child becomes in adult stage (Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 53-56). Pathetically some children, especially girls, lack acceptance by either family or the society or both, right from birth. In many societies, being born as a girl is considered a burden, so right at birth some baby girls are received by their parents with disappointment (Durkin, 1995, p. 160). Even if for some reason the parents desire a girl child, the larger society has a prejudiced mind about having a girl child and this becomes a great disincentive to the career development of female children (Durkin, 1995, p. 160). Such disappointment and attitude greatly influence the kind of support that the children receive from the parents and the society as a whole.

Moreover, research suggests that there is a disparity in parental attitude and support for a boy child and a girl child, and this gives boys an advantage in terms of career development in certain fields. Parents always have separate patterns for upbringing their male and female children. This can particularly be seen in the kind of household responsibilities and games the parents offer to their sons and daughters. For instance boys are always provided with sports equipment, tools and vehicles whilst girls are always provided with baby dolls, jewelries and the like. These discrepancies have the tendency to create differences in the children's interest which is carried on to the adult life. (Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 53-56.) Shafer and Malhotra (2011, p. 213) argue that men often seem to be less supportive in training of their daughter(s) as compared to that of their son(s).

Apart from parental support, parental modeling has an influence on the individual's career development. As everybody is born into a family, individuals start modeling the life of the elders, and that is how mental programming starts and

progresses throughout the person's life time (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 67). Obviously children are socialized in the family along the gender line, but the importance of the child modeling of both parents (father and mother) and other notable members in the family cannot be overemphasized (Hofstede et al., p. 138; Triandis, 1994, p. 24). Also playing a vital role to enable the parents to properly perform their duty as the epitomes of good socialization process, is the availability of resources in the family and social support that is available (Triandis, 1994, p. 25).

From the social psychologists' perspective, Durkin (1995, p. 145) stresses the importance of *peer group* to the development of the child, and asserts that it (peer group) serves as one of the key forces behind the individual's social development and competency.

Other media of socialization such as *school and mass media* also contribute to gendered role segregation. Graves and Powell, (2003, p. 57) maintain that the socialization in the school greatly contributes to the girl's low self-esteem which consequently affects their choices of courses and employment in the future. Children are affected by what happens within the school environment. The school system is always characterized by sex segregation with men dominating in leadership and administrative positions. In many school systems the representation of women in leadership is far below their numerical strength in the teaching staff and such situations have repercussive effect on the girls' ambitions, aspirations and career choices. In the classroom, girls seem to make better grades than boys, but boys receive more than girls both positive and negative attention from teachers. For instance boys are always questioned, criticized and have their ideas accepted or rejected more than girls. Such classroom interactions have implications in the development of self-esteem and confidence in the later life of the individual and consequently create two separate paths of socialization for boys and girls. (Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 56-57.)

The mass media exposes children to activities that make the children develop the idea that men and women are different in many aspects of life including job or career fits. For instance television, the most common source of information and entertainment for children and thus a very powerful socializing tool, teaches children good values in the society, but latently and sometimes explicitly inculcates gender and role stereotypes into children. There are always more male characters on TV than female. These females

are often younger ones depicting that a woman's value lies within her youthfulness. TV commercials always show segregated gendered roles such that the marketing of household items which are used in the kitchen for instance are presented by female characters, and items that are used outside the home such as vehicles are usually presented by male characters. This same scenario can be found in most TV programs such as movies and other entertainment shows. The key thing in all these is that they shape the social reality and go a long way to propagate gender stereotypes and their scourge of gender discrimination in the society. (Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 56-57.)

The society in general accord more respect to an individual who is able to exhibit the conventional role of his or her gender (Graves & Powell, 2003, p. 48). Even from the childhood boys or girls who cross over to engage in the games of the opposite sex are given names (Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 39-40). All these suggest clearly that the developmental experiences of boys and girls influence their ability or opportunity to do certain things in their adult life. Moreover, the segregations of men and women into polarized gendered roles are a product of socialization or the developmental experiences of the individual.

2.3   The cultural perspective of gender

Human beings have many things in common but there are certain life styles which are peculiar to a particular group of people. Hofstede (1997) presents a comprehensive study on differences among people from many countries, different social class and ethnic groups, genders etc. He believes that each individual is a product of nature, culture and personality as shown in figure 1, and that people from different parts of the world think, feel and act differently due to their cultural background. Triandis (1994, p. 20) asserts that due to the similarities in human physiological and ecological contents, there exists greater similarities in cultures but differences are inevitable.
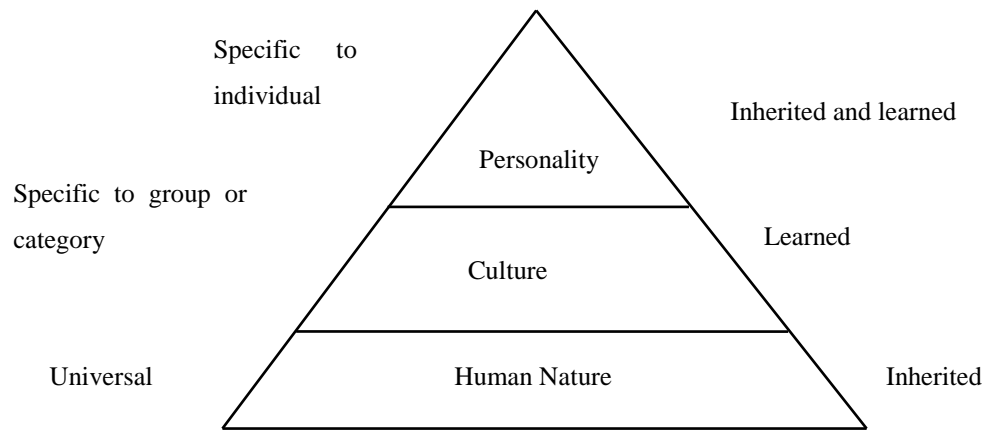
Figure 1. Levels of uniqueness of human mental programming (Hofstede, 1997, pp. 3-6).

2.3.1 Conceptualizing culture

Culture has no definition that is acceptable and applicable in all contexts, and this is due to the fact that the existing definitions are always formulated by scholars from different disciplines (House & Javidan, 2004, p. 15; Triandis, 1994, p. 22). For example: from the social Psychology background, Triandis (1994, p. 22) defines culture as "a set of human-made objective and subjective elements that in the past have increased the probability of survival and resulted in satisfaction for the participants in an ecological niche, and thus became shared among those who could communicate with each other because they had a common language and they lived in the same time and place". From the perspective of an organizational anthropologist, Hofstede (1997, p. 6) also defines culture as "the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another". According to House and Javidan (House & Javidan, 2004, p. 15) culture is "shared motives, values, identities, and interpretations of meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of collectives that are transmitted across generation". Northouse (2007, p. 302), also defines culture as "learned beliefs, values, rules, norms, symbols, and traditions that are common to a group of people".

Culture is thus a learned phenomenon and has nothing to do with biological inheritance. In the other words, culture is acquired from the social environment. (Hofstede, 1997, pp. 4-5). Culture is different from human nature in the sense that human nature is a heritable characteristic or feature which is common to all human beings and personality is a peculiar characteristic of the individual which s/he does not share with other people (Hofstede, 1997, pp. 5-6).

Culture of a group of people can be manifested through symbols, heroes, rituals and values. The first three which are captioned practices are observable but their meanings are only known to those within the cultural context. The practices are very dynamic and can be changed in a fast rate. Unlike the first three, values lie within the inner feelings of the individuals in a cultural setting and cannot therefore be observed directly by outsiders; they can only be inferred from the practitioners' actions. Values are central to cultural manifestation and are learnt unconsciously, mostly at the early developmental stage of the individual. They are relatively static and thus take a much longer time to change. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 7-9.) As shown by the figure 2 below, symbols, heroes, rituals and values can be equated to the layers of onion and they are arranged from the most superficial manifestation in the outer layer to the deepest in the inner layer (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 7-9).
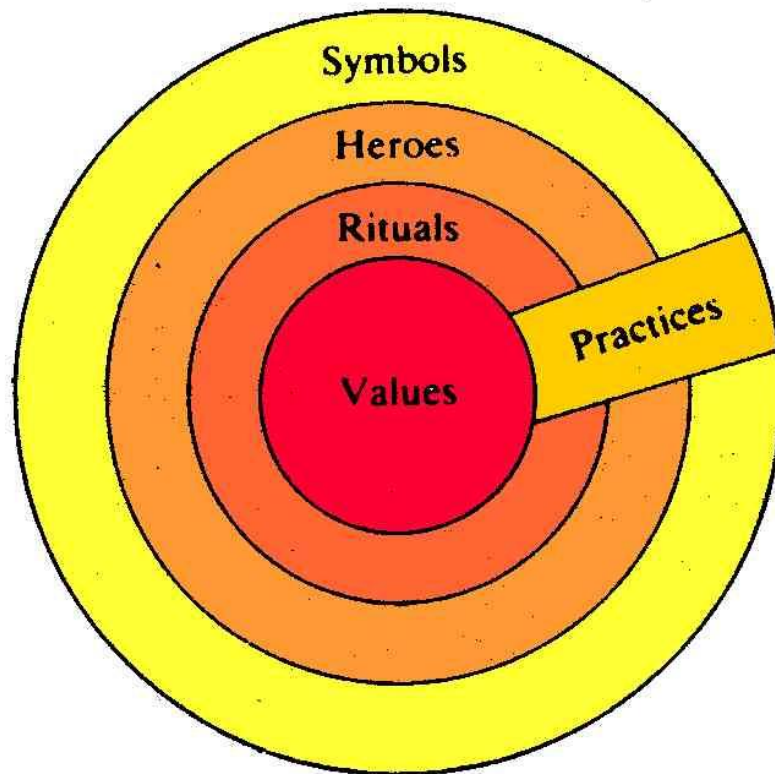
Figure 2. The "onion diagram": manifestations of culture at different levels of depth, (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 7-9).

Superficial knowledge about culture or lack thereof is detrimental to any human institution or society, as Hofstede (1997, pp. x-xi) puts that it results in the abuse of people's rights, deprivation, oppressions, and even killing. The author contends that until recently, the impact of culture was not deeply known and this created pseudo-superiority between genders, races, ethnic groups etc. The so-called superiority has benefited men in many societies so that men are seen as superior to women and therefore fit for leadership in most human institutions. For instance over the years it has been difficult to change the traditional gender roles not because women do not possess the skills needed to perform certain task, but because symbols and rituals which people attach to some roles are missing in women. Thus, the societal culture has created inequalities between men and women and consequently assigns separate roles to them. (Hofstede, 1997, p. 6.)

In many cultures people match certain behavioral characteristics to a particular gender and further to particular roles. Hofstede (1997, pp. 80-81) admits that the

biological differences between male and female are universal, but the acquired behavioral characteristics and gender roles relatively differ from one culture to another. However, there are common patterns of gender behavior and roles across most societies and generations. Men are expected to be assertive, competitive and tough, and these supposedly make them match for certain positions and roles in the society. Women on the other hand are expected to take the tender roles of caring for people and the home and this transcends to the economic life as well. (Hofstede, 1997, 80-81.)

In countries where there is a culturally misogynist attitude towards feminine leadership, women are not only deprived the opportunities to develop a leadership career, but also those who defy the odds to become leaders encounter resistance in the course of performing their duties. Nevertheless, values and traditions are not ultimately static; they can change over time and women leadership maybe embraced in many societies. Furthermore, in countries with high gender egalitarianism jobs are not ascribed to a specific gender; rather, men and women are treated equally in terms of job opportunities. (Yukl, 2006, pp. 428 – 429.)

Culture exists at various levels such as national, regional, ethnic, religious, linguistic affiliation, generation, social class, occupational, organizational, gender and other levels (Hofstede 1997, p. 10). Triandis (1994, p. 2) describes some cultures as possessing a tightness syndrome in the sense that such cultures are characterized by the imposition of many norms, rules, and expected behaviors. The culture of a society can either retard or enhance the economic competitiveness in the society (House & Javidan, 2004, p. 19). The way leadership is viewed or valued is dependent on the cultural setting, and in spite of how far globalization has brought different countries together in terms of economic activities, cultural differences are highly visible (House, 2004, p. 5). Thus the subsequent subsections present some specific cultural dimensions which negatively affect women's access to leadership.

2.3.2   Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Hofstede (1997, p. 14) defines cultural dimension culture as the measurable aspects of a culture which can be compared with another culture to establish differences. The author studied data from over 50 countries focusing on inequality among people, implication of gender differences in the countries, how people handle uncertainty, and the relationship

between the individual and the group. He consequently identified four cultural dimensions, namely: power distance (PD), femininity versus masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, and collectivism versus individualism. (Hofstede 1997, pp.13-14.) However, for the sake of relevance this review would include only the first two (power distance and femininity versus masculinity).

Power distance (PD): it is the dimension of national culture that shows the extent to which people admit and recognize the fact that power is unequally distributed. Inequalities exist in any society, therefore some members have more power, respect and status than others. The inequalities in this term are to some extent due to unequal opportunities and satisfaction for everyone. (Hofstede 1997, pp. 23-24.) The inequalities in the societies have been linked with the PD. At the community level and even in other institutions within the society people who have power have more opportunities in the society, and a typical example is access to education. This presupposes that people from a high social class have a better access to education than those from the middle and the lower classes in that order. (Hofstede 1997, pp. 23-24, 28.)

The PD of a society has some impacts on leadership. For example in the African context, Kauda, (2010, p. 21) levels that some micro cultures within African societies serve as impediments to effective leadership, but for so many years these cultures have not been researched into. There exists a large PD in most African cultures and this permeates into organizations. Followers for instances always conceal their thoughts on matters they disagree due to the culture that expects a high level of subordination of followers. Followers are always expected to please the leader no matter if s/he is wrong or right. Thus by implication the followers inadvertently satisfy the interest of the leader at the expense of the interest of the organization. (Kauda, 2010, p. 18.)

In large PD cultures people are socialized to show respect towards those who are above them in terms of age, school grade, organizational hierarchy, and social stratum etc. There is little opportunity for people from such cultures to experiment things for themselves since the power to act is concentrated on few people like parents, teachers, fathers, bosses etc. Also there is fear of expression of opinion, especially in the presence of people with high authority. In small power distance cultures the need for independence is given priority, thus children are socialized to experiment things by themselves. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 67-73.)

Masculinity versus feminity: This dimension shows divisions of values and thus shows the important work goals which men and women are akin to. Although the society creates segregated gendered roles, the individual feeling in the course of playing the role imposed by the society lies within the individual. Earnings, recognition, advancement and a desire to have personal accomplishment belong to the masculine pole. Good relationship with the superior, working with people who cooperate, and living in desirable environment with family also belong to the feminine pole. (Hofstede, 1997, pp. 81-83; Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 137-140.)

The extent of masculinity or femininity of a culture determines how occupations are segregated in a society, and also it shows how roles are segregated between the father and the mother at the family level (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 150-151). In masculine cultures sex roles are specified so that there are jobs ascribed to men and those to women. Deviations from such specificity are not very welcome by the larger society. Also more value is placed on the individual's performance rather than collective. In feminine cultures roles are not so specified for men and women. Also, interdependence and collective performance are valued. ((Tirmizi, 2008, p. 36).)

This dimension shows that women value family life whilst men dominate in the social life outside the home in almost all societies. In masculine cultures, women who are able to manage public life alongside family life are those from the upper social class who can afford to hire home assistance to handle family responsibilities. Moreover, most women are able to take leadership or management positions only after 45 years when they are likely not to have very young children to care for or when their children are old enough to take some basic care of themselves. Young and single women are always discriminated against in taking high authority positions since their models are not common in such positions in the society. Although slowly, these trends are changing in the more industrial societies, so even above the values, economic circumstances of a society and necessities play vital roles in women's public participations. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 154-156.)

In relation to the feminine-masculinity Tirmizi (2008, p. 36) points out that *gender egalitarianism* (the extent to which gender roles, power and status of men and women are differentiated in a society) is a critical dimension of culture which had not been explored enough. Close study of cultural differences reveals that every society has

a men's culture and a women's culture, and in most cases it is abnormal for one to cross over to the culture of the opposite sex. In the case of occupational differences women are seen as not fit for jobs that are traditionally labeled as fields for men. Thus a woman may possess the needed technical skills for a male dominated field, but she would be considered as unsuitable basically because the symbols, rituals or values which the society match with the position or the job are missing in the woman. (Hofstede 1997, p. 17.)

As an element of culture, *religion* has a stake in gender beliefs, inequality and roles segregation in many societies. According to Hofstede et al., (2010, p. 189) human beings have the need to be associated with supernatural forces who are believed to have control over their destiny. All religions assign separate and specific religious roles for men and women. Moreover, most religions believe that God, the father, is a man thus He created men in His own image and likeness. Woman on the other hand is believed to have been created from a man as "a help meet" of man. In masculine societies people believe more in establishing good relations with God. Feminine societies prioritize good relationship with fellow human beings. In some religious denominations, sexual pleasure of women is regarded as abominable and that of men is acceptable. These inequalities among most religions negatively affect the image and status of women and also transcend to their opportunity to occupy certain positions in the society. (Hofstede et al., pp. 176-189.)

2.3.3 Cultural change

Cultures have their individual historical origins and they are always established to solve the prevailing ecological problems or circumstances. This explains not only cultural differences, similarities and subjectivity, but also why some cultures change from time to time. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 18-19; Triandis, 1994, pp. 1-5.) Scientific evidences show that human beings have gone through gradual evolutional changes in terms of biological and environmental makeup. These changes occur alongside with cultural change. In reality cultural change has been the propeller of our present day civilization where attention is no longer on the survival of the individuals but the survival of societies. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 432-433.)

In recent days people from different cultures are exposed to each other's cultures due to frequent contacts through technology, travel, trade, television and many more (Hackman & Johnson, 2004, p. 282). Change is inevitable in the societies, especially with the advent of modern technology and its products. Some aspects of societal cultures keep on changing at a very fast rate, and a typical example is new jobs which emerge from new technologies. Also, ways of exchanging information are far different from the way they used to be some decades ago. However, the same cannot be said about the attitude of people, for instance towards authority which belongs to the value layer of culture. This is an indication that some aspects of culture change faster than others. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 18-19.)

As it has already been shown in figure 2, the practice aspects of culture (symbols, heroes and ritual) are very prone to change in a society because they are acquired throughout the individuals' life time. As the core of culture, the values of a society are comparatively stable; they linger in the individual's life time and are therefore transferred across many generations. Again, values are learnt at the early stage of life (by 10 years of age) and thus become firmly engrossed in our inner psyche. Thus values affect gender status beliefs and roles of a society. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 19-20.)

The result of data from 65 countries constituting 75 percent of the world's population indicates that cultural change has a link with industrialization and economic development. Some specific changes that can be propelled by economic advancement include change from gender roles specification towards neutral roles, increase in educational attainment and income levels, occupational specialization and change in attitude towards authority. (Inglehart & Baker, 2000, pp. 19-21.) In spite of the established fact that values are difficult to change in a society, the authors opine that economic development can be a driving force for cultural change, including the core aspect of culture, values. As a result of industrialization, people tend to move away from traditional values, and rather be oriented towards secular-rational values. Moreover, postindustrial societies are characterized by values which manifest trust, well-being, participation and tolerance. An example is the reduction of organized religion in most industrial and postindustrial societies. Looking at the opposite side, the authors found that people in low income societies and non-industrialized societies

always hold firmly their traditional values. In this vain, economic declination brings societies back to traditional values. (Inglehart & Baker, 2000, pp. 44-49.)

Leaper and Friedman (2007, pp. 563-564) also point out specifically that industrialization keeps on changing the status of women in many industrial societies. According to the authors in post industrial societies cultural changes have liberated women from stacking to the home as home keepers. This is because of the fact that social support, such as day care facilities, is more vibrant in such societies. Moreover, women in such societies usually adopt systematic control over their reproduction. In addition, most industrial activities nowadays do not require greater human strength, size and speed. (Leaper & Friedman, 2007, pp. 563-564)

2.3.4   Cultural driven challenges of African women and girls

Gakusi (2010, p. 216) outlines some challenges which negatively affect women and girls in Africa, particularly in Sub-Sahara Africa. According to him, poverty and some cultural practices have made child labour very rampant in Africa. Some parents, especially in the farming communities, use their children for supporting family businesses at the expense of their education. Generally, there is a deficit of accessibility to education at all levels of African Education. Furthermore, within the limited access the percentage of girls' enrollment is much lower than that of boys. In most families decisions of choosing who should be sponsored to school always go in favour of boys. The educational achievement of girls and women has been low in Africa due to factors such as early marriage, too much of household labour, teenage pregnancies, and puberty right. Moreover, the author posits that women and girls have been bedeviled by cultural manipulation whereby people have been brainwashed to believe that the cultural practices are for their own good. For instance, girls are made to go through circumcision (removal of clitoris by local surgery) under the pretence that it will help them to get married and bear children. (Gakusi, 2010, pp. 216-17.)

Mathipa and Tsoka (2001, p. 324) emphasize negative perception as a big block against advancement of African women. The authors contend that although no evidence has proven that women do not posses what it takes to be leaders, it is unfortunate that in most African societies women are regarded weak and cannot therefore handle leadership positions. Specifically, there are strongly held perceptions that African

women have a poor self-image, lack assertiveness, have less career orientation, have less confidence, perform poorly, and are lazy and arrogant. (Mathipa & Tsoka, 2001, p. 324) Also contributing to the woes of African women and girls is the inactive role of men in rearing of children. In the traditional African context, taking full responsibility as a father is not only based on biologically fathering the child but also based on marriage. Thus if a man has a child without properly marrying the woman he is always partially excluded from the rearing of the child. Even in a properly and organized marital home the rearing of children is almost exclusively left in the hands of the mother. Consequently, the woman is partially disabled from undertaking active economic activities and career development. (Richter & Morrell, 2008, p. 151.)

In the African cultural context and for that matter in Ghana, Dolphyne (1991) also gives a comprehensive account of some aspects of African cultural and attributes which have been plaguing the advancement of many African women. These, according to the author, include marriage system, child-marriage (betrothal marriage), polygamy, widowhood, female circumcision, "purdah", traditional inheritance system and high fertility rate. (Dolphyne, 1991, p. 1.)

3 GENDERING WORK AND LEADERSHIP

Gender, work and leadership are universal phenomena which are parts and parcels of all human endeavors. Eagle and Carli (2007, pp. 1-3) observe that history in most human societies shows that women were directly denied the opportunity to undertake certain jobs or occupy most prestigious positions in the society. The flimsy reason for this phenomenon was the assumption that women were more suited for domestic chores than any kind of work. So it was a natural order for men to be working and be breadwinners whilst women took charge of domestic issues. (Eagle & Carli, 2007, pp. 1-3.) The role specifications in terms of gender exist not only in domestic duties but also in the work arena. Thus this chapter focuses on impacts of gender on one's job and leadership opportunities.

3.1 Organizational culture

Culture does not only manifest at societal or national level but also at organizational level (Tirmizi, 2008, p. 25). Organizational culture consists of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization, that function unconsciously, and that determine the organization's view of itself. The members successfully apply these assumptions to solve the internal and external problems they encounter over time and it thus turns to be routine. Consequently, it tends to be the culture of the organization. (Schein, 1985, pp. 492-493.) Culture as collective programming of the mind of a group of people within an environment implies that an organizational culture is the collective values, beliefs, norms, behaviors etc. which distinguish members and stakeholders of one organization from the others. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 343-345.)

Just like societal culture, the culture of an organization has a historical origin, it is socially constructed and once established it is difficult to change, even in the absence of the reason for establishment of such culture. A new member in an organization is always required to learn the way of life of an organization in order to fit, irrespective of the person's competency. A sudden deviation of the established culture of an organization can create mayhem and disruption of the social order due to how members are always glued to the culture of the organization. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 342-344.) It is pertinent to say that organizational culture, as compared to societal culture, is easy to change because the members enter the organization at adult stage and learn the culture of the organization. Moreover, cultures that are learnt at the adult stage are relatively easy to change. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 20.)

How does organizational culture impede women's access to leadership? Hoyt (2010, p. 488) asserts that apart from the traditional division of labour, workplace cultures also have an impact on men and women's accessibility to leadership. Societal culture can be distinguished from organizational culture, especially on the basis of practices (Hofstede, 1997, p. 181). However, some dimensions of the national or societal culture affect the culture of an organization. For example, the power distance of a society influences the culture of an organization so that in a large power distance societies decisions are always taken by those on top of the organizational structure where power is concentrated. Organizations in such societies can be equated to the extended family system where power to take a decision is always with the head of the family. (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 304-306.) Also in masculine societies, feminine behavior is considered as a weakness, and subordination of women to men is highly valued (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 159). These suggest that organizational culture in large power distance and masculine societies would be built on patriarchal ideologies and women are likely to face resistance with regards to their advancement.

3.2 Gender discrimination at workplace

For many centuries women have been struggling for their right in this male-dominated society, but the effort started yielding positive outcomes during the eighteenth century and beyond. For instance the nineteenth century marked the recognitions of women in

many fields such as literature and sciences. (Symonids & Volodin, 1999, P. vii.) The political right struggle was one of the major focuses of the struggle and women gained the right to vote in 1893 in New Zealand, 1902 in Australia, 1906 in Finland, and 1913 in Norway respectively (The New Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 12, P. 733). In 1948 the United Nations (UN) made a universal declaration of human rights which recognizes the principle of equality between women and men and prohibits discrimination against women (Symonids & Volodin, 1999, P. ix).

Nevertheless, women continue to face discriminations, especially in the labor market. Ayman and Korabik (2010, p. 157) argue that although recent writers on leadership have prioritized diversity in leadership to some extent, there are some malignant factors that contribute immensely to the underrepresentation of women in leadership, and these factors have been ignored sparingly by many writers. Some of these factors are stereotypes, status and power differentials, ingroup-outgroup dynamics etc. These factors serve as an advantage for men and as obstacles for women and other ethnocultural minorities in their bid to leadership positions. (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p. 157.) It is imperative to find out what actually pulls women back in their desire to climb to the leadership positions in order to be able to change the situation or maintain the status quo (Oakley, 2000, p. 322).

Women overtly and covertly face discriminations in the labor market that hinder them from ascending to the top leadership of organizations. Oakley (2000, p. 321) investigated into several factors such as lack of job experience, inadequate career opportunities, gender differences as far as linguistic styles and socialization are concerned, gender-based stereotypes, old boys' network at the top, and tokenism which serve as barriers to women who have leadership aspirations. She (the author) concludes that women who desire to ascend to higher leadership positions are always entangled by two strong factors, namely; gender-based stereotypes and competing forces of the old ''boys' network'' (Oakley, 2000, p. 321).

There are many ways in which leadership has been associated with particular gendered characteristics which largely wreak discrimination against women. Typically, feminine characteristics such as dressing, tone and peach voice, body language are considered incommensurable with top leadership positions. Such stereotype creates the impression that women do not fit well into top leadership positions. Thus even women

who are able to brave through the barriers into the top leadership positions confront the problem of acceptance and willingness from the followers. On this account, some women out of frustration from the male dominated organizational culture abandon their leadership dreams for other comfortable opportunities. (Oakley, 2000, pp. 330-331.)

Acker (1992, p. 411) asserts also that working life is considered to be separated from the life at home and therefore there are rules and regulations that are to be adhered to in workplaces. These rules and regulations tend to be in favour of men as compared to women, and this is due to the domestic responsibilities ascribed to women. For instance the major roles that women play in family reproduction hinder women's ability to adhere to some organizational rules and regulations. The consequence is that men are always the best choice in certain occupations and positions due to minimal hindrances emanating from traditionally assigned family responsibilities. Women on the other hand often find themselves in occupations and job positions which conform to their circumstances in order to enable them to balance their domestic responsibilities with the job or organizational rules and demands. (Acker (1992, p. 411.)

3.3   Leadership

Undoubtedly, leadership in every human organization and institution has an overarching importance that it is the major determinant of success or failure. Leadership is part and parcel of all human organization and therefore it attracts universal attention (Hackman & Johnson, 2004, p. 2). Research has proven that the effectiveness of an organization depends largely on leadership (Yukl, 2006, p. 3). There are numerous definitions of leadership that can be compared to the number of people who have attempted to define it (Stogdill, 1974, p. 7), but this copious amount of literature on leadership in the shelves mostly lacks consensus because most of the theorists come from different disciplines and perspectives who try to come out with solutions to problems pertaining to their own field (Stewart, 2006, pp. 3-4; Yukl, 2006, p. 2).

Leadership is all about influencing others towards the achievement of goals. Scholars from a variety of fields have come out with many definitions of leadership but one thing that is common in most of these definitions is influence; how leaders influence followers in order to accomplish a goal (House & Javidan, 2004, p. 15). Jago

(1982, p. 35) states that leadership is both process and property. The process of leadership is the use of non-coercive influence to direct and coordinate the activities of an organized group toward the accomplishment of group objectives. A property leadership is the set of qualities or characteristics attributed to those who are perceived as successfully employing such influence. (Jago, 1982, p. 35.) Leadership can therefore be defined as a *process* of *influencing* a group of people in order to consciously or willingly contribute efforts towards the achievement of a common goal (House & Javidan, 2004, p. 15; Northouse, 2007, p. 3; Yukl, 2002, pp. 6-7).

Leadership as a process presupposes that the leadership does not dwell in the one person called the leader but it is a non-linear relationship between the leader and the followers. The leader affects the followers and s/he is affected by the followers. In this case leadership is available to everyone. (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 2; Northouse, 2007, p. 3; Yukl, 2006, p. 4.) It is evidently clear that the concept of influence is very central to the leadership function, and that the differences lie with those who exercise the influence, the intended beneficiality of the influence, the way the influence is exercised, and the end product of the influence (Yukl, 2007, p. 20). Leadership influence is not coercive but rather negotiation and collaboration between the leader and the followers. One cannot influence the other without his/her consent, thus the influence between the leader and the follower is reciprocal; the leader can sometimes turn to be a follower and vice versa (Jago, 1982, p. 316). Leadership is a relational property within groups in the sense that leaders exist because of followers and followers exist because of leadership (Hogg, 2001, p. 185).

One other factor that can be considered to be part and parcel of the leadership process is power. Power is simply "capacity or potential to influence". People who have power have capability to shape other peoples' conviction, manner and the way they do things. (Northouse, 2007, p.7.) Based on sources, French and Raven (1959, pp. 259-269) came up with five bases of power: namely reward, coercive, legitimate, referent and expert powers. Power that is originated from one's position in the organizational structure is the position power (reward, coercive, legitimate). Power originated from the individual's characteristics such as personality, expertise in a particular activity, vision, smartness, gift, communications skills, etc. is termed as personal power (referent and

expert). (Bolman & Deal, 2008, pp. 203-204; Northouse, 2007, p. 9; Yukl, 2002, p. 149.)

At the pedestrian level, leadership and management are used synonymously but most theorists disagree. Northouse (2007, p. 9) admits that both concepts involve working with people and both focus on effective goal achievement, but he argues that leaders and managers use different strategies. Yukl (2006, p. 5) posits that one person cannot double as a leaders and a manager. Kotter, (1990, p. 3) also argues the two concepts are not the same in the sense that leaders set a vision, articulate the vision and map up strategies for creating a suitable environment for realizing the vision. Managers on the hand engage extensively in planning, budgeting, organizing, staffing and controlling to establish a goal (1990, p. 3). However, Hall (1996, p. 10) posits that in the field of education neither leadership nor management can exist on its own, they actually work together. Thus the two terms will be used interchangeably throughout this thesis.

3.3.1 Gendered leadership

The topic of gendered management/leadership has been studied across the globe and the prominent studies include: gender relation in organizational groups, cultures and communication, gender divisions of labour, gender division of hierarchy, power, authority and leadership in organizations and management, gendered markets, gender imagery, symbols and advertising, gender and information technology, sexual harassment, bullying and violence in organizations, and home-work relations (Broadbridge & Hearn, 2008, p. 39). Also, numerous studies have been conducted on gender and leadership and a good number of these studies focused on the differences between men and women in terms of leadership style, behaviour and effectiveness (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p. 159). Discussing gender automatically invites culture into the scene since the two coexist in close symbiotic association (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p. 157).

There is always a lack of consensus with regards to the factors that have contributed to the women's inability to climb to the leadership ladder, but evidence from many researchers suggests that the common contributing factors include the following: stereotypes associated with leadership with maleness, conflicting role expectation of women in many societies, gender discrimination in the labor market, low

human capital development of women, and the need for success as far as family responsibilities are concerned (Bolman and Deal, 2008, pp. 351-355).

Acker (1992, p. 408) asserts that most researchers investigating women in leadership have been focusing on difficulties that women face in the labour market, thus occupational inequalities, sex segregation, and wage gaps have been the mantra of these researchers. She asserts also that there is unfair power distribution between men and women in most societies, but this has been ignored albeit by the researchers (Acker, 1992, p. 408). Smith (2010, p. 22) also argues that most theories on women's underrepresentation in certain occupations and positions have been overly attributed to barriers emanating from the society and the workplace. The author therefore suggests that aside from the barriers, women indeed exercise a personal agency that influences their career decisions (Smith, 2010, p. 22).

Early leadership theories benefited men and this led to the long held axiom that leadership is the men's role. Bolman and Deal (2008, p. 351) asserts that throughout history research and writings on leadership relegated women to the background and this consequently created the impression that leadership is exclusively for men. This trend does not only belong to history but also in the contemporary world, as Ayman and Korabik (2010, p. 157) report that for many decades most useful theories on leadership are mostly drawn from researches conducted on white men in the United States. Moreover, early approaches of leadership theories focused on personality characteristics that were believed to be inherent in people labeled as leaders, and these characteristics were assumed to be missing in non-leaders. Some of these characteristics include intelligence, determination, integrity, objectivity, self-confidence etc, and a more important premise was that the leaders were believed to have been born with these characteristics. (Northouse, 2007, pp. 15-19; Yukl, 20026 pp. 12-13.) Ayman and Korabik (2010, p. 162) posit that these traits negatively affect women's access to leadership since people perceive leadership traits as masculine characteristics.

As a result of many criticisms which largely discredited the trait approach, in the 1950s, research attention was directed towards what effective leaders actually did instead of what they were and this gave birth to the behavior approach (Yukl, 2006, p. 13). Due to the fact that demands, requirements, outcomes, circumstances etc. vary from one organization to the other, the situational approach was promulgated. This approach

premised that a leader may not be effective at all times, in all places and in all circumstances, thus the context determines the suitable leader. (Northouse, 2007, p. 91; Yukl, 2006 p. 14.) Other subsequent approaches of leadership theories include power influence approach, integrative approach, skills approach, style approach, and contingency theory (Northouse, 2007, pp. 39-130; Yukl, 20026 pp. 14-15). All these approaches were presented in a masculine background and, as stated earlier, contributed to the belief that leadership belongs to the man's world. This assertion is based on the fact that as human beings the theorists had their own cultural backgrounds which might influence their thoughts (Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 307-308).

3.3.2 Educational management in Ghana

Ghanaian context seems to maintain the mainstream masculine culture domination in leadership and education is not an exceptional field. In the first place some writers seem to suggest that in the colonization of Africa most countries contributed to the low status of African women (eg, Egbo 2000; Triandis, 1994). Due to economic exploitation during the colonial period, African males had the opportunity to receive formal education as compared to their female counterparts (Triandis, 1994, P. 48). Egbo (2000, p. 1) also alleges that one unfortunate legacy of the introduction of Western Education in Africa by the colonial masters is the fact that it benefited almost only males. It is suffice to say that the colonial masters needed only educated men to pursue their own agenda and therefore promoted only male educations (Egbo, 2000, p. 1). This phenomenon has permeated into contemporary developing countries; hence women educational levels continue to be low as compared to their male counterparts (Triandis, 1994, p48).

Secondly, leadership in Sub-Saharan African countries in the post-colonial era to this day has been construed as innate traits and behaviors that dwell predominantly in great men (Haruna, 2009, p. 941). Thirdly, and specifically in Ghana, school leaders are generally appointed based on long service promotions. Depending on the level of the educational institution, ones' political background, ethnic background, and affiliation with the top leadership in education can earn him/her the position. (Alful-Broni, 2004, p. 5) These factors have negative implications for women leadership since they are not only masculine-oriented but also a competition in which men are mostly the winners.

After independence in 1957, Ghana has embarked on several educational reforms but none of these reforms gave consideration to developing the proficiencies of school leaders (Zame, Hope & Repress, 2008, p.116). According to the same authors, school principals in Ghana do not have adequate leadership training; they acquire the position through a long service promotion, and thus engage in only management and administrative practices (Zame, Hope & Repress, 2008, p.126). Although a long service gives invaluable experience to the principals, additional training to boost experiences acquired from the long service is impeccable (Zame, Hope & Repress, p. 117). Agezo (2010, P. 691) adds that locally, a principal is considered effective based on his/her ability to control and manage an educational institution. In the Ghanaian context therefore, principals are seen as managers rather than leaders. This career path of educational leaders in Ghana puts women in a disadvantageous position since according to MacBeath (2009, pp. 407-408) women in general have less ambition to climb to the leadership positions in organizations. However, there are instances where women who wish to be leaders are discouraged by negative gender assumptions in the society (MacBeath, 2009, pp. 407-408).

3.4   Obstacles to women's access to leadership

To be able to find strategies that can promote equity leadership accessibility for men and women, it is first and foremost imperative to understand the obstacles women encounter in their quest to climb the leadership ladder (Hoyt, 2010, p. 492). This section thus presents a brief historical background and some specific obstacles to women's access to leadership.

3.4.1   Stages of obstacles for women's access to leadership

In Eagly and Carli's, (2007) view, historical development shows three distinctive stages that women have so far gone through as far as barriers to their advancement are concerned. These stages are the *concrete wall*, the *glass ceiling* and the *labyrinth*. (Eagly & Carli, 2007, pp. 1-3.)

The concrete wall represents explicit rules and norms that blocked women from advancing. Even up to the 20th century women faced visible and explicit concrete

barriers which prevented them from participating in certain activities and filling certain capacities. As a typical example, women had no right to vote in public elections, and had no equal political right as men did. Also women were denied access to educational opportunities as compared to men. Furthermore, there were many instances where job advertisements categorically excluded women applications. (Eagly & Carli, 2007, pp. 1-3.)

The glass ceiling metaphor was first introduced in 1986 by Wall Street Journal in the US, after the trend of barriers for women advancement shifted from explicit exclusion to latent exclusion. The glass ceiling, unlike the concrete wall, is artificial non-rules or norms barriers which prevent women from climbing to high authority positions. The barriers took the form of invisible factors that blocked women from reaching top leadership positions. It primarily describes difficulties women encounter in organizations which make it impossible for the majority of women to advance in their careers. Since its introduction the term became the mantra of the public and the academic community. It is still very popular in many writings about gender and managerial discrepancies. (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 4.)

The glass ceiling has been featured copiously by many writers of gender inequalities since its introduction. For instance, Northouse (2007, p. 291) observes that women are markedly underrepresented in key leadership positions due to the "glass ceiling", which serves as a hidden barrier preventing women from assuming key leadership positions. He further explains that the glass ceiling is an integration of some factors which put women in a disadvantaged position in terms of development of human capital investment in education, training and work experience. Among other factors which immensely contribute to the glass ceiling are the gender differences between men and women, and the long held axiom that men are brave and women are too meek to be able to make radical decisions. (Northhouse, 2007, pp. 191-292). Hoyt (2010, p. 485) also states that the glass ceiling encompasses some latent barriers existing in the so-called nondiscriminatory organizations which obstruct vertical movement of women in the leadership ladder.

Nonetheless, some writers seem to be kicking against the glass ceiling citing that it has overstayed its usefulness. Hall (1996, p. 1) reiterates that it is dangerous to portray women as victims of the glass ceiling instead of women pursuing career advancement.

"Is there still a glass ceiling?" This is the rhetorical question that Eagly and Carli (2007, p. 1) ask. The authors argue that looking at the changes and progress that women have made so far, with regards to their participation in socioeconomic and other public activities, the glass ceiling no longer authentically depicts the situation on the ground. The glass ceiling depicts the barriers which prevent women's advancement as rigid and impervious. This is actually a wrong picture of the current circumstance of women and other ethnocultural minorities. The glass ceiling thus misleads and makes the situation look hopeless. Evidences of women's progress nowadays show that barriers against women advancement exist but those barriers are permeable and navigable. (Eagly & Carli, 2007, pp. 1-2.)

Admittedly, the more powerful positions still remain in the hands of men, and women have not yet been fully liberated from the prejudices and discriminations which hinder their access to top managerial positions. However, instead of the glass ceiling which portrays the barriers as a highly inflexible *labyrinth,* a new metaphor that portrays the barriers as navigable network routes of challenges and maze path that women go through to leadership positions, is the appropriate way to portray or diagnose the women's woes with regards to leadership accessibility. (Eagly & Carli, 2007, pp. 1-2.)

3.4.2   Gender and managerial stereotypes

Triandis (1994, p. 107) defines stereotypes as "ideas about the characteristics of groups of people". A stereotype is a set of beliefs of personal characteristics which one ascribes to a group of people (Graves & Powell, 2003, p. 4). McGarty et al., (2002, pp. 1-2) also define stereotypes as "psychological representation of characteristics of people who belong to a particular group". In the other words stereotypes are perceptions or impressions or prejudiced mind-sets that a group of people hold and share. Stereotypes are categorized into two groups; what a group of people think about themselves and what they think about other groups. These are termed *autostereotype*s and *heterostereotypes* respectively. Some stereotypes are authentic in the sense that they have empirical evidences backing them and they are referred to as *sociotypes.* (Triandis, 1994, p. 107.) Ridgeway (2001, p. 637) entitles gender stereotypes as "genetic codes" of

the gender system because they are so powerful that the society uses them as bases for ranking and evaluating men and women's abilities and competencies.

Individuals who constitute a society always share characteristics, circumstances, values and beliefs in order to maintain the structure of the society. Stereotypes are formed in order to aid the perceiver make sense of a situation with little effort, and also enable him/her (the perceiver) to conform to the accepted views of the society. (McGarty et al., 2002, p. 2.) Moreover, stereotypes provide a shortcut for explanation and understanding (McGarty et al., 2002, pp. 1-2; Powell, Butterfield & Parent, 2002, p. 177), but undoubtedly they have a high potential of misleading people (McGarty et al., 2002, pp. 1-2). They can be used to perpetuate erroneous ideas or thinking to be established as welcome wisdom in a particular society and transfer from one generation to another. Thus the stereotypes can wreak negative or positive effects depending on how the people apply them. (McGarty et al., 2002, pp. 2-4.)

Triandis (1994, pp. 48-49) presents some specific behaviours which are stereotyped as masculine or feminine in many societies. Men are labeled as aggressive, adventurous, dominant, autocratic, robust, forceful, enterprising, independent, progressive, stern, wise and competitive. Men are also reckoned as having a higher ability to take risks as compared to women. Women on the other hand are labeled as sensitive, sentimental, affectionate, dreamy, submissive, and superstitious. Moreover, those behaviours which are stereotyped as masculine have further been regarded as more important and prestigious than the feminine behaviours in most societies. These behaviours which have been stereotyped as masculine or feminine have their corresponding occupations. (Triandis, 1994, pp. 48-49.)

How do stereotypes affect the female leadership? Managerial stereotypes affect the women's confidence and the confidences others have about them with respect to their leadership acumen, since the managerial role is tagged as a masculine role. The stereotypes constitute strong status beliefs that the worthiness of men in terms of leadership competence is far above women. So in some cultures female leadership is believed to be encroachment of the male's territory or breaking of social order, and this is a major contributing factor to the "glass ceiling". (Ridgeway, 2001, p. 637.) In spite of the fact that the proportion of females occupying managerial positions has over the years increased tremendously, and the increased advocacy of feminine leadership styles,

"a good manager is still perceived as predominantly masculine" (Powell et al., 2002, p. 177). Ironically, the dwindling of masculine leadership characteristics has not yet produced expected concomitant endorsement of feminine leadership characteristics. Specifically, leadership is still being stereotyped as the men's field. (Powell et al., 2002, pp. 188-189.) Hence, women who want to pursue a leadership career have to admit that they are naturally not viable, thus the best option is to adopt a masculine way if only they want to see their dreams become reality (Powell et al., 2002, p. 178). These stereotypes have implications on the underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions.

The stereotype that management is predominantly a field for men deters and deprives women and even men who have feminine characteristics from pursuing a leadership career. The research conducted by Powell et al., (2002) epitomizes the negative implications of "think a leader – think a man" stereotype. The researchers sampled 348 graduate and undergraduate students to determine whether the increase in the number of female managers over the years has resulted in a change in the stereotype that a good manager largely exhibits masculine characteristics. It was found among other things that young females studying business do not see themselves as prospective good managers as compared to their male counterparts. Such a perception results in a very low motivational gravity for young women to pursue higher career development in leadership and management. (Powell et al., 2002, p. 191.)

In addition, during the selection for managerial positions, an organization is likely to consider applicants who show signs of adhering to the prevailing managerial stereotypes ascribed to the position being vied for. Moreover, organizations expect their managers to act according to the behaviours that are attached to positions they occupy. As a result, some women in managerial positions invariably do not live their own life, but the life that has been tagged to the managerial position. (Powell et al., 2002, p. 189; Powell, 2012, p. 126.) Again this can serve as a reason for some women to remain in their comfort zones. It is likely for a woman to be evaluated negatively by men in a leadership context that has predominantly been stereotyped as masculine or that has been occupied successfully by men for a very long time (Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p. 165).

3.4.3   Gender Status Beliefs and leadership

The status belief of men and women in the society affects female leadership owing to the fact that it (status belief) determines the confidence that organizations have in men and women as far as leadership competence is concerned. Status beliefs are part and parcel of gender stereotypes that hinder women from occupying higher authority and leadership positions in most societies. The status beliefs establish a hierarchical image in the minds of the people, and they serve as guidelines for placing men and women in their rightful positions in the social stratum. Moreover, this mental image, to a very large extent, is used as a yardstick to evaluate men and women's viability in certain contexts instead of actual performance. (Ridgeway, 2001, pp. 637-640.)

Status beliefs are formed as a result of different traditional gender roles and unequal opportunities for men and women. Ridgeway (2001, pp. 649-655) asserts that the status that the society accords to men and women is a result of everyday interactions, and once anchored in the minds of the people, they are very difficult to amend. The author delineates that in everyday interaction women are latently restricted from engaging in certain activities by factors such as bearing and caring for children. Men are flexible and have the opportunity to move about and therefore have the opportunity to gain influence and power in the society. Consequently, men are believed to have a higher status in the society and this is strongly embedded. Although with the advent of new ways of doing things due to economic and technological changes, men still enjoy a higher status than women because it takes a longer time to change cultural beliefs. (Ridgeway, 2001, 649-655.)

Ridgeway (2001, pp. 651-655) asserts also that gender status beliefs create some kind of legitimacy reactions and performance expectations about female leadership, especially in the fields and contexts where men have already taken dominion. In some cultures people innately doubt the legitimacy of women in leadership positions. So it exists in the minds of the people that giving a leadership position to a woman is tantamount to reducing the power and the authority that are embedded in the position in question. In other words the status that the society accords to women is below the power and authority required by whoever is fit to occupy the leadership position. Moreover, in cultures where women have a very low status, women's accomplishments in leadership are less valued and rarely recognized by many. (Ridgeway, 2001, pp. 651-655.)

3.5   Importance of female leadership

The WDR of 2012 on gender equality indicates that promoting gender equality offers a greater economic impetus as it has a greater potential of booming productivity, improving development outcomes for future generation, and giving institutions adequate representatives. Women constitute 40 percent of the world's labour force, hence if barriers against women advancement are dealt with, labour productivity could increase by at least 25 percent in some developing countries like Ghana and Tanzania. Moreover, improving the status of women would offer them the opportunity to provide the necessary support for their children thereby laying the foundation for the future generation. In addition, making women full participants in decision-making brings a variety of ideas which are recipes for development. (World Bank, 2011, p. xx.) The above can also be true in leadership in education.

Many researchers have argued that women are not predisposed to be non-leaders naturally, but have for many centuries been negatively affected by the domination of men in leadership (eg. Oplatka, 2006; Shapira et al., 2011; Smith, 2011). These researchers have given various reasons why women lack access to leadership positions and why it is imperative to give way to women into leadership. For example, Oplatka (2006, pp. 604-624) reviewed 13 standard peer reviewed articles on educational administration, gender studies and comparative education to set the stage for exploration of women educational leadership within the developing countries. The author remarks that women possess unique leadership qualities, but cultural and social structures push males and females towards opposite directions and this is a major hindrance to women's access to leadership positions (Oplatka, 2006, p. 612).

In a research in which life history interviews were conducted with 40 female secondary school teachers, Smith (2011, p. 22) reports that women's career decisions are not only influenced by socially or culturally constructed barriers and institutional factors such as workplace discrimination, but more importantly the women's self-perceptions regarding what is convenient for their living conditions. The author found two categories in the female teachers' career decision-makers: those who plan and take control over their lives and those whose decisions are based on other people's input on them? or based on chances and circumstances. The teachers belonging to the latter

group generally lack confidence and are reluctant to apply for a promotion. They therefore need encouragement, feedback and professional advices and support to drive them to move forward. (Smith, 2010, pp. 11-13.) A similar research has been conducted through in-depth interviews with seven successful female educational leaders in the Arab education system in Israel. The research findings indicate that female principals play important roles in the development of education in the Arab world, but there exists social and political resistance for women to enter into public life and positions. They also serve as roles models from whom many women their communities draw inspiration to shape their dreams and aspirations. (Shapira eta l., 2011, pp. 25, 38-39).

Women perform remarkably well in leadership, even better than their male counterparts, ironically, more people prefer male leaders and this makes it difficult for many women to assume leadership positions, especially in male dominated fields (Eagly, 2007, p. 1). For instance specifically in Ghana, Agezo (2010, pp. 694-700) gives a detailed account of some leadership qualities such as sharing, visionary, passionate for work, collaborative, having a high integrity etc. which characterize female principals in Ghana. All these researchers among many others believe that female leadership is very vital especially in the educational institutions.

There is a lack of empirical evidence that shows that men are better leaders than women and this makes women equally qualified to assume leadership positions of any kind in the society (Yukl, 2007, p. 427). In a meta-analysis of 17 studies to examine gender differences in leadership, Dobbins and Platz, (1986, p. 125) argue that gender has no significant influence on leadership effectiveness. They conclude also that male leaders are considered more effective only in a laboratory analysis and not on a real field of practice. The general stereotype and deep-seated prejudices about women as not capable of managing schools effectively is mainly due to the lack of adequate scientific knowledge in most societies (Kruger, 1996, p. 449).

Nonetheless, some researchers have revealed some differences between the leadership style of men and women, but do not relate these differences to the underrepresentation of women in leadership. McTavish and Miller (2006, pp. 14-15), for example, posit that autocratic leadership that uses command and control is often associated with men's leadership, whereas women are associated with a democratic approach which relies on consensus building, empowerment and team-work.

Furthermore, women's inter-personal communication and listening styles are often characterized by empathy, mutual trust and respect. Conversely, men are more directive, formal and stringent in their communication, and also likely to reward good performance and punish poor performance. (McTavish & Miller, 2006, pp. 14-15.) The authors, however, assert that there are many women in the fields and professions such as business, education and health but in terms of leadership in these fields and professions the women are directly or indirectly covered by the "glass ceiling" (McTavish & Miller (2006, p. 6).

There are some societal and organizational factors which serve as barriers hindering women from occupying top and elite managerial positions (Broadbridge, 2007, p. 965; McTavish & Miller, 2006, P. 14). Prominent among these factors are family demands, unfavorable organizational cultures, ways in which work is organized, lack of female role models, lack of confidence and political awareness (Broadbridge, 2007, p. 965; Oplatka, 2006, p. 604), institutional sexism, a masculine organizational culture (McTavish & Miller, 2006 P. 8). All these point to the fact that women are only subjected to injustices in the society, and when given the chance they have a lot to offer to the society, especially in the field of education which is the number one driving force behind any developed nation.

In a research to examine female leadership practices that contribute to school effectiveness in the Ghanaian context, Agezo (2010, p. 700) found that female principals posses more interactive skills, emotional intelligence, sense of humor, and are more flexible and assertive. Women principals focus more on the development of quality teaching in their schools, but male principals channel much of their attention toward external responsibilities of their leadership (Kruger, 1996, p. 447). On the issue of conflicts in schools, women principals act proactively to avoid the occurrences of conflicts, whilst their male counterparts are more resolute in conflict management. A man would probably emerge more often as a leader in an informal situation where there is no leadership than a woman would do (Graves & Powell, 2003, p. 108). This assertion suggests that men's ambition to assume leadership positions is higher than that of women.

Writing on advantages and disadvantages of female leadership, Eagly (2007, p. 6) states that women have been judged as more effective in educational, governmental, and

social organizations, as compared to men. Women applied a transformational leadership approach; they exercise less control over followers, are future-oriented and very supportive, they empower and encourage followers etc. Women are also found on top in financial management and nondiscriminatory practices. (Eagly, 2007, pp. 5-6.)

3.6 Prospect and way forward of female leadership

Where are we and where should we head towards? This question comes to mind because the status of women keeps on changing and thus there is the need to anticipate the next direction. Researchers and policy-makers have been proposing and implementing many approaches towards putting women in their proper shelves in order to create equality and let justice prevail. Berger, Walis and Watson (1995, p. 2) observe that for many decades strenuous efforts to challenge the normative male domination in critical and special roles in human society have not yet yielded the level of equality expected. Some of these efforts include creation of gender studies in universities, scientific research on genetic makeup of males and females, invention of fictional characters who attempt to neutralize stereotypes, and many others. These efforts basically seek to weaken and demystify gender differences in order get rid of discrimination against women. (Berger et al., 1995, p. 2.)

Many writers admit the fact that women had, at least for the past five decades, made remarkable improvement in higher education, employment in certain professions which used to be predominantly for men and political power in terms numerical strength (e.g. Eccles, 2011, p. 195; Hoyt, 2010, p. 485; Shafer & Malhotra, 2011, p. 209). Notwithstanding, the available data indicate that there is still a very wide gap between men and women in the top leadership positions (Hoyt, 2010, p. 485). Moreover, the society keep on portraying women and men as innately different and unequal, and this has been a strong contributing factor sustaining the gender inequality, since it has the potential to influence public policies (Shafer & Malhotra, 2011, p. 209). This section thus seeks to reveal some of the strategies viable for the promotion of female leadership.

Sensing the danger of too much complaints about the glass ceiling, Hall (1996) conducted a two-year long qualitative research with six successful female principals in the United Kingdom (UK). The researcher aimed at finding out the reason behind some

women who have successfully been able to break through the glass ceiling. The author acknowledges the existence of barriers to women's leadership access but argues that some women have been able to break through and this thus offers an alternative direction as to how women can get into the top echelon of leadership. (Hall, 1996, pp. 1-5.) The findings of this research project provide many suggestions which can make a positive impact on women's ability to move into leadership positions and also change the society's erroneous perceptions about women's leadership acumen.

First, the research suggests that women themselves need to be intrinsically motivated. Tracing the respondents' career track from family origin through all their schooling and their career as teachers, the researcher found that the principals had been successful primarily due to their high level of intrinsic motivation. This motivation propelled them not to be scared by their weaknesses, and the stereotypes about leadership and gender. The principals encountered the barriers as other women did but regarded themselves as capable enough to overcome those barriers. They relied largely on their own efforts and more importantly the women chose lifestyles the enabled them to balance family life with career advancement. (Hall, 1996, pp. 184-185.)

Second, the research suggests androgynous socialization where children and even adults are given the opportunity to model both males and females. Hall (1996, pp. 184-185) states that although the female principals in her study were socialized along gender line, they had the opportunity to model both mother and father which inculcated in them how to use both power and influence. During their career development the principals were androgynous because they learned from both good and bad role models irrespective of gender and never bothered to learn masculine behaviours to get their way through. They were always studying any context they found themselves in order to map up appropriate strategies for developing the schools they headed. As one of their strategies, they created and maintained a culture of trust, openness and inclusiveness in their schools. (Hall, 1996, pp. 185-186.)

Third, the research suggests that women who aspire to be leaders are required to develop self-management. According to Hall (1996, pp. 186-187), the female principals in the study relied on self-organization, self-development, and self-reflection which enabled them to be authentic leaders and role models as they were supposed to be. They attached positive emotions to their duties and other people's needs. The author credits

this vital aspect of the principals' leadership as a retroactive effect of their past socialization as girls and women. As authentic models they paid attentions to the physical attributes such as dressing in an acceptable way and body language. (Hall, 1996, pp. 186-187.)

Moreover, the study prescribes a transformation leadership approach as capable of projecting female leadership. Transformational leaders inspire and empower followers, and seek not only their own development but the development of the followers individually as well (Bass and Riggio, 2006, p. 4; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999, p. 184; Stewart, 2006, p. 9). This is in congruence with Hall's (1996, p. 187) findings that the female principals in her study used assessing and reviewing of the performance of teachers not for accountability but for professional development. They eschewed discrimination and model profession behavior for others to emulate, irrespective of gender. They treated each individual as having a unique personality, set high expectations and were astute in providing moral and material support for teachers and other followers. Instead of traditional expectation of a leader having power over followers, these principals rather share their power with the followers. They chose to give power to their followers and not power over followers. (Hall, 1996, p. 187.)

Hoyt (2010, pp. 492-493) makes a similar suggestion that getting rid of barriers against women is a way forward and this can be facilitated by the effective leadership of women who have been able to break through the barriers. Thus the author recommends transformational leadership which is practically an effective leadership approach, and more importantly it utilizes feminine behaviours (considerate and supportive) (Hoyt (2010, pp. 492-493).

Oplaka (2006, p. 621) recommends that in order to attract every hand on deck in bridging the gap between men and women in terms of leadership representation, there is an impeccable need to research into generating international database to project women leadership, especially in educational institutions. In relation to Oplaka's view above, WDR for 2012 indicates that taking advantage of opportunities offered by the advent of globalization can go a long way to promote gender equality. The report specifically mentions some elements of globalization such as trade openness and easy access to information and communication technology as tools that can connect women and girls to trade and economic opportunities. These elements can also bring changes in attitudes

towards gender relations in some societies and also motivate countries to channel more efforts towards promoting gender equality. (World Bank, 2011, p. xxi.)

Shafer and Malhotra (2011, p. 209) suggest that in order to promote gender equality, the roles women and men play at the social structures, and for that matter the family and workplaces, should be redefined. World Bank (2011, p. 22) prescribes that tackling gender inequality should be guided by the context. In this case it is important to first of all look for the gaps which have the highest potential of effective change. Also as a guiding principle, the causes of gender gaps must be the focus of any strategy rather than focusing on the outcome of the causative factors. The report outlines four strategies which are viable in many contexts. These include: (a) providing an equal opportunity for human capital development, (b) bridging earnings and productivity gaps between men and women, (c) allowing equal voices of men and women in decision-making, and (d) limiting the reproduction of gender inequality over time. The report stresses that in many developing countries women have less influence on household decision-making. It thus suggests that giving women a mouth in household decisions and management has the potential of giving a good future to the future generation (World Bank, 2011, pp. 22-23.)

4 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design encompasses the exact procedures involved in the research process, and in quantitative and qualitative researches these procedures include: data collection, data analysis, and report writing (Creswell, 2012, p. 20; Patton, 2002, p. 64). All empirical researches have a research design which can be explicit or implicit (Yin, 2009, p. 26). Thus this chapter basically presents the detail description of how the research was conducted. It first and foremost briefly presents the philosophical ideas (theoretical paradigm) behind the design of the research, and reiterates the purpose of the study and the questions the research sought to answer. It proceeds with a background description of qualitative research, how the data was collected and the data analysis procedure.

4.1 My choice of theoretical paradigm

Consciously or unconsciously, every researcher incorporates some personal beliefs and philosophical assumptions into his/her research. The researcher's beliefs and philosophical orientation serve as a guiding framework through which he/she makes choices. These are always manifested in his/her choices of research problem and questions. They are also manifested in the researcher's choices of theories and method(s) of collecting and analyzing data. (Creswell, 2013, pp. 15-16.) These beliefs are collectively termed as paradigms or worldview. Paradigm can therefore be defined as "the basic belief or worldview that guides the investigator, not only in choices of methods but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways". (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105.) Guba and Lincoln identify four paradigms and posit that each of the paradigms is applicable to both quantitative and qualitative researches. The

paradigms include: *positivism*, *postpositivism*, *critical theory*, *and constructivism.* (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 105.)

The paradigms, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 108), are rooted to three philosophical assumptions: *ontology*, *epistemology* and *methodology*. Ontology is concerned with the nature of reality and its characteristics (objective or subjective). With regards to ontology, qualitative researchers embrace multiple subjective realities which encompass the original views of the respondents resulting in different perspectives and in-depth understanding. Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and how it is acquired. With epistemology, qualitative researchers get into the field for closer interaction with the participants in order to observe and amass the individuals' subjective views. And, methodology is concerned with the process of conducting research. Concerning methodology, qualitative research relies on inductive and emerging techniques and it requires the competency and commitment of the researcher in collecting and analyzing the data. (Creswell, 2013, pp. 20-22.) I believe in a subjective reality and also see the need to explore the history, experiences, opinions, perspectives and feeling of people in order to understand issues surrounding them. Consequently, I was convinced that my philosophical orientation matches with those embedded in qualitative research.

Table 1 below shows the summary of the relationship between the paradigms and the philosophical assumptions. On top of the columns of the table are the four paradigms. The roles contain the outline of the specific nature of reality as enshrined in each paradigm (Ontology), the nature of knowledge each paradigm seeks to bring out (Epistemology), and finally, the process involved in conducting research in each of the paradigms (Methodology).

Table 1 Basic beliefs (Metaphysics) of alternative inquiry paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2000, p. 165; 2005, p. 193).

Item	Positivism	Postpositivism	Critical theory et al	Constructivism
Ontology	Naïve realism–"real" reality but apprehendible	Critical realism-"real" reality but only imperfectly and probabilistically apprehendible	Historical realism-virtual reality shaped by social, political, cultural, economic ethnic, and gender values; crystallized over time	Relativism-local and specific constructed and co-constructed realities
Epistemology	Dualist/objectivist; findings true	Modified dualist/objectivist; critical tradition /community; findings probably true	Transactional/Subjectivist; value-mediated findings	Transactional/Subjectivist; created findings
Methodology	Experimental/ Manipulative; verification of hypotheses; chiefly quantitative methods.	Modified experimental/manipulative; critical multiplism; falsification of hypotheses; may include quantitative methods	Dialogic /Dialectical	Hermeneutical/Dialectical

Theoretical perspectives are important in qualitative research, but it is not a fixed rule that a research should belong to a specific theoretical perspective. In practice, what is impeccable in qualitative research is the use of open-ended questions and observation to obtain data from the real world of the participants. (Patton, 2002, pp. 135-137.) Moreover, Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 4) assert that because qualitative researchers always seek to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under study, they always hardly stick to a single interpretive framework. Thus in this qualitative research, although some aspects of other interpretive framework(s), especially the feminist inquiry approach, may latently or explicitly be manifested, it largely lends to *constructivism.* With regards to methodology, the research employed the *hermeneutic* approach. Guba and Lincoln (1990, p. 148) specifically match the social construction framework with the hermeneutic methodology. Hermeneutics focus on understanding the meaning of the phenomenon within the original context or the context where the

phenomenon was constructed. The tenet of hermeneutics is *contextual or nonobjective interpretation* of a phenomenon. (Patton, 2002, pp. 113-114; Schwandt, 2000, pp. 194-194.)

I believe in social justices, and thus chose to follow the path of social construction interpretive framework tradition as far as this study is concerned. Researchers who believe in social justice have a passion for change in order to correct injustices in societies (Creswell, 2013, 23). Schwandt (2000, p. 197) argues that knowledge is not discovered but rather, it is constructed by human being. Thus the basic tenet of the social construction interpretive framework is that human beings have the ability to collectively perceive and create social reality. The social constructivist considers such perceived reality as not absolute and therefore subjective and relative. The theory disassociates the perceived social reality from nature. Rather, the social constructivists posit that the social realities are shaped by cultural and linguistic contexts. People for instance construct meaning of symbols, gestures, names etc. based on their characteristics. Thus, social constructivists are always interested in understanding the multiple realities created by people and how they (the realities) affect the people's co-existence. Moreover, researchers from this orientation interact with people in order to explore their experiences and perspectives through open-ended interviews and observations. (Patton, 2002, pp. 96-98.) Creswell (2009, p. 8) also posits that constructivist researchers extensively rely on the views of the participants in order to arrive at a subjective meaning others have about the world or the phenomenon under study.

The above discussion coupled with other factors to be discussed later propelled me to choose a qualitative case study research paradigm for this study. This was the research track that I believed had the greatest potential of yielding a deeper understanding of gender representation of leadership in Ghana. It offered me an opportunity to find information from the natural setting. Qualitative researchers are not only concerned about how people create social reality, but also the meaning they give to the social reality created (Denzin &Lincoln, 2005, p. 10).

4.2   Aim and research questions of the study

The statement of the purpose and research questions of a study directs the researcher with regards to the facts that are supposed to be learnt from the participants (Creswell, 2012, p. 20). The purpose of the study shows what the research intends to find out. Patton (2002, p.213) considers the purpose of a study as the *controlling force* of a research that drives or determines the decisions concerning all the other elements of the study. The overall aim of this study was to explore the views of female principals and other concerned groups (teachers and education officers) on gender representation of educational leadership, and also to solicit ideas as to how more women can be attracted to educational leadership in Ghana.

A research element which probably requires most cogent attention in any research endeavor is the question(s) the research seek to answer (Yin, 2009, p. 10). Three initial research questions were formulated for the realization of the above research purpose, and these included: *How has culture influenced gender representation of educational leaders in Ghana? What cultural, organizational and social factors serve as obstacles which prevent women from getting leadership positions in Ghana? How can female representation of educational leadership be increased in Ghana?* However, after collecting the data there was the need to introduce one additional research, thus the research question was: *Why are female leaders needed in the Ghana education system?* I did this because research questions of qualitative research are sometimes prone to change in the course of conducting the research to enable the researcher gain more insight about the problem under study. This is because as an inductive approach, qualitative research relies largely on the information from the ground and not extensively on the theories or the researcher's perspective. (Creswell, 2013, p. 22.) Hence during the interview the participants kept on stressing the importance of recruiting more women into educational leadership in Ghana. They cited many reasons why women leadership is a potential solution to many challenges in Ghana's education and also brings improvement in the education.

I was moved to conduct this research with this aim due to my background as a teacher with relatively enough experience with both male and female principals, and male and female teachers. I observed that most female educational leaders enter into the

positions at relatively older age as compared to their male counterparts. On this account, Ruhl-Smith, Shen and Cooley (1999, p. 601) point out that women, as compared to men, teach for a longer time before they seek for substantive leadership positions. The authors maintain also that women require more encouragement before they make up their mind to seek leadership roles (Ruhl-Smith et al., 1999, p. 601-602). With regards to my personal experience, I learned that most of my female teacher colleagues had less motivation to seek leadership positions.

Moreover, coming to Finland as a student I have learned that one factor that has contributed to the success of Finnish Education and development in general is their commitment to equality, in which gender equality is included. Women enjoy the same status as men in Finland, therefore they (women) have opportunity to contribute fully to the society without any significant impediment. It is no exaggeration to say that the Finnish example can be replicated in my country, Ghana. I thus had a strong conviction that if African and for that matter Ghanaian development agenda should really see the light of the day, then women need to be given the chance to participate actively in decision-making by involving them fully in leadership.

What is more, I saw the need to conduct this research because I came across current copious research findings and reports that there is the existence of gender inequality, especially in decision-making. Many of these research findings and reports posit that this phenomenon greatly contributes to the woes of underdeveloped countries. (eg, Cuadrado et al., 2012; EFA, 2011; Gakusi, 2010; Powell, 2012; World Bank, 2011.)

4.3   Qualitative case study

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, pp. 1-2) trace the history of qualitative research from the colonial era where colonial masters studied the culture of the indigenous people using qualitative strategies such as observation, participation, interviewing, and ethnography in order to map up strategies for ruling their colonies. Later, the research strategy was adopted by social and behavioural sciences. Along the way, qualitative research was criticized by the advocates of quantitative research in the scientific arena. To this day, it faces such criticisms as being an unscientific exploration and lacking empirical bases

for generalization. Nevertheless, today, qualitative research method holds superiority in the human sciences.

Thus, qualitative research has been given different definitions at each stage of its development. However, Denzin and Lincoln (2005, pp. 1) provide a generic definition of qualitative research as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world". This presupposes that qualitative research involves collecting, analyzing and interpreting empirical data (personal experiences, interviews, observation, historical, etc) in order to understand the world. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, pp. 1-3, 8.) According to Creswell (2009, p. 4), qualitative research is a method of exploring and understanding an individual's perspective of a social phenomenon. This is done by observing or interviewing the participants at the natural setting of the phenomenon, analyzing the data inductively (building from particulars to general themes) and consequently interpreting the data. (Creswell, 2009, p. 4) Merriam (2009, p.x) also states that "a qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit".

The qualitative research paradigm was employed for the current study. Qualitative research leads to acquisition of in-depth and detailed understanding of the phenomenon under study. This is because the researcher explores the experiences, feelings and the opinions of the participants without imposing predetermined variables or answers on them (the participants) (Merriam, 2009, p. 5; Patton, 2002, pp. 5, 13-14). Moreover, the in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study is enhanced by the small number of respondents coupled with a small number of cases. Thus a qualitative researcher is expected to step into the ground to observe the real world of the phenomenon under study. He or she is expected to communicate with people in order to get their experiences and perceptions about the issue under consideration. (Patton, 2002, pp. 5, 13-14.)

Belonging to the naturalistic research tradition, qualitative research is such that the research occurs in the real-world setting and also devoid of the researcher's manipulation. Moreover, a naturalistic researcher focuses extensively on the perspective of the participants. Such approach to studying a phenomenon offers an opportunity not only for deeper-wider insight into the phenomenon, but also for the emergence of new and unexpected outcomes. (Patton, 2002, pp. 39-40, 43.) The central idea behind the use

of qualitative research is to optimize learning from participants so that the results of the study can be realistic, persuasive and convincing to the reader (Creswell, 2012, pp. 17-18). There is less restriction as far as qualitative design is concerned and this makes the research approach flexible. Even after the data collection has begun, there is still room for the emergence of new strategies, collaboration and modification. This makes the approach more eclectic and also allows a deeper and holistic exploration of the phenomenon under study. (Patton, 2002, p. 255.)

My choice for qualitative research did not come for nothing as Patton (2012, pp. 12-14) puts that there are no explicit rules for choosing between qualitative and quantitative research but it all depends on what the researcher wants to know about the phenomenon under study. For instance, a researcher who wants to know numerical or statistical dimensions of a phenomenon would certainly opt for quantitative approach. On the other hand, a researcher who aims at a deeper and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon is likely to adhere to the qualitative approach. (Patton, 2012, pp. 12-14) Thus I subscribed to the latter instance. In addition, Merriam (2009, p. 1) suggests that aside from making sure your research design matches with the research questions, it is important to ensure that the design is in line with your worldview (theoretical paradigm), personality, and skills. Hence, researchers are supposed to have adequate knowledge about the philosophical foundations of the various research designs to enable them make suitable choices of research design.

I believe that studying social issues as gender inequality requires exploring into the inner experiences of participants, and qualitative research best offers such opportunity. As Creswell (2013, p. 6) points out, "qualitative research inquiry represents a legitimate mode of social and human science exploration, without apology or comparison to quantitative research". In a research where the variables are unknown, and where the literature might not provide enough information on the phenomenon under study, a qualitative research method is the most suitable method to employ to explore more information from the participants (Creswell, 2012, p. 16). This is in line with my topic in the sense that not many researches on gender representation have been done within the Ghanaian cultural context. Also, the Ghanaian society keeps on changing at a very fast rate and this call for drawing a new perspective of the people and such attempt requires a qualitative inquiry.

Moreover, in choosing a qualitative research approach I was also guided by three factors as provided by Creswell (2012, pp. 19-20): (a) The nature of the problem: the qualitative research approach is suitable when the problem of the study requires exploration for a deeper understanding. (b) The fitness of the approach to the audience of the final research report: here, the key fact is that the audience must be familiar with the approach. (c) The researcher's personal experience: in this regard a qualitative researcher should have experience in field work as observation and interaction skills. (Creswell, 2012, pp. 19-20) Concerning the first two factors, I had no doubt that the nature of the topic requires deeper understanding from the perspective of female principals and other stakeholders and the audience, I realized that my first audience, the faculty members, are very familiar with qualitative research. The third factor was a bit of a dilemma in the sense the researcher's expertise is the sine qua non of the quality of qualitative research, as Patton (2002, pp. 4-5) puts it that qualitative data are mostly obtained from field contact and this makes the methodological skills of the researcher, his/her sensitivity and integrity a prerequisite for the quality of qualitative research. Hence, the researcher represents the research instrument that determines the validity and credibility of the research (Patton, 2002, p. 14). I used a mix method of quantitative and qualitative methods for my Bachelor's degree thesis and also did more courses and seminars in qualitative methods and thus considered myself fit for the task of qualitative research.

Qualitative research per se is not a single research approach, but rather has a variety of sub-approaches which the researcher can choose from, usually based on the nature of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002, pp. 76-78). This qualitative research employed the case study strategy. A case study is a suitable research strategy for understanding a complex phenomenon or a problem in its *real-life context* (see Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 104; Stake, 1995, p. xi; Yin, 2009, p. 18). Case study is used in my disciplines within human sciences to understand complex social phenomena. It "allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events". (Yin, 2009, pp. 4, 17.) The case for study can be decisions, individuals, institutions, programs, neighborhood, cultures, critical incidences and events (see: Patton, 2002, p. 40; Yin, 2009, pp. 4, 17.) The essence of case study is to capture an in-depth understanding and complexity of a phenomenon by studying a sizable number of

participants or by a thorough examination of a small number of particular instance(s) (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 104; Stake, 1995, p. xi). A case has specificity and every case has unique characteristics. Thus it is important to single out one case among many others in order to understand the details. Therefore a phenomenon is worth subjecting to case study if it is of special interest and thus required to be studied within the context in which it (the phenomenon) exists. (Stake, 1995, p. xi.)

Consequently, Yin (2009, p. 18) defines case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident". Case study can be a single case study or a study of multiple cases (Yin, 2009, p. 19). Stakes (1995, pp. 3-5) also describes three types of case studies: *intrinsic, instrumental*, and *collective* case studies. A case is described as intrinsic if a researcher has a personal interest in a problem or phenomenon or takes the responsibility for studying a case. Here the researcher has a need to study the case if it pricks his/her curiosity. Moreover, the study is limited to that particular case and cannot be generalized. When a researcher studies a particular case in order to get more insight about a general understanding of a composite research question or a problem, then the case study is described as instrumental. Here the study is usually used as a part of another study or as an aspect of a program. Finally, when the research is such that several cases or facets of a general problem or a phenomenon are studied separately but with a sort of coordination, and finally drawing conclusions from the individual instrumental cases, then the approach is described as a collective case study. It is suffice to say that it is possible and acceptable to conduct a case study without adhering to a particular type.

Researchers do not choose the research approach haphazardly. Among approaches such as case study, experiment, survey, archival analysis, and history, Yin (2009, p. 8) suggests that three conditions serve as guides for making choice. Thus: (a) the nature of the research questions posed, (b) the extent of control the researcher can exercise over the actual behavioral event, and (c) the focus of the research on either contemporary or historical events. He clarifies the suitability of a case study for a research in line with the conditions stated above. Firstly, the case study approach is preferable when the researcher seeks to find out *how* or *why* a phenomenon exists, affects, influences,

impacts etc. Secondary, the approach is very appropriate when the researcher has a minimal control over the events, and thirdly, when the researcher wants to study the phenomenon in a real-life situation. (Yin, 2009, pp. 8-13.)

Considering all the above pros and cons of a case study, I realized that studying how culture, societal, and organizational factors influence gender representation in educational leadership, and how to improve women's participation in leadership, could best be done by using the qualitative case study approach. Moreover, the nature of the phenomenon required studying in a real-life context devoid of my control as a male student conducting a research about women. Hence the study was lowered down to a multiple-intrinsic case study. It has been suggested that a case study is best suited for studying contemporary issues (Yin, 2009, p. 8), I observed that oppression of women in many human endeavors has a strong historical background, but I viewed it as more contemporary because of the fact that phenomena keep on taking different dimensions from one generation to another. I therefore saw it as a right direction to undertake a qualitative case study research in order to capture an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon.

The approach was specifically *intrinsic-multiple case study*. Silverman (2005, p. 127) intimates that an exclusive intrinsic case study is likely to lack acceptance, but since I could not deny my personal interest and passion for the chosen research topic, I needed to incorporate other forms of case study to make it an intrinsic-multiple case study. This afforded me the opportunity not to concentrate on a single case but spread my tentacles to obtain richer data than if I had relied on just a single case as characterized by the intrinsic case study model. Case study data cannot effectively be collected outside of the social context of the phenomenon being studied (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27). The participants who constituted cases for the study included four female principals, two male, two female teachers, and one female education officer. The focus was to explore their experiences and opinions on the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership in Ghana, and the way forward. As a qualitative researcher I did not have a predetermined hypothesis and thus relied on systematic interpretation of experiences and opinions expressed by the participants.

Like other research strategies, case study has its weaknesses. For instance it has been criticized as having less rigor and therefore has been captioned as a "soft" research

strategy, and thus only suitable for the preliminary stage of some other research strategies. Moreover, it has been criticized as having less scientific bases for generalization and also for taking too long, which results in massive unreadable documents. (Yin, 2009, pp. 2-4, 6, 14-15.) I figured out and acknowledged most of these weaknesses, and then mapped up strategies to minimize their effects on the study. For instance I did a thorough literature review before coming out with the tentative research question and this had been suggested by Yin (2009, p. 3). I did not stereotypically say the research was a case and therefore should strictly follow the convectional path of conducting a qualitative case study. At each stage that I deemed necessary, I incorporated other methodological strategies to complement the weaknesses of the case study approach.

4.4   Data and data collection

Data for qualitative research are mostly obtained from field contact with participants (Creswell, 2012, p. 17; Patton, 2002, p. 4). Patton (2002, p. 4) identifies three kinds of qualitative data: *interviews, observations, and documents*. This study employed interviews as the main sources of data. This section thus presents the participants and how they were sampled, the nature of interview questions used, and how the interviews were conducted.

4.4.1 Place and participants of the study

Kumasi, my home city, was selected for the study. Apart from proximity and convenience, there were other vital factors which I took into consideration before choosing Kumasi for the place for the research. The city is the second capital and largest city in Ghana. By dint its location in the center of Ghana the city has greater diversity in terms of population. Different ethnic groups both within Ghana and some other African countries migrate to the city mostly for economic reasons. It is a highly commercial city with all ranks of businesses ranging from large-scale multinational companies to simple hawking businesses. It is commonly known that most of the ethnic groups in Ghana are adequately represented in Kumasi and this is one of the reasons why most new government policies are always piloted in the city before nationwide coverage.

Moreover, the city constitutes different communities such as pure urban, semi-urban and rural communities. The research was not for generalization but I thought it was wise that research findings from such a diverse context would not only be convincing and persuasive, but have a relatively adequate representation of the African community, since according to Gakisu (2010, pp. 216-217) gender inequality has been one of the drawbacks of the African continent as a whole.

Nine participants were *purposefully* sampled to share their experiences and opinions on the underrepresentation of females in educational leadership in Ghana. The logic of purposeful sampling is not based on a larger size for empirical generalization; rather it is based on "*information-rich cases*" which would lead to more insights and and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Moreover, purposeful sampling in qualitative research enhances richness and meaningful interpretation of the data, and also prevents lurking of the nitty-gritty of the phenomenon being studied (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27). The participants are therefore selected based on the kind of *people* they are and the *place(s)* they have been (Creswell, 2012, p. 205).

There are varied strategies within purposeful sampling. So having in mind the purpose of the research and availability of time and other internal factors, I applied different strategies at different point of the sampling process. The constant factor was that I was always making sure that whoever was selected was capable of providing rich information on the topic. (see: Patton, 2002, p. 242). However, two strategies featured prominently; *criterion purposeful sampling* and *random purposeful sampling*. The criterion involves selecting from the population some participants who meet some predetermined attributes and random involves selecting from the population without any predetermined attributes or characteristics. (Patton, 2002, pp. 238, 240-241.) My criteria for the selection of participants were based on the site of the phenomenon, gender, the number of years on post, and age. I must say that my initial plan was to sample only female principals, but upon advice from my supervisors and fellow students, it was so clear and very important that I included other stakeholders, and that was one of the impeccable advices I had. The inclusions of others aside the principals was very justifiable on the basis that they are members of the Ghana Education Service (GES) and also it was a way to bring variety and diversity to enhance the richness of the data.

The nine samples consisted of four female principals who have been in the GES for at least 20 years, four teachers (two males and two females) who have a minimum of five years of teaching experience, and an official from education directorate. With regards to the teachers, I considered their ages such that it was necessary to draw ideas from both the young and the old, thus the youngest was about 30 years old and the oldest was about 60 years old.

Before embarking on the journey to Ghana for the data collection I started the arrangement for sampling the participants since there was no adequate time on my side. I secured the help of two research assistants in Ghana, precisely in Kumasi, to make the initial arrangements for securing the permit from the participants. So in September 2012 I sent unofficial letters via e-mail to them to introduce my topic to whoever they would contact concerning the research. The intention was to make advance preparations to complement the limited time that was at my disposal for the data collection. In this case I hoped it would not be a new thing when I went with an official letter from my institute, Institute of Educational Leadership of University of Jyvaskyla, Finland. Although both research assistants assured me that they had done the initial arrangements by talking face to face and introducing my research intent to some female principals who fell within my criteria, upon my arrival in Kumasi I found out that no such arrangements had properly been made. So I had to start all over again.

I arrived in Kumasi on the 5th of November, 2012 and presented my research permit application letter to the Kumasi Metro Education Office on the 7th of November, 2012. This letter was one of the two sets of official letters (one for the metro office and the other for the participants) which I took from my institute. The letter was addressed to the metro director but it had to pass through three different offices before it got to her. By their operation a letter to the director has to first go to the registry, then to assistant director in charge of administration (ADA), then to the financial office and finally back to the ADA who then forward it to the overall boss (the metro director). At the financial office I had to pay a statutory fee of five Ghana cedis, equivalent to two Euros. I followed up that same day to ensure that the letter had actually gone through all these stages to the point where it had to go to the main boss. At this point the ADA told me that I could go home and come back the next week because the director attends to such letters once a week so mine might be dealt with the next week. I demanded the specific

day that I could come but the man said it was impossible to give me the date since there were so many letters piled up and the director could not attend to them all within one day. So I took his phone number so that I could contact him. I waited for the next week; in the meantime I was calling him regularly to find out the progress made so far.

On my second visit to the office one of the unfortunate things happened. The ADA told me that he was sorry because he was actually not the one to handle my letter so it had not yet been sent to the director's office for endorsement before the next action could be taken (that was after telling me on phone that my introductory/permit letter was almost ready). So he was going to return it (the introductory letter I brought from my institute) to me to be sent to the appropriate office. He said my case was supposed to be handled by the officer in charge of supervisory affairs= since that office deals much closer with the schools. I had no option than to contend with the situation and find the way forward. He then started looking for the letter but could not find it. I joined him in the search process and after combing through every file in the office we could not find the letter. It was such a terrible scene but I contended again and sought the way forward. He asked me if I had another copy but I did not have it so I showed him a copy of the letters to be presented to the participants. He said that one could be used at their office as well. He took me to the said appropriate office and another process began. I reminded them about my limited time and they gave me the authority to go ahead and contact the sub-metro offices to start the actual sampling process. They provided me with the list of all the sub-metro offices within the Kumasi Metropolis. For the sake of proximity and considering the vehicular traffic situation in the city, I choose three sub-metros which were closest to my residence. They were Bantama, Manhyia, and Suame sub-metros.

So I started contacting the offices of the three sub-metros while waiting for the original introductory letter from the main metro office. At the sub-metro offices I used the participants' introductory letter to introduce myself and explained the reason why I did not have any authority letter from the main metro office. They understood and accepted my request as they were very aware of the bureaucratic inertia in the system. In all the three offices I was provided with a list of all the schools headed by female principals. I was also briefed about some general personal records of the principals and almost all of them fell within my criteria. I initially selected two female principals from

each of the three sub-metros although I needed four. The extra two were to serve as a backup in case some refused to participate.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 27) posit that participants of qualitative research are not usually fully pre-specified since contact with the initial participants on the field might lead to identification of the most suitable or other equally suitable participant(s). On this account, the other participants (teachers) were to be selected from the schools from where the principals had been selected. From there I proceeded to the schools. Concerning the participant from the education office, I initially proposed to interview a metropolitan/sub-metro/district director of education but upon arrival in the field it became necessary to sample an officer in charge of female education and welfare affairs.

In all the six schools I contacted the principals were willing to participate and also the teachers introduced deemed fit for the interviews. The first school interview was very successful and my morale was highly boosted. But that excitement was short-lived. My second of four appointments was very disappointing. By then I had received the official introductory letter from the metro office but all the principals refused to participate. One said she discussed with her husband and he refused to allow her to participate, another one said she wanted to bring her daughter to represent her because her daughter could say everything that she (the principal would say), and the other two said they would not want the interview to be recorded so they wanted to write their responses. I interviewed them alright and they wrote their responses. But the two interviews were not analyzed since their responses were too sketchy amounting to less than one page each. After these four encounters I went back to the sub-metro offices to take the list of the schools headed by female principals and proceeded to contact all the schools. I did that in the sense that, as said earlier, almost all of them fell within my criteria and I hoped that it would give me the number of participants I needed even if some disappointed me. To be very certain I contacted another sub-metro (Kwadaso sub-metro) for a backup, in case the unexpected happened. With these measures, I ended up conducting 12 interviews instead of nine. However, only nine interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Those interviews which were not used included two participants who did not allow their voices to be recorded and one who opted to speak in her local language. The details of the interviews come in the subsequent section.

4.4.2 Interview as a data collection method

We interview in order to obtain information we cannot observe from people. This unobservable information includes the individual's feelings, thoughts, past behaviours, inner reasons for actions and the like (Patton, 2002, p. 240; Stake, 1995, p. 64). Patton (2002, pp. 348-349) distinguishes *two* categories of interviews: open-ended interview which allows the interviewee to respond to questions in his/her own words and from his/her own perspective, and closed or fixed response interview which imposes predetermined responses to a question and the interviewee is restricted to choose from only these responses. Qualitative interviewing is based on the assumption that an interview enables the researcher to enter into people's perspectives which are considered to be meaningful and knowable. (Patton, 2002, p. 341.) Relying on a naturalistic-inductive approach to research, I used the open-ended interview as the main instrument for collecting data for this research. Such approach of collecting data results in capturing an in-depth insight into people's experiences, perceptions, opinions, feeling, and knowledge (Patton, 2002, p. 4, 348). The open-eneddness of interview questions offers participants an opportunity to express their ideas holistically so that the researcher can present the real perspectives of the participants (Smith, 2011, p. 9).

Patton (2002, p. 342) further identifies three interview approaches which constitute the open-ended interview: informal conversational interview, general guide interview approach, and standardized open-ended interview. The informal conversation is carried out by posing unprepared spontaneous questions to the interviewee and these questions emerge as issues emerge in the course of the conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. It is a highly flexible and open-ended way of collecting data and it also caters for individual differences but the data can be difficult to analyze since different respondents are likely to answer different questions. The interview guide approach involves the interviewer asking or framing questions in the cause of the interview based on a list of issues or topics prepared in advance. This approach combines flexibility and systematic gathering of only relevant information but can result in less comparability of the responses and some vital aspects of the study being omitted. Finally, with the standardized open-ended interview, the same carefully worded questions are posed to the all the interviewees in the same sequence. This approach gives room for the comparability of responses and also makes the analysis of the data

relatively easy but it somehow restricts the interviewer from capturing issues which were not anticipated prior to the interview. (Patton, 2002, pp. 242-249.)

The strengths and the weaknesses of the interview approaches enumerated above suggest that there is no exclusively perfect interview approach. Patton (2002, p. 347) thus suggests using a triangulated interview approach, which means that the researcher does not actually cling to a single approach but rather combines the various desirable aspects of some of the approaches or all the approaches to create synergy. In this way the result is expected to be greater or more desirable than in the individual approaches. The author cites an example of a combination where the researcher can begin the interview with preset open-end questions and then touch on other issues in the course of the interview or at the end. (Patton, 2002, pp. 347-348.) Above all, the competency and skills of the interviewer determine the quality of the information obtained (Patton, 2002, p. 341).

So in this study the combined approach of open-ended interviews was adopted to elicit the subjective perspectives of participants on varied issues concerning the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership. In doing so I first of all based on the purpose of the study and the research questions to make a list of issues as a guide to direct my interview questions. I then framed standardized questions based on the issues listed. Moreover, I made provisions for the interviewees to come out with issues which were not captured in the standardized questions I presented. I therefore minimized the number of interview questions to give the interviewees enough time to express their views and experiences on issues which were not in the interview questions. Six questions meant for all the participants were made. Four extra questions were framed for the female principals to respond.

Interview questions need to be piloted before the real interview as this can serve as a mental rehearsal and also offers an opportunity to refine the questions (Stake, 1995, p. 65). The questions were piloted in two stages before administering. The first was in Finland with two fellow students and second was in Ghana with a retired female principal (but still heading a private school) and two other former members of staff (teachers). All the piloted sessions showed that there was no need for any significant adjustment in the questions. The only thing I realized was the need to avoid digression on the part of the respondents and this was shown in the test I conducted in Ghana. I

attributed this to the Ghanaian way of expression themselves. We Ghanaians speak with proverbs and parables, thus one is likely to be judged as not being direct but an average Ghanaian always understands the context. In this regard, I made a plan that during the actual interview I would reiterate the purpose of the research before the interview and this would keep the participants from over-digression. So each interview was information-packed no matter how short it was. In the next subsection I give an account of how the actual interviews were conducted.

4.4.3 Conducting the interviews

The first interview took place on the 27th of November, 2012 and the last interview was on the 3rd of January, 2013. Apart from the last interview which took place in the residence of the participant, each of the other interviews was conducted in the participant's work place (schools and an education office). Each interview session lasted for at least 35 minutes and the longest was 50 minutes. All the interviews which were used for this study were tape recorded and the participants were fully made aware of the interviews were being recorded. The participants did not know the specific questions which would be asked but they were adequately briefed about the purpose of the research and the key issues the interview questions were based on. The idea was to elicit spontaneous responses devoid of ready-made answers. As a naturalistic study, my aim was to capture the participants' own perspectives on the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership. It was therefore necessary to avoid a situation where some respondents might try to provide answers from existing literature.

Through the interview the participants were the focus and I accorded the needed right to make their own choices. For instance, although I had a very limited time, I always gave the participants the opportunity to suggest dates and times suitable for them. During the sampling the dates for each of the interviews were agreed with the participants and in most cases the participant could not give me a specific date and time they could avail themselves for the interviews. Their responses were always "let's make it next week". So the option was to take their phone numbers so that I could call them for assurance before meeting or going to their schools to conduct the interviews.

Stake (1995, p. 59) emphasizes the need for the researcher to familiarize himself/herself with the data field and establish rapport with the people or the

participants. I visited each school at least two times before the interview. Although these numerous visits were due to the bureaucratic route I went through during the sampling and also the participants' inconsistency with their time, it offered me an opportunity to naturally establish rapport with all the participants prior to the actual interviews and also observed the interactions in the schools. I informed the participants both in writing and verbally about the purpose of the interview and assured them that the interviews would never be used for any other purpose(s) aside the thesis. Nevertheless, anyone who was still skeptic was ignored because I had more samples than I needed. Generally, the majority of them cooperated as many showed a keen interest in the topic.

Each interview started with a brief introduction of the participants before the actual questioning began. Some of them suggested offering a word of prayer before we started and I did not prevent anybody from doing so. I always made sure that the recorder was on and put it between me and the respondent before commencement. I engaged the participants in informal conversation but was making sure that every detail was captured. I took notes alongside the recording since body language and the like could not be recorded with an audio machine. According to Patton (2002, p. 5), a good interview goes beyond just asking questions. Thus I took notes on the respondents' facial expressions and emotions as they responded to the questions. I also made extensive use of the feedback technique by trying to restate some of their responses and asking them if that was what they meant. Although I followed the questions sequentially, probing questions were asked where I deemed necessary. I allowed the participants to talk without unnecessary interferences. An interviewer should be a good listener rather than talkative because most informants are more delighted when they are being listened (Stake, 1995, p. 64). I downloaded every interview to my computer and also saved copies on an external storage device.

If necessary and if the researcher can afford it, it is not illegal or unethical to offer a token like a meal, refreshments and the like to the informants (Stake, 1995, p. 59). In line with this I made a provision of some mineral drinks as a kind of refreshment during the interviews and in some cases after the interview. Coincidentally my first respondent gave me a very wonderful reception by providing some non-alcoholic beverages, chocolate and peanuts on our interview table. So during the interview we were enjoying

those things as well. The atmosphere was more friendly and informal with no shyness or tenseness on either side. I learned a lesson from this and created a similar atmosphere during the subsequent interviews. I was cautious that these side issues never clouded the purpose of the occasions; eliciting the participants' subjective perspectives on the topic under study.

Generally, the interviews were conducted in an informal and friendly atmosphere. To some extent I enjoyed much more cooperation from whoever was connected with the data collection than I anticipated, especially from the respondents. From my observation, this was due to the sensitive nature of my topic. Most of them valued the topic as a matter of national interest since the issue of gender parity has been one of the prime national agendas. After the interviews I personally presented my appreciation letters to all the participants and also verbally expressed my gratitude to them as Ghanaian customs demand. Most Ghanaians appreciate personal contact rather than other medium such as letter, email or telephone call.

4.5   Data analysis

Qualitative data from the field are usually converted into text which requires *processing* to make the text understandable and useful (Miles & Huberman, 1999, P. 9). Analysis can simply be referred to as *interpretation* of data (Strauss, 1989, 4). The essence of qualitative analysis is to convert data such as interviews, field notes, documents and observation into findings. At this point the skills and insight of the research (the main research instrument) are a prerequisite. (Patton, 2002, pp. 432-433.) This section thus focuses on how the data for the research was analyzed or converted into subjective findings.

4.5.1   Content analysis

Content analysis has been termed differently by different writers but the basic purpose remains the same; it is a means of analyzing texts usually in the form of transcribed interviews, newspaper articles, description of pictures and written collections. All content analyses are rooted in the assumption that cultural forms of expression can be represented in text and this thus links contents analysis with the subjective social reality.

Therefore the results of the analysis and its interpretation are contextual and mutually dependant. (Bos & Tarnai, 1999, p. 60.) Patton (2002, p. 453) defines content analysis as "any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings". It involves identifying, coding, categorizing, classifying, and labeling the primary patterns in the data. This presupposes that contents analysis is a means of finding out the relevant ideas in the data in relation to the phenomenon under study (Patton, 2002, p. 463).

Bos and Tarnai (1999, p. 660) identify two main types of content analyses: hermeneutic-interpretive content analysis and empirical-explanatory content analysis. Putting these two at the opposite ends, there are mixed forms of content analyses between them in a continuum. Among these are qualitative content analyses, ideology-critical content analyses, or categorical content analyses. (Bos & Tarnai, 1999, p. 660.) Hermeneutic analysis involves systematically understanding a text and interpreting it to make it meaningful and understandable to the reader. The approach takes into consideration the social and linguistic contexts of the text as well as the interpreter. However, it has been criticized for lacking the necessary verification and thus the results from such approach cannot be generalized. Empirical analysis, on the other hand, used to focus on counting and quantifying occurrences of certain categories of a text with the aim of describing the explicit or manifesting the content of communication. After being criticized for being limited to counting only the manifest aspect of communication, some researchers later advanced the approach by including analyses of values and attitude categories but in a complex process. Pure quantitative or empirical content analysis is considered as the mere presentation of figures. Due to these counter criticisms of the two approaches above, the use of mixed methods which balance the two approaches is in the right direction. (Bos & Tarnai, 1999, p. 660-665.)

Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p. 1278) classify the qualitative content analysis among methods such as ethnography, grounded theory, phenomenology, and historical analysis? which are used to analyze text data. The authors offer a definition of qualitative content analysis as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or pattern". They also identify three approaches of the method:

conventional, *directed*, and *summative*. The three are distinguished from one another by the degree of inductiveness which is manifested by the coding schemes and the origin of codes. Conventional content analysis is usually suitable when the aim of the study is to describe a phenomenon and when there is not enough literature on the phenomenon. Codes are defined during the data analysis and derived from the data. The result of this approach may not adequately represent the data because some key categories in the data may not be recognized. The directed approach is suitable for a research that aims at extending an existing theory. So codes are obtained from relevant research findings or theories and the codes are defined before and during the data analysis. Finally, a researcher employing the summative approach usually aims at understanding the contextual usage of certain words or statements. So it basically involves identifying and quantifying the usage of the worlds or the statements. (Hsieh & Shannon 2005, pp. 1278-1286.)

The above definitions and explanations point to the fact that content analysis is context-oriented and it also allows the researcher to use a scientific approach to understand the subjective social reality. In spite of the classifications and different methodological approaches it is worth knowing that *approaches or guidelines are not rules*. Patton (2002, p. 432) states that there is a plethora of guidelines for analyzing qualitative data in the literature which a qualitative researcher can adopt as a road map to navigate through the data. However, these need not to be taken as hard fixed rules that must be followed. This is because firstly, each qualitative research is unique and would therefore require a unique style or strategy for analyzing the data. Secondly, qualitative research is always oriented towards the context in which the phenomenon under study exists, therefore applying universal rules would alter the purpose of the qualitative research approach. Thirdly, approaches may out-use its significance since contexts keep on changing. Finally, due to the variety of research social settings and individual styles and ability, adhering to hard-fixed rules would not auger well for many qualitative researchers. (See: Patton, 2002, pp. 432-433; Strauss, 1989, pp. 1, 7.)

The long and short of it is that the analysis method of the present study was content analysis. Hence, in the subsequent section I present the steps which I followed to analyze the data.

4.5.2 Content analysis in the present study

Patton (2002, p. 436) posits that naturalistic inquiry does not really draw a clear-cut distinction between data collection and data analysis. Hence in the course of data collection insights about emerging themes should not be ignored but need to be noted. These can give direction for the next interview and also constitute the beginning of the analysis process. (Patton, 2002, pp. 436-437; Strauss, 1989, p. 26-27.) On this ground, after each interview I listened to them over and over again and took notes alongside. Hence after listening my first two interviews, I came up with new interview questions which I termed as "XQ (extra questions). Also through the extensive listening of the recorded interviews I got a plenum of immersion into the data and some issues or themes emerged. I already had preliminary findings of the study which I even presented in a research seminar with my class. I used that opportunity to solicit ideas about the subsequent stage(s) of the analysis. I drew different suggestions from this occasion, especially from my colleagues and my supervisors. After this stage I let the data rest for some time.

During the actual analysis, although I had a good immersion into the data at least from the initial analysis, I read the data several times to buttress my initial understanding and familiarity with the data. The following are the subsequent stages I followed:

Organization of the data

The data was transcribed between February and March, 2013. I transcribed the data verbatim (word for word) and included the probing questions and their responses. In all the data there were about 60 standard pages. The probing questions and clarifications were put into brackets and italicized. The clarifications were where I reframed the interviewee's statement during the interview and then asked the interviewee to confirm if that was what she or he meant. The interviews were originally categorized into Part 1 (P1) to Part 9 (P9) during the transcription and without using the names of the respondents. Each part represented one respondent. This was to conceal the identity of the participants as well as their schools or offices. At this stage the data was somehow complex and confusing and this confirms Strauss's (1989, p. 26) assertion that sometimes the nature of qualitative data creates confusion for researchers at the initial

stage. So during the analysis I re-arranged the data so that the female principals came first, followed by the female teachers, then the female education officer, and finally the two male teachers. I assigned a special identification code for each respondent's text in an alphanumerical format. For example FP1 = Female principal from school one and MT2 = Male teacher from school two. This technique was very useful for the comparative and summative aspects of the analysis.

Identification and establishment of composite codes/themes

 Ryan and Bernard (2000, p. 780) describe coding as the "heart and soul" of the analysis in the sense that it enables the researcher to identify and make sense of the connectivity between blocks of text. Strauss (1989, p. 27) points out that the quality of coding in qualitative data analysis to a very large extent determines the quality of a qualitative research. Thus with regards to this research I applied *open coding* and *selective coding* almost concurrently. With the open coding I scrutinized the data word for word and line by line (Strauss, 1989, p. 28) noting and colouring all the words and phrases or statements which I deemed relevant for the purposes of the study. The aim was to produce concepts which possibly fitted the data and which had a connection with the purpose of the study and the research questions. The stage also aimed at reducing the data into a more easily navigable form. At this stage I opened myself for everything although I had initial concepts as far my constant interaction with the data was concerned. Through this exercise I was able to establish three main or composite themes and then assigned colours to each of them. The themes included: (a) Factors which affect women's access and progress in educational leadership (red), (b) The reasons why female leaders are needed in the Ghanaian educational system (green), and (c) Possible ways to increase female educational leaders in Ghana (blue).

Development of categories

From this point I entered into a more microscopic coding looking for only the respondent's expressions which were relevant to a particular composite theme. I did this for each of the themes and for each of the interviews. Here, the colour technique was applied in order to link the expressions to their appropriate themes. I made a fourth

unnamed theme and captioned it "other". This theme contained the expressions made by the respondents which I deemed relevant to the study or the purpose of the study but which could not fit into any of the first three composite themes. The related ideas expressed by the participants were grouped in order to obtain subcategories. There were many subcategories and thus they needed to be codified. Hence the related subcategories were further connected to establish the main categories.

5 FINDINGS AND DISCUSION

This chapter aims at presenting and discussing the findings of the study. The study sought to explore factors which have been creating a disproportionate representation of men and women in educational leadership in Ghana, and also to elicit views on how more women can be involved in educational leadership in Ghana. The results were drawn from the analysis of the interview data of nine participants. In the first part of the interviews, four female principals responded to the same four open-ended (semi-structured) questions. This set of questions aimed at exploring the life experiences of these four female principals from childhood education to their present positions. The results of this section of the data have been themed as "the journey to the position as female principal". The results of the rest of the data have also been presented under three composite themes: a) Factors which affect women's access and progress in educational leadership, b) The reasons why female leaders are needed in the Ghanaian educational system, and c) Possible ways to increase female educational leaders in Ghana.

As a qualitative study, I adopted a descriptive approach to present this chapter and also presented the voices of the participants in the form of extracts from the data. These extracts were inserted in their original form from the data but grammatical errors were corrected where necessary. For the sake of anonymity, the respondents and their institutions were denoted by alphanumerical codes: FP1, FP2, FP3, FP4, FT3, FT1, FEO, MT4, and MT2. The numbers represent the schools involved. With regard to the alphabets, F represents female, P represents Principal, T represents teacher, M represents male, E represents education and O represents officer.

5.1 The journey to the position as female principal

As stated earlier, the first part of the interview was to explore the principals' experiences throughout their educational and professional endeavor. They were first of all asked about how they feel as female principals and all the four principals gave affirmative answers that they were very satisfied with their present positions. The analysis of their responses revealed that the principals encounter many challenges throughout their educational journey and in the performance of their duties as teachers and as principals. It also revealed that they appreciate their roles in the society more than tangible rewards from their jobs. This is not only because they have been able to break through many barriers, but more importantly because they appreciate the contribution they are making to the Ghanaian society. One of the principals (FP2) pointed out that many of the students have no proper parental care and support due to a broken home and the death of parents. So she felt it as an obligation to nurture such children as if they were her own children. By the dint of their positions they are respected in the society in general and in the various societal associations they belong to. Their joy is not only rooted in their positions but more importantly in being able to combine a successful family life and career advancement. In all their submissions they made references to their families.

In spite of this prestigious recognition they enjoy as female principals in a male dominated society, they have to go an extra mile to maintain this respect since the eyes are always on them. This finding to some extent confirms a previous study by Agezo (2010, p. 694) which lists passion for work as one of the leadership characteristics of Ghanaian female principals.

> But sometimes it is not easy for me as woman. I always have to sacrifice a lot but we don't even get any significant incentives. But always when I look at these children (the students) I feel the need to help them. I see that their future is in our hands. So despite our low salaries we still do our best. (FP1.)

Secondly, the analysis revealed the hard circumstances which the principals had to go through during their initial educational endeavor. They were asked to describe their background with regards to the family and educational backgrounds. The analysis showed that among the four principals only one of them (FP3) came from a middle class

family. This particular principal stated that her mother was an illiterate housewife but her father was an educated government worker. Her father could therefore afford her educational needs as well as those of her other siblings. However, when her father retired from work the family was financially broke. This prevented her from going to the university and therefore had no option but go to the post secondary teacher training college. Her situation shows how financial constraints affect the women's educational aspirations, and this is reiteration of findings by Hofstede et al. (2010, pp. 154-156).

The three other principals came from poor families where their parents had many children. So it was almost impossible to attain higher education but they were fortunate to have scholarships and assistance from other family members to go through their secondary education and teacher training education. For instance, one of the principals (FP1) stated that it was her aunt who inspired her and assisted her materially to enroll into a teacher training program (Post middle teacher training college) after completing middle school (presently referred to as Junior High School in Ghana). Her parents broke up before she started primary school so she was being tossed from one step mother to another and from uncles to aunts. At one point she passed the entrance examination to go to a secondary school but had no one to sponsor her. She recounted how her father used to pester her to join him at his farm instead of going to school. The other two principals had scholarships to go through their secondary education. FP4 was supposed to be a shepherd girl taking the father's flock to the field but through the intervention of her uncle who was in the Ghanaian military, she had a scholarship to go to secondary school and finally to post secondary teacher training college. According to FP3, her father was financially fit to sponsor her educational needs but he refused. He was not willing and even opposed her educational aspiration. She said that during her era as a young girl many fathers preferred that their girl children helped them at the farm rather than went to school. Research has shown that fathers are comparatively reluctant to support their girl children, especially in training (Shafer & Malhotra, 2011, p. 213).

> I had a scholarship. I was a sports girl and that gave me the opportunity to have the scholarship. I remember I was in the boarding house when my headmaster called me and told me that I had been awarded a scholarship so I should bring my parent to come and sign the scholarship forms. My mother had by then travelled to our hometown. I told my father about it. My father then told me that he had no time to go and sign the forms. (FP2.)

Thirdly, the analysis shows that none of the principals originally had career plans to develop to their present level. Also, the principals took up the positions later than they could have taken. Here all the principals had their family responsibilities as the impediment and therefore settled as teachers although they were qualified to be promoted to the principal positions. With the exception of FP4, who was motivated and assisted by her husband to go for further studies while her children were still young, all the other three principals said they waited until their children were old enough to take care of themselves before they made up their minds to progress in their career.

> In my case for instance I used to ask myself that how can I being woman be a school head? I felt it was men's role. Besides, my family was a problem. So for very long time I was an assistant head although I qualified to be the main head. I initially did not plan to become a head but later I gave it a second thought and decided to try it. (FP2.)

This echoes Smith's (2011, pp. 11-13) findings about career decisions of female teachers. The author found two categories for female teachers' career decision makers: those who plan and take control over their lives and those whose decisions are based on other people's input on them or on chances and circumstances. The teachers belonging to the latter group generally lack confidence and are reluctant to apply for promotion. They therefore need encouragement, feedback and professional advices and support to drive them to move forward. (Smith, 2011, pp. 11-13.) With regards to the present study, the principals did not have confidence initially due to the circumstances they found themselves in.

> I never thought I would come this far when I started as a young teacher. The initial problem I encountered was my family. It was very difficult for me to care for my children and also teaching. So I never wanted to take any leadership position. By then my husband was always putting pressure on me to go for further studies so he (my husband) supported me to go for my further studies when I was ready. (FP4.)

Another theoretical argument that conjoins with this revelation about the participants of this study is the one put by Hofstede et al. (2010, pp. 154-156) that most women are able to take leadership or management positions only after 45 years of age when they are likely not to have very young children to care for or when their children are old enough to take some basic care of themselves.

5.2 Factors affecting women's access to educational leadership

To elicit ideas about the factors which have contributed to the underrepresentation of women in the leadership of Ghana education system, all the nine participants were asked to share their views on obstacles preventing women from leadership positions. As a follow-up question, they were also asked specifically about the influence of culture on the issue. Broadly speaking it was found that educational leadership is both relatively *inaccessible* and *unattractive* to female teachers in Ghana. The inaccessibility is due to the existence of strong invisible barriers, and unattractive in the sense that there are some female teachers who dully qualify to be school heads but are not willing to take leadership positions. Hence the study confirms the existence of the glass ceiling in Ghana which prevents many women from climbing up on the organizational ladder (see Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 4; Hoyt, 2010, p. 485; Northouse, 2007, pp. 191-292). My prime focus of the study was to look for the root causes of the gender gap in educational leadership in order to effectively address the problem. Thus the analysis revealed several contributing factors which are all linked with the culture of the Ghanaian society in general. Low educational attainment of women emerged as the number one factor blocking women's access to leadership, and the analysis further showed that this has been propelled by the societal culture. Thus, I begin by presenting how education, influenced by culture, has resulted in the underutilization of women, as far as educational leadership in Ghana is concerned.

5.2.1 Low educational achievement of girls and women

In the view of all the nine participants, women are underrepresented in educational leadership in Ghana because as compared to males, female educational achievement has been very low in the past and even to the present day. Three of the principals, FP1, FP2 and FP3 argued that being a woman does not really affect your chance of becoming a principal. It rather gives you an advantage over men if you have the same qualification and teaching experience as the male competitors. They substantiated that although such advantage is there for women, most of the women do not possess the prerequisite educational qualification for taking educational leadership positions.

> They (GES head offices) give more opportunity to women because the men are not helpful especially within Kumasi here. They see that when they give the headship to the women they do the work efficiently but the men they don't care. But if such opportunity is there for women and you do not have the required qualification you cannot even apply. So we women are always behind due to our educational background. (FP1.)

The reasons cited as the causes of lower educational attainment of women in Ghana include: irresponsible parents or poor parental attitude towards and support for girl child education, unequal educational opportunities for boys and girls, too much household chores for girls which affects their performance in school, and women's interest in family life at the expense of their educational attainment etc.

Irresponsible parents

All the four female principals and a female teacher, FT3, raised a strong accusation against *parents, especially fathers for failing to take responsibility for their girl children education*. This was expressed through their own experiences and as opinions. The first three female principal's presentations on this particular issue were characterized by stronger emotions which seemed like a kind of an attack on irresponsible parents. According to them, some parents don't see the need to send their girl child to school because they believe the essence of being a woman is to get married and have children. So going to school can interfere with this essence. Women do not really need to be gainfully employed since their husbands are responsible for taking care of them financially. The following extract by FP1 summarizes this particular claim:

> Sometimes it's due to the female children who are denied of going to school or being educated, because our parents have made up their minds that when you send a female child to school, she will just go and have sex with a man and become pregnant and finally become a drop out. Then once again if not a drop out at all it is believed that the women's office is the kitchen. After all educational attainment a woman will by all means get married and take over the domestic. So a girl needs to stay home to help the mother and also learn from the mother. (FP1.)

Using her own life experience, the same participant said her father did not only refuse to sponsor her education, but also he was always discouraging her to forget about going to school. According to the father, after all his brother who was even a male could not pass

his secondary school exams and had to join him (the father) in the farming work, after wasting money and time in the secondary school. So the earlier she (FP1) took to the farm work the better. According to her, although the father did not send her to the secondary school, she was assisted by her aunt to go through Post Middle Teacher Training College (PMTTC) and that was the genesis of her present position as a female principal. This confirms the numerous theoretical prepositions that the home environment, attitude and support of the parents to a greater extent determine the skills and professions people develop (see Eccles, 2011, p. 195; Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 68; Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 53-56; Shafer & Malhotra, 2011, p. 213).

FT3's take on the issue was a bit different from the principals. According to her, parents are reluctant to send their girls to school because the society values money above the acquisition of knowledge. She asserted that a penchant for money and materialism is the order of the day and it has been part and parcel of our culture. Parents thus do not see the need to invest in their girl children's education since it does not give an immediate financial reward. They (parents) therefore focus on their businesses and do not care about the educational needs of their children.

Educational opportunities

The analysis shows that women have lower educational attainment because of the existence of unequal educational opportunities for boys and girls. Boys get through their education smoother than girls do. This, according to the analysis, is due to the fact that parents are more motivated to sponsor their boys to school rather than their girls. The parents hope that a boy is better capable of making it in terms of educational success than girls. There are more risks involved in spending on girls' education than boys' due to the prevalent rate of girls' dropouts from school. One participant who laid more emphasis on this issue was FE1. In her view boys or men are always the best choice in the Ghanaian cultural setting when the activities to be performed involve the use of one's intellect or physical strength.

> The boy child is given the chance to attend school when the parents cannot afford two. That is when a boy and a girl have the same chance to enter school; if they have to sponsor one of them they would certainly choose the boy. So always the boys or men have the chance to be educated than the women. (FE1.)

The two male participants (MT2 & MT4) shared the same view that women are less empowered in the society. So an educated man has a higher power status than a woman who has the same qualification as the man. Thus the motivational gravity of a woman to move on the academic ladder is usually lower than a man's. This same reason accounts for why some parents are reluctant to sponsor their female children's education. It is important to note that all such ideas are grounded in the cultural values and beliefs of the society. The participants' assertion of unequal educational opportunities for boys and girls agree with Gakusi's (2010, p. 216) statement that in most African families decisions of choosing who should be sponsored to school always go in favour of boys. It is also consistent with the widely held view that boys are supposed to be given an opportunity to develop intellectually in order to be able to stand up to their standard role as breadwinners of the family in their adult stage (Shaffer, 1996, pp. 505-506).

Cultural values

The analysis of the data revealed that women's educational achievement is low in Ghana because Ghanaian women have more interest in family life at the expense of their educational attainment and career development. In the participants' view, happy family life is valued more than educational and career achievement, as far as Ghanaian women are concerned. The participants expressed the view that an average Ghanaian woman will choose to abandon her educational development if there is a slightest chance that it interferes with her family responsibilities. In a related development it was found that most of these women bring forth many children which does not give them enough time to continue their education to the higher level. This coupled with a lack of proper day care facilities and flexible educational system leave the women no option but to terminate their educational journey at a relative lower level or wait until their children are old enough. In connection with this, one of the female teachers underscored that in the larger Ghanaian cultural context single women are not respected. Although the society values education to some extent, traditionally the dignity of a woman depends on her ability to marry and make children. Thus by and large, an average Ghanaian women dream is to get married as early as possible. The idea is that a married woman has good morals and has also been shaped by her husband or can be assisted by her husband. Particularly in congruence with the Ghanaian context of single and married

women is Butler's (1995, pp. 31-32) claim that by the standard created by many cultures, a perfect woman is required to be in a heterosexual and maternal frame.

> Most of the women they prefer to be in the house taking care of the family and the children. After form four or JSS they don't want to go to school again. They just want to get married. If you are a girl and you reach a higher level of education you will not get any man to marry. This is because they think that if girls reach that higher level of education then they would compete with the men. And I see that sometimes it is quite true because in some years back some of my mates couldn't get husbands to marry because they were able to enter into university. So when they came out they found it very difficult to get married. (FP3.)

This finding quite relates with the observation made by Baah-Boateng (2007, p. 61) that women by their nature show more interest in domestic activities than men and this negatively affects their educational attainment. Similarly, Acker (1992, p.411) posits that women are always preoccupied with the desire to raise a beautiful family. Hofstede (1997, pp. 81-83) also points out some feminine values which among other things include having and living happily with family.

Obnoxious cultural beliefs and practices
 Some of the participants justified that the low educational attainment of women in the country can be attributed to some obnoxious cultural practices and beliefs in the Ghanaian society. According to them, practices such as female circumcision, betrothal marriage and witchcraft interfere with girls' education. Two respondents, MT2 and FP2 put a very passionate and strong emphasis on the belief in witchcraft and creation of *"witch camps"* as a very outmoded culture depriving women of their freedom and advancement.

> In our society a very brilliant girl or a women is sometimes accuse of using her witchcraft power to study. Even when a woman is part taking in a science class and she is brilliant they will regard her as a witch which is not proper and this makes the woman feel bad to part take in some courses, especially when it's a male dominated area. (FP2.)

> Men think that they are better than women and so a woman who does well at school is perceived to be a witch. Some women who are very intelligent are considered as witches and they are taken to witch camps where they are subjected to heinous treatments. These women spend their early days when they should be in school at the witch camps serving men. Some even end up becoming wives to the so called powerful

spiritual men. Also some parents refuse to send their girls who are very intelligent to school to avoid the child being accuse as witch. (MT2.)

Also on this same issue MT2 disclosed that sometimes in some parts of Ghana a young beautiful girl in the school can be asked by her parents to drop out from school to take a husband. This is because the money received from the bride price goes to the family to take care of the family, settle a family debt or purchase a property for the family. The family prefers such situation rather than allowing their daughter to go to school and probably be impregnated by a less worthy boy or man. Again, this confirms the impact of the family's beliefs and values on the children's chances in life (Durkin, 1995, p.160). Moreover, these cultural/religious beliefs and practices which affect girls' and women's education in Africa have been emphasized by writers such as Dolphyne (1991, p. 1) and Gakusi (2010, pp. 216). These writers posit that people have been mentally manipulated and brainwashed to believe that all such cultural practices are meant for the people's own good.

Child abuses

Some child abuses were found to be contributing to the low educational attainment of girls and women. The participants enumerated on some common abuses which potentially hinder girls from pursuing education or which account for girls dropping out from school. Some of the abuses include child labour, sexual abuses, forced child marriages and corporal punishment. Five respondents mentioned that parents engage their young children mostly in farming and petty trading to earn money to support the family. Some parents also give out their children to worthy families to work as house helps. All these things affect the children's academic performance and also shift the children's interest from school. FE1 disclosed that her office has been receiving cases of rape which usually involved grown-up men abusing their step-daughters sexually. She said if the victim does not get pregnant she is likely to be psychologically impaired and consequently drop out from school.

(…) Rape cases and teenage pregnancy are always reported to our office. The victims are usually girls but since they lack sex education they pregnant accidentally. Such girls may not get the support to enter or chance to continue their education. Concerning rape cases, because most of the girls are staying with their step mothers, step fathers, uncles or aunties the culprits are always protected from prosecution. Sometimes we would hear

a school girl who becomes pregnant and tell you my step father raped me and that makes them timid. Those things are not helping the children to have education. (FE1.)

Economic constraints

Economic circumstances of a family were found to be a factor which affects the girls' and women's ability to be educated and climb higher on the academic ladder. This point was made by five of the participants and it was inferred from their experiences and opinions that there are some parents who genuinely wish their children to have the best of education but due to poverty they just cannot afford it. One of the principals (FP2) emotionally expressed how some parents could not afford a simple desk for their wards to use in the classroom. The cost of basic education is shared between the government and the parents but according the principal, there are a good number of parents who cannot afford their part. Recounting her life history, she stated that her mother who was very interested in education was economically crippled, else she would have gotten her education better and faster than she did. FP3 also made a similar statement that her education journey was better until her father retired and the family plunged into a financial crisis. Alas, her sisters behind her could not go to school from that point on.

> I realized that some of the children were not having desk and actually the parents could not afford it. And some of the parents claim that because the education is free there is no need to take such responsibility. But we too, government doesn't give us everything. Actually there are some who truly excuse to say can't afford but they want to see their children well educated. So poverty is another problem. (FP2.)

Another principal also recounted her story that as a child she used to work for her parents in order to make the ends meet. A male participant (MT2) made a point that due to poverty some parents give out their children to marry at a tender age just to get money from the bride price to take care of the family. Another male participant (MT4) also made a mention of the fact that the poor national economy affects the development of the vulnerable in the society, particularly the poor, women and children. FE1's take was that if the family cannot afford all their children's education, any available chance would certainly be going to the boy(s). All these assertions made by the participants agree with Hosftede's (2010, pp. 154-156) assertion that no matter how strongly people hold their cultural values and desires, the economic situation has the greatest potential of determining women's public participation and advancement. Inglehart and Baker

(2000, pp. 19-21) also make a similar assertion that a good economic stance of the society is linked with the increase in educational attainment of the people.

5.2.2 Societal culture

The result of the analysis manifested that the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership is partly due to some culturally constructed barriers which entangle women and prevent them from climbing higher on the organizational ladder. It was found that in spite of the difficulties which women go through to acquire educational qualifications, there still exist some elements in the culture and the social system which prevent women from climbing higher on the organizational ladder. The participants were asked to share their experiences and views on the influence of culture on the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership. It came up that in the Ghanaian culture leadership and decision-making are prerogatives of men, thus a woman as a leader seems to be a deviation. It is significant to note that House (2004, p. 5) also raises a similar point that the way leadership is viewed and valued depends on the culture of the society. Most of the participants thus used the term "suppression from the society" as the factor preventing women from developing an interest in leadership positions and taking them. They raised numerous points and examples to substantiate the claim that the society and its culture exclude women from leadership positions. The evidences provided by the participants were rooted in cultural beliefs, values and practices of the African society in general and Ghana in particular. The participants simply claimed that leadership is stereotyped as the men's job.

Firstly, the culture generally undermines women and therefore people do not recognize women as capable of leading. A male teacher (MT4) strongly argued that the society has an opposing view on a woman taking a leadership position. He stated that "a woman who performs anything the society regards as a men's role is usually labeled as witch" and these include leadership roles. Two female teachers made similar comments that most people believe that men are more powerful to lead. So there is no need to give leadership positions to women when men are there. Besides, "men do not take our decisions and orders serious", they said.

> In my opinion, it is because of our cultural background. Women are seen to be second to men. When we want people to be leaders we seek to pick men before considering

women. That has been the norm, and that has contributed greatly to the underrepresentation of women in leadership. And it has affected our educational system also. Even though we see some women coming up but the majority is men. (FT3.)

From her experience FP1 posited that the surrounding communities sometimes do not give her the needed cooperation as they would give to a male counterpart. So she sometimes relies on her males teachers for support. This finding corresponds with Hofstede (1997, p.17) who states that in some societies women taking positions traditionally meant for men is considered very abnormal. Tthe technical skills the woman may possess do not matter, as she would be considered as not suitable basically because the symbols, rituals or values which the society match with the position or the job are missing in the woman (Hofstede, 1997, p. 17.) Moreover, Haruna (2009, p. 941) posits that leadership in Sub-Sahara African countries in Post Colonial era and to this day has been construed as innate traits and behaviors that dwell predominantly in great men.

Secondly, it emerged from the analysis that the permeation of Western culture into the Ghanaian society to some extent denies some women the opportunity to ascend into top leadership positions. Theories have established that cultural change is inevitable in many societies, especially due to globalization (see Hackman & Johnson, 2004, p. 282; Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 18-19; House & Javidan, 2004, p. 19). Four respondents raised this particular issue but three seemed to consider it as a very negative point against women since they believed that women taking leadership positions belong to the Western culture. In this case their position was that people are being slow to accept changes which originate from the West because most Western cultures go contrary to the Ghanaian customs, traditions and religious beliefs. However, a female teacher who deemed it as a strong barrier that has the potential of preventing her from seeking school leadership, used dressing as a typical example to justify why she believes the invasion of Western culture in the Ghanaian society is a strong barrier against women leadership aspirations.

> What I want to add is about how the foreign culture is influencing our society these days and impact on women. Now we have taken a lot of foreign cultures and embedded it into ours. The society is not accepting certain things we have adopted. For instance the way we dress. Now our society doesn't accept women wearing trousers and the rest. What I have notice is that women who try to dress in the Western kind of way are looked down upon by the society she lives in. So if such a person has all the qualities

and can be a good leader she will never be selected just because of her kind of life style. We believe that it is not accepted in our culture. So for me I don't apply when a headship vacancy is announced because I can't dress more traditional as most of the female heads do. (FT3.)

Thirdly, still on the permeation of cultures, the analysis revealed that the traditional leadership system in Ghana replicates itself in the formal sector and this affects women's access to educational leadership. In the most traditional Ghanaian societies the overall leader is a man, the king or the chief. In some cases it is the queen mother who selects the king but she is usually virtually excluded from decision-making. In practice the queen is just a supporter of the king and always limited to minor issues concerning women. That was the idea expressed by six of the nine participants. In another development, some of the participants related this issue to the family system in Ghana. In the extended family the head of the family is a man. So this creates the impression that leadership is for men which is then replicated in the educational arena. In summary the participant posited that leadership has been stereotyped as the men's role due to the traditional and community leadership system headed by men.

Let us shift it to chieftaincy. Right from our traditional leadership the queen mother is not recognized as the chief or the king. In our cultural set up here we have the queen mother and the chief or the king. It is the queen mother who selects the king but whenever the king is selected he holds the upper hand. Whatever goes on the area or the community has to be controlled by the chief or the man whilst the queen mother is there and excluded from major decisions. (FE1.)

Fourthly, also connected to the above barrier is what the participants described as lack of acceptance of women as leaders by the subordinates as well as the larger society. As one of the commonest statements found in the data, the respondents pointed out that the society as well as teachers do not wholeheartedly accept women as school leaders. They implicated that this is not only a bigger challenge for women already in headship positions, but it also deters the upcoming female teachers from aspiring as principals. All the participants either explicitly or implicitly talked about this particular barrier. They related the lack of acceptance of female leadership to the fact that the society somehow sees it as usurping of men's position. This is a typical example of a highly masculine culture where deviation from a specific job assigned to a particular gender is seriously resisted by the larger society (Tirmizi, 2008, p. 36). The participants also

attributed this lack of acceptance issue to the low status of women in the society, male superiority complex, religious beliefs etc.

> Even in our current political election, there were two women who were contesting but you could hear people saying that they will never give their mandate to a woman to rule them. And in the school male teachers feel so big to take instruction from you the woman. They don't want to accept the fact that you are their superior. So the society as a whole sees the women as somebody who is not presentable in the leadership aspect and also the society prefers the male more than the women. In the society again, when you take the Islamic religion for example a woman is seen as somebody who cannot be given the chance to maybe be at the top when men are there. And it is the same thing in other organizations where men are there. Even with the Christians women can preach, but look at the Muslims it is not accepted. In the society women are denied of holding all these positions such as minister of God, which are highly respected. (FP4.)
>
> Two, is resistance from men. You would always hear some men saying, you are a woman, who are you to give instruction? (MT4.)

One of the female teachers (FT3) pointed out that we grew up believing that a leader should be a man so some people find it difficult to accept that a woman is also capable of leading. She alleged that even some of the highly educated people still hold such ideas and this influences their decisions when they are among a panel for selecting school heads. They pointed out that tie breaking between a male and a female always goes in favour of the female candidate. But the female teacher asserted rather the opposite. She finally remarked that even though some women are able to make their way through to leadership positions, few people accept them as leaders and give them the needed support and respect.

This finding appears to be a stronger setback for women leaders since theories maintain that there cannot be leadership without cooperation of the followers or without the followers accepting the leader (see Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 2; Hogg, 2001, p. 185; House & Javidan, 2004, p. 15; Jago, 1982, p. 316; Northouse, 2007, p. 3; Yukl, 2006, p. 4.). All these writers and many others hold the view that proper leadership exists only when there is acceptance and followship. Meanwhile, effective leadership does not require just position power, but personal power as well (Bolman & Deal, 2008, pp. 203-204; Northouse, 2007, p. 9; Yukl, 2002, p. 149). From the analysis women leaders find it difficult to win personal power due to this lack of acceptance from subordinates and the society as a whole.

Fifthly, it was found from the analysis of the data that there exists stronger gender stereotypes and gender status beliefs in the Ghanaian culture which hinder women's smooth access to leadership positions. This issue was argued from two directions. Some of the participants explained it by relating the ideal leadership behavior and personality in the Ghanaian context to genders. Here, they stressed the need for a leader to appeal visually to the people since in the Ghanaian context appearance counts a lot, especially when it comes to lobbying. In the behavioural side the participants stated that a leader in the Ghanaian context should command respect, have ability to control people, be a strict or principled person, be a risk taker, and possess outstanding communication skills. It is believed in the society that men naturally possess these characteristics. Some of the participants also related this issue to the fact that people have their beliefs about jobs and positions which are biologically, socially and religiously suitable and convenient for men and women. Meanwhile, women are portrayed as weak, less intelligent, dependant of man, shallow-minded, short-visioned, indecent, less courageous, vulnerable, and easily influenced by trivial things. These stereotypes exist and are held strongly by men and most of the women themselves. In effect they (the stereotypes) damp the zeal of some women to vie for or accept leadership positions and also deprive them of confidence and support of the people. It also goes a long way? to make leadership unattractive to female teachers.

> Women are seen to be only good as home makers and men as leaders, so that is one obstacle. Most people think that women have no confidence and are not courageous to exercise control. And these days you can't be a leader if you cannot control because the people have become very stubborn. (FT3.)

This finding is a confirmation of a plethora of researches which have found that gender-based stereotypes are one of the strongest forces fighting against women's leadership aspirations (eg. Ayman & Korabik, 2010, p. 165; Oakley, 2000, p. 321; Powell et al., 2002, pp. 188-189; Ridgeway, 2001, p. 637). It has been reckoned as the main source of discrimination against women in the labour market. Feminine characteristics such as dressing, tone and peach voice, and body language are considered incommensurable with top leadership positions. Such stereotypes create the impression that women do not fit well into top leadership positions. She thus posits that women who are able to brave through the barriers into the top leadership positions confront the problem of acceptance

and willingness from the followers. (Oakley, 2000, pp. 330-331.) One other theoretical argument which is in line with this finding is the bio-evolutionary theory. The tenet of the theory is that the natural characteristics of men and women predispose each to having specialized skills in performance of specific activities. Thus men may have what it takes to be leaders but women may not have, and likewise women may also have what it takes to be home keepers which maybe missing in men. (Archer & Lloyd, 2002, p. 3; Durkin, 1995, pp. 168-169; Elliot, 1991, pp. 25-33; Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 51-53; Hofstede et al., 2010, pp. 137-138.) The participants cited religious beliefs as one of the roots for leadership being stereotyped as a men's role, and this has also been stated by Archer and Lloyd (2002, p. 3), and Graves and Powell (2003, p. 152) as a catalyst for the biological beliefs about gendered roles.

Sixthly, the participants implied that the extended family systems in the Ghanaian culture serve as a setback for women's advancement. Although some instances were stated where some of the principals were assisted by external family members to go through their education, some instances were stated where the system was a hindrance. One of the principals accounted that her mother did not get the opportunity to be educated because she took the responsibility to take care of her brothers when her parents died. Another principal also told a story about her father that her father was a teacher but when his uncle died, the custom demanded that he inherited his uncle to take care of the extended family properties. Inheriting his uncle meant that he was supposed to take all the responsibilities which were due to his uncle when he was alive. This consequently left her father with too many responsibilities which affected his ability to sponsor his own children to school. This issue of extended family had also been cited by Dolphyne (1991, p. 1.) as one of the factors affecting women in many African societies.

5.2.3 Gendered socialization

Analysis of the participants' responses to interview questions which aimed at finding the obstacles to women's access to leadership revealed that socialization contributes to directing women's interest from aspiring for leadership positions, creation of the stereotype that leadership is masculine and less social capital development of women. The participants' understanding of socialization was consistent with Gruce and Hastings's (2007, p. 1) definition of socialization as process of assisting individuals to acquire skills, rules, standard etc. of a group or of a society. Moreover, they (the

participants) dwelled largely on the *home or the family* as the important agent that socialized children to develop into segregated roles and occupations. And this is in congruence with Hofstede's et al. (2010, p. 68.) recognition of the family as the number one and the most important agent of socialization.

To begin with, the participants pointed out that *parents serve as role models* so children copy the various roles which their parents play at home. In the home the father has a separate role and likewise the mother. Some of the participants cited examples that in the Ghanaian context cooking and most of the other domestic shores are done by the mother. Hence girls are always supposed to be with their mother to enable them to develop skills in home-keeping. Thus the *children grow up with the stereotyped ideas about their role or job in the society*. This influences the choices of career aspirations and the courses boys and girls take in secondary school and other levels of education. One respondent for instance suggested that more than 90% of students who study home economics are female students. Also some of the participants raised the argument that in the homes where the parents are not educated, the children's interest in education is lower since the parents serve as role models.

> And even in the secondary school girls are not encouraged to study science and courses which would enable them to challenge men. Their interest is always in studying home economics because that is what they have been thought at home. When you go to the home economics class the boys are not up to even ten percent, almost all of them are girls. (MT2.)

In addition, the analysis showed that parents engage their children in segregated roles and other activities in the home and these shape the children's interest and skills. One female participant (FE1) gave a typical scenario that it is the responsibility of parents to inculcate or teach their children the virtues and role standards of the Ghanaian society. Mothers usually share the household chores among the children based on their gender. A mother who allows her boy child to do house work meant that a girl may be reprimanded by an elderly person in the house; for that can make the boy become a less powerful man in the future. Such a person may not have respect in the society. Moreover, if the girl is not well trained to be a good woman she would bring disgrace to the family if she got married and moved to live with her husband. Some mothers therefore prioritize training of their girls to acquire home caring and management skills above anything else in the girl's life.

> Parents always try to train their children so that in future people will not say this woman's daughter doesn't know how to cook or that. So, mothers always want to train their girls to be good in cooking and other women's job. It affects the girls because they are always thinking of cooking, cooking, cooking … Boys on the other hand are always free to do many things. It is time women are giving the same advantage. (FE1.)

In another similar argument, some of the participants implicated that the way boys and girls are socialized at the family level negatively affect the women's social capital development. This in turn affects the endorsement women receive from the society when they are seeking for eminent positions in the society. Here the participants' argument was that boys are always engaged in outdoor games and embark on errands. These help them to develop better human interactions, communication skills and also become more exposed to the larger society. This extends to the adult stage where men go out and women stay in the house to take care of the children and serve their husbands.

Moreover, some of the participants posited that *girls are always loaded with too many household chores which affects their academic performance.* According to the respondents, girls are expected to help their mothers in the kitchen, cleaning, washing and also help in taking care of their younger siblings and the like. All these eat into their time that is supposed to be used for studying at home. Boys on the contrary have fewer household responsibilities and thus make use of their free time to study and also engage in more intellectual and physically stimulating activities. Consequently, men become relatively competitive in terms of securing higher or prestigious positions in the society. This is a replication of Ridgway's (2001, pp. 649-655) assertion that girls and women face a home restriction syndrome while their male counterparts are usually free to move out to interact with the larger society. In the end, men have an advantage over women to build both social and intellectual capital.

> At home the girls have more responsibility than boys when it comes to the household chores like cooking, cleaning, washing and those kinds of things. The boys always just go out and play and interact with friends, but girls are always kept at home to work. They have to help their mothers to keep the home. So when the mother is at home the girl child also has to be at home but for the boys whether is at home or not they can chose to go wherever they want. (FE1.)

Theoretically, some researchers believe that the marginalization of women in leadership selection has to do with how boys and girls are socialized into adults (see Graves &

Powell, 2003, pp. 43-44; Yukl, 2007, p. 427). Moreover, this shows how roles are segregated even from childhood which extends to adulthood. Children are shown the standard roles which they are supposed to play even with regards to domestic roles. The children become so used to such roles and would always like to stick to their stereotyped roles and continue to the corresponding adult roles. (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 151; Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 53-56; Shaffer, 1996, pp. 505-506.)

5.2.4 Organizational rules and regulations

Each of the nine participants at least raised a concern that some of the organizational rules and regulation in the GES hinder women from either qualifying or seeking leadership positions. They implied that the rules and regulations do not favour teachers who are mothers. So such people are not able to acquire their promotions on time as their male counterpart do. Prominently featured in these rules and regulations were inadequate number of days allocated for each maternity leave, the rule that teachers are not supposed to bring their babies to school, the structure of the school time table, strict supervision and criteria of promotion and selecting school leaders.

First of all, six of the participants stated that in the GES female teachers have only three months of maternity leave anytime they give birth. According to the participants, this is woefully inadequate since a woman has to spend some of these days before she delivers her baby and spend the rest after the delivery.

Secondly, this is aggravated by the fact that there is a rule that forbids teachers to bring their babies to school. This puts more pressure on the women and hence they find it difficult to pursue their career to higher levels. Some of them end up terminating their appointment momentarily and then return at appropriate time. They thus suffer from interrupted and stunted career development. All the four principals recounted the ordeal they had to go through. They disclosed a common strategy that they often brought their babies and kept them under the trees near the school compound with maid servants. In this case they could sneak out from time to time to go and breastfeed their babies. In their view many women could not pursue any further education from the moment they started giving birth. Those who were able to go through were always far behind their

male counterparts. Consequently, they could only get to the principal positions after they had had all their children and the children were old enough.

Thirdly, and as another residue of the two issues raised above, the participants stated that we the women have to pass through the same competitive procedure with our male counterparts for promotion and selection into leadership positions. Meanwhile our men have enough time and space at their disposal to prepare themselves. The promotions are based on academic qualification, number of years served, teaching portfolio (lesson notes, teaching and learning materials prepared, students exercises etc), internal and external supervisions, and a face-to-face panel interview. The participants pointed out that the women always fall short because of the many responsibilities loaded on them. Fourthly, and in connection with above point, some of the participants disgruntled about the strict supervision of teachers in Ghana's education system. In their view due to the plenum of supervision, both internal and external, an average teacher who is also a mother finds it difficult to pursue studies alongside her normal work demands. In line with the above, Alful-Broni (2004, p.5) points out that the career advancement track of Ghanaian education system is susceptible to be influenced by one's ethnic background, political affiliation, gender and one's relationship with the higher authority.

Last but not the least the respondents complained about inflexible timetables in the basic schools. They claimed that teachers are always loaded with so many activities in the school which do not give room for already busy mothers to engage in private studies. An example was cited that at basic schools teachers are supposed to be present in the school throughout all the school's open hours whether they have lessons or not. And this gives the mothers inadequate time to care for their babies. They are supposed to go to school as early as possible to supervise the students to clean the compound and their classrooms. Failing to be punctual can lead to punitive consequences and poor appraisal from the principal during promotion. In a nutshell the participants claimed strongly that the school system and culture favour men and give them a competitive advantage over women.

> And our time there was no crèche so I had to carry them (babies) to the school and that one is not allowed but still we were doing it because we did not have any place to send our children to. Sometimes if your head is very strict you have to let a maid or your old

lady takes care of the child at a hiding place around the school. So at break or your free time you can go there and maybe give him or her breast milk. (FP3.)

The main substance in all these views expressed by the participants has also been underscored by Acker (1992, p. 411). According to her, working life is considered to be separated from the life at home and therefore there are rules and regulations that are to be adhered to in workplaces. Most of the rules and regulations do not give consideration to women who have a loaded family role to play, hence women are in a relatively disadvantaged position as far as career progress and advancements are concerned. Moreover, some writers have also identified unfavourable organizational culture as inimical to the progress of women on the organizational ladder (eg Bolman & Deal, 2008, pp. 354-355; Broadbridge, 2007, p. 965; Hoyt, 2010, p. 488; Oplatka, 2006, p. 604).

5.2.5 Women's inherent characteristics

Seven of the participants pointed out that irrespective of the barriers emanated from the society and the organization, there are a good number of women whose inherent characteristics, lifestyle and intrinsic motivation are below the standard of responsibility enshrined in school leadership. According to the participants, some women are barriers to themselves. Some of the characteristics the participants cited to substantiate their claim included shyness, laziness, negligence of duty, short sightedness, lack of confidence, lack of courage, indecent dressing, inferiority complex, and poor self image.

One participant who was very passionate about this issue was FT1 who happened to be the youngest participants and had the minimum number of years in the GES. In her view it is lack of seriousness and laziness which are preventing some women from climbing higher on the academic and the organizational ladder. "My fellow female teachers like giving too many excuses", she said. She used herself as an example that in less than two years after graduating from the teacher training college she proceeded to the university to pursue her bachelor's degree. She said it was difficult to teach and study at the same time but she was able to endure. She confidently said that when she reaches the level where she qualifies to be a principal, she will never give any gender excuses to deny herself from going for the position. Her extract below epitomizes the views of the participants as far as this issue was concerned.

I think women are less represented because most of them are lazy and did not take their education seriously. The males were going to school more than the females. Some too they are not confidence and also in Ghana we always think that the male has to take the leadership roles in the society so even when they are given the permission to do it they don't do it because they always think it's the job for the males and not the females. Women always feel inferior in our society and they see the males as superiors over them. (FT1.)

FP1 and FP2 made the same assertion that we female principals are public figures within our catchment areas, so if you feel shy you cannot take such positions. Other respondents such as FP1 and FP4 hammered on the dressing of some of the female teachers. They posited that teachers are role models not only to the students they teach, but also to girls and women in the society so their appearances can affect them either negatively or positively. Some of them don't know how to talk in an acceptable way so the society portrays them as disrespectful. FT3 pointed out that some women have a very poor perception about themselves and also are not always ready to endure challenges. Arguably, the respondents did seem to prove that these characteristics are biological attributes of women. Rather implicitly they argue that the women develop the characteristics from the environment.

Theoretically, no specific argument support the claim that women inherently posses such characteristics alleged by some of the participants. However, Mathipa and Tsoka (2001, p. 324) argue that these are negative perceptions that most African societies hold about women and thus usually base on that to exclude women from the most enviable positions in the society. Also Smith's (2010, pp. 11-13) study of 40 female teachers describes a certain group of female teachers as "protégées" who under-value their own potential and lack confidence. But contrary to the participants' view, the author did not reckon such characteristics as innate in women.

5.2.6 Lack of strong moral and ethical leadership

Some unethical men who are in control of affairs in organizations and institutions were alleged to be a block for women's access to leadership positions. The actions of these men directly and indirectly hinder women from aspiring for higher education and also aspiring for leadership positions. This point was raised by a very experienced male

respondent (MT2) who, according to him, has been working in the GES for 36 years and claims that he knows much about this issue under consideration. His main allegation was that some men at the top demand sex from women for exchange of employment and promotion into higher positions.

According to this participant, women encounter this barrier right from the higher institution where lecturers demand amorous favours from young female students in exchange for grades. A lady who refuses to give such a favour is likely to face the wrath of such tutor and he can sabotage her. This has the potential of leading to drop out.

> And it will interest you to know that those who are able to get to the university, there too because of the problem of lecturers wanting to take advantage of girls, some are intimidated and out of fright abandoned their courses at the university. It is a very big problem which the universities are now tackling with all seriousness. (MT2.)

This same participant advanced his argument that the unethical behaviour does not exist only in the university but also in organizations which include the GES. In his view women who refuse to yield to the demand of these unscrupulous men are always denied of their rightful positions.

> The first obstacle that comes to my mind is the ways bosses who control businesses and educational organizations handle women. When women are due for certain positions men in high positions will want to take the women to bed before they give them those position. Usually, women who refuse such demands from bosses are denied employment opportunities or promotions. It is very big issue but you don't hear about it often because our does allow talking about issues concerning sex. (MT2.)

I did not actually find theories that directly connect to this finding in the Ghanaian context. However, it all boils to the cultural dimensions of power distance and masculinity versus femininity. Hofstede et al. (2010, pp. 67-73) point out inequality as one of the characteristics of high power distance societies and this presupposes that there is tendency of people abusing the power in their hands. Also in masculine societies the subordination of women to men is highly valued (Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 159). Erroneous sexual desire of women in such societies is abominable but that of men is tolerable to some extent (Hofstede et al., pp. 176-189).

5.3   The reasons why female leaders are needed in the Ghanaian educational system

This theme or issues was raised by the participants from the beginning of the data collection. To begin with, it is significant to reiterate that this aspect was not initially part of my research focus. It emerged in the course of the field work; interviews. As open-ended as the interview questions were, the participants had the opportunity to air their views about the topic; gender and educational leadership in Ghana. The first three participants strongly emphasized that women need to be given the chance since they have a lot to offer as far as educational development in Ghana is concerned. Moreover, this research is akin to the constructivist paradigm so I realized it was in the right direction to construct the knowledge together with the participants. I therefore gave some attention to it in the subsequent interviews. Hence, the analysis of the data revealed many reasons that in the view of the participants are justifiable enough to involve more women in educational leadership in Ghana. These reasons have been grouped under two sub-headings: (a) leadership qualities, and (b) women leaders as role models.

5.3.1   Leadership qualities

All the nine participants at least made a point that women offer the best quality leadership as far as Ghana's education is concerned. They passionately advocate for recruitment of more women in educational leadership in Ghana. The participants purported that so far the domination of men in the leadership of education in Ghana for a very long time had not yielded the needed results of using education as the engine of growth and development. Some predicted that the involvement of women would not only solve the existing challenges in the Ghana education, but would also bring tremendous improvement which would extend to the socioeconomic development of the country. This argument by the participants is in line with some research findings which report that women possess leadership qualities needed for educational development (eg Oplatka, 2006, p. 612; Shapira eta l., 2011, pp. 25 & 39). Some of the leadership qualities they attributed to female principals in Ghana have been discussed below.

Caring and ethical leadership

All the four principals, a female education officer (FE1) and a male teacher (MT2) argued that the nurturing ability of women enable them to exercise caring leadership in the school context. In view of the participants, women are closer to children than men are. Right from the home women are more responsible for raising the children. They posses tendering skills which make school children feel more comfortable to be with them. They show incredible sympathy and empathy towards others and are credited with higher emotional intelligence. They exercise fairness and are highly incorruptible. A male teacher (MT2) confessed that although he is a man, he could objectively claim that as compared to men, female school leaders are less likely to engage in corrupt practices such as bribery, embezzlement of school funds, collection of unapproved fees etc. He further stated that there have been many complaints about corrupt leadership in many Ghanaian schools, so women can offer good leadership to curb the situation. Some also support their argument that the fairness in women is originated from how they deal fairly with their children at home.

> … you see what, I have realized is that when women become leaders they are not partial because of the mother qualities in women. Let say if you are a mother and you have two or three children, as a mother you love them equally and give them the same right. So, that mother quality in women makes them fair and firm. Fairness is one of the qualities in a leader. So I must say that a mother has most of the qualities that a leader should have. Also Women cannot be easily corrupted, you cannot corrupt a woman. So women can bring improvements in Ghana's education through fair, firm and non corruptible leadership. (FE1.)

In connection with the above, some theorists also perceived women to be ethical leaders in the sense that they are nondiscriminatory, empathetic, sympathetic, hold high integrity etc (eg Agezo, 2010, pp. 694-700; Eagly, 2007, p. 6).

Tolerant and excellent human relation

The analysis of the data showed that the participants perceived female principals to be tolerant of different views, different cultures and ambiguity. They also asserted that female principals have excellent human relation skills. Once again, the participants attributed women's natural caring of children as having tendency to predispose them to be tolerant. One participant cited an example that we women are able to tolerate our stubborn children in the house, so when we come to the school as principals, we take the teachers as our own children. We tolerate their divergent views and shortcomings and

gradually try to correct them. Two participants also cited examples that throughout their career as principals they ensure that they establish a good relationship with teachers, superiors, parents and all other stakeholders.

> I find it interesting because always I want to relate well and interact with people. I am a mother so I try my best to tolerate and correct my teachers just as I do to my children at home. So for my teachers when I see somebody is not feeling happy I try to comfort the person and know what is wrong with the person. For example at my former station I had a teacher who had a mental problem. I covered her until the lady was sent to a resource center, so I always want to interact with people when I come to school I feel very good and I always see to it that they are doing well. (FP1.)

One participant (FP2) disclosed that as a principal she handle each teacher as an individual with unique circumstances. She said each teacher comes from a different background and thus the effective way is to deal with them individually. These leadership qualities demonstrated by the principals are in line with the transformational leadership paradigm which admonishes leaders to handle each follower as a unique individual and also reckon professional development of followers as vital (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 4). Based on the human-oriented leadership of women as portrayed by the participants, it can be said the participants perceived female leaders' strategies as transformational and deeply ethical caring leadership. Thus, this finding supports Agezo's (2010, p. 689) recognition of Ghanaian female principals as transformational leaders.

Meeting the educational needs of children

The participant claimed that female principals set realistic goals which respond effectively to the needs of students. They usually followed up to the achievement of the goals. They also come out with plans which meet the needs of the students or learners due to the fact that women are more exposed and are very sensitive to the children's needs and problems. They have a passion for the success of students just as a mother has for her own children. In the view of some of the participants, female principals are always concerned not only about the academic success of students, but rather the holistic development of the students. One of the principals pointed out that for a person to be useful in the society, some social skills and right attitudes are also required besides academic qualification. She added that unlike their male counterparts who are always concerned about academic success to win applause from the society, we women principals integrate all these no--academic training into the school system to ensure the

holistic development of the students. Another female principal also made a point that in their time moral development was very serious in the school program, but today the moral fiber of the society has eroded among the youth and the school is a contributing factor. In her view corruption and other anti-social behaviours in the society are a clear indication that school leadership dominated by men has failed the people of Ghana.

> You see, right from the house we are always there with the children, and we know the needs of these children better than even the fathers know or any other person will even know. So it is the same in education. If I am a woman and maybe I am holding a higher position in education at least I know what the children need and that will enable me to come out with plans and programs that will satisfy the needs of the children. As a woman I know what is out there, I know what to bring that will go a long way to help the children in their education and the society as a whole. When women are put in leadership positions in education I know for sure, this one it is not like women are trying to put themselves somewhere, women are able to identify and solve problems in the society more than the men. (FP4.)

This view by the participants has been echoed by Eagly (2007, p. 6). The author points out that woman are more effective in leadership contexts such as in educational, governmental, and social organizations, where too much control is not required.

Collaborative and uniting agents

The participants described women as good collaborators and uniting agents. In the views of the participants who made these points, women leaders have a natural tendency to pull ideas from different people and different sources. Women don't consider themselves erudite in their field. So they are always sharing their leadership power and responsibilities with the followers and other stakeholders. They are meek and comparatively approachable. Women are not power conscious as compared to men. According to the participants, these factors give female principals a uniting ability to combine all hands on deck for the achievement of the desired goals. It was also inferred from the principals' stories that they collaborate with teachers, parents and other stakeholders. For example they we usually making statement like "together with my teachers we …" Interestingly, most of the participants repeatedly associated these to the motherly role of women and the way girls are socialized into adults.

> And women can unit people as well. You see at times men do not have time and patient to tolerate but women are very tolerant. This tolerant make a woman a uniting tool. When you are able to tolerate others it enables to convince people and win their support.

> Also women are not too known like men so when we are in leadership we always ask others to bring their views so that we can make it together. (FE1.)

> I always tell the parents in PTA meetings that they all have to contribute the little they can to help the children to study at home. So we women leaders can collaborate with the teachers and the parents to set target with regards to students' academic performance. (FP2.)

These views expressed by the participants agree with McTavish and Miller's (2006, pp. 14-15) assertion that women leadership is characterized by a democratic approach which relies on consensus building, empowerment and team-work. Furthermore, women's inter-personal communication and listening styles are often characterized by empathy, mutual trust and respect (McTavish & Miller, 2006, pp. 14-15).

Managerial skills

Most of the participants were of the view that women are good managers. Their conception about management was largely dwelled on financial management. It could also be inferred from their submissions that they perceived women to be good human resources managers, as compared to men. The participants considered financial management as the major role of a principal due to its sensitivity. Moreover, people are always suspicious about the misuse of schools funds in Ghana, so the ability of a principal to manage school funds effectively is highly rewarded. It is against this back drop that one of the male teachers (MT2) emphasized that one of the solutions to financial malfeasances in many Ghanaian schools is to allow more women into leadership positions. He made an instance that even at home most men who are financially successful have women or wives who are the backbones of their financial management. Thus it is pertinent for Ghana to take advantage of this special potential abound since financial misappropriation is a major hindrance to Ghana's educational development. All the principals also explain how they are able to coordinate multiple tasks which go a long way to help them develop managerial skills.

> Women are very good in leadership, even in our homes if men will be honest women are very good thinkers, especially when it comes finances. If you are spending aimlessly your wife will tie you up. So when it comes to money matters women are careful in spending so if more women are made heads those noise about headmasters chopping school money will be reduced. (MT2.)

This finding is partly related to the idea expressed by Hall (1996, pp. 186-187) that women's self-management ability traces its root to their socialization in childhood, and these management skills are transferable to the school management context.

5.3.2 Women leaders as role models

The analysis of responses given by the participants about why women leadership in the educational sector should be embraced and projected indicated unanimously that the participants see women principals as role models not only to female teachers and students, but to all females in the society. Most of the participants related this to the Ghanaian government's effort to promote the advancement and well-being of women. For more than a decade the government of Ghana has been operating a full ministry to advance the welfare of women and children. This effort has always been in form of providing free maternity care, support legal services, flexible entrance for girls into higher educational institutions etc.   The participants therefore held a view that promoting female leadership would undoubtedly buttress the government effort in advancing the welfare of women and bridging the gender gap. Hence the school children and the young women within the society would look up to these women principals to shape their vision and aspiration. One female principal stressed that this would not benefit only Ghana, but Africa as a whole, since other African countries can also learn from Ghana's exemplarily effort.

> Women leaders can be models for other young girls so that they can also attend school. We can motivate more girls to attend school and become educated women and then help to impact more knowledge to the incoming generation. (FP3.)

Hence, as rightly stated by FP1, inclusion of more women in educational leadership would motivate parents to educate their girl children since they (parents) would witness the benefits of educating a girl child. Writing from a different context but similar circumstances of the marginalization of women, Shapira et al. (2011, p. 38) report that female principals in the Arab education system in Israel were found to be serving as role models inspiring women in their communities.

Two teachers, one male (MT2) and one female (FT1) were of the view that women do not serve as role model only to females, but males as well. According to them, women's nurturing ability extends to men as well when they are leaders. Men are

always encouraged when women are able to make achievements which are usually achieved by men. Thus women leaders inspire and encourage others and also set a good example for others to follow. MT2 cited a very popular quotation by the late Ghanaian educationist, Kwegir Agrey, which goes that "if you educate a man you educate an individual but if you educate a woman you educate the whole nation". Their argument here is that women affect and transfer what they have and know to others as compared to men. Moreover, women have more contact with the oncoming generation so when women are in leadership they nurture more quality leaders for the society. In relation to this FP4 also asserted that women leadership has the potential of bringing the development to the life of Ghanaians in general.

> Besides the women too are also role models, especially to the girl child. In the school the girls look up to us and emulate our behaviors and conduct. The same things happen in the houses that we stay and the society as a whole. So women leadership can bring improve in lives of our girls and even the boys. So promoting women into higher positions does not bring development to only women but the whole country. (FP4.)

This aspect of the research findings is in line with World Bank (2011, p. xx) which reports that if barriers against women are dealt with, productivity could be increased by 25 percent in Ghana. Also including women in decision-making would enhance the country's development and children would immensely benefit in terms of education if their mothers are empowered (World Bank, 2011, p. xx).

5.4 Possible ways to increase female educational leaders in Ghana

The final part of the interview questions focused on finding out the participants' subjective views about how more women can be involved in educational leadership in Ghana. Thus after diagnoses, participants were given the opportunity to come out with their own subjective prescriptions. The analysis of the data from this part of the interview revealed varied suggestions made by the participants. Chiefly among the suggestions made by the respondents included: improved educational and training opportunities for women, women building their own capacity, favourable policies and working conditions for women, sociocultural change, and provision of policies and social interventions by the government. The participants actually threw messages to all

stakeholders and pointed out strongly that it requires all hands on deck to lift up the image of women in Ghana. I observed the passion they attached to their messages and it was as if I as a researcher was carrying the information to the public domain or to the various stakeholders involved. Below are the summaries of the views expressed by the participants.

5.4.1 Improved educational and training opportunities for women

All the nine participants suggested that in order to ensure adequate representation of women in Ghana's educational leadership, girls and women should be given the needed support to have higher education and training. They referred to their earlier assertion that girls and women face many hindrances which affect their educational achievement. Some of them stressed the need for parents to provide equal educational opportunities to their children irrespective of gender. Two female principals (FP1 & FP2) urged parents to take advantage of many programs which have been put in place to promote girls' education. FP2 added that education in general should be affordable so that every parent can afford to send their girl children to higher level educational institutions. A male teacher (MT4) also sent the same message to the parents and suggested scholarship packages for girls whose parents cannot afford it.

Some of the participants also called for the strengthening of distance education and urged female teachers to take the opportunity of the facility. Here, they pointed out that women's domestic and social responsibilities usually hinder them from enrolling in the regular university system, thus the best option is the distance education system.

> I would also like to encourage the women to upgrade their academic qualifications, through distance education so that in case there is a vacant leadership positions they will be qualified to apply. Women also need to plan their lives very well so that they can make time for their studies. I for instance did both my diploma and degree through distance learning but I was able to combine family responsibilities, work and studies. (FP2.)

The participants further recommended that female teachers should be given regular in-service training and also participate in programs which will enhance their professional skills. One participant alleged that in the school most external programs and meetings are always attended by their male counterparts and this give an advantage to the male teachers.

> They (GES head office) should be calling us every now and then for some programs which will encourage the females to upgrade themselves. They should also give more opportunity to the women in participating more in programs which develop their interest in leadership. (FP1.)

> When they (female teachers) are chosen to attend meetings they shouldn't hesitate because when they go and see their fellow women giving speeches it boost their confidence. It also offers opportunity to see so many people and learn many things from them. (FP2.)

Moreover, a male teacher (MT2) advocated for the introduction of comprehensive leadership training into the Ghana educational service. In his view the lack of leadership training paves the way for many people to believe that women are not equipped enough to lead schools effectively. He pointed out also that leadership training would boost the confidence and competency of women principals in order to correct the wrong notions people have about women leaders.

This solution suggested by the respondent is in congruence with the strategic framework offered by World Bank (2011, pp. 22-23). The report contains that tackling gender inequality should focus on the root cause. It also states that investing in human capital development of women through education could be a viable way to bridge the gender caps in many contexts. (World Bank, 2011, p. 23.) Thus this suggestion made by the participants about the educational attainment of women is in line with the one made by World Bank (2011, p. 23). The solution is focused on the root of the problem.

5.4.2 Women building their own capacity

One suggestion that was consistent in all the interviews was that women should be the architects of their own destiny. The participants strongly urged women to stand up to the task of redeeming their image in the society since they are capable of doing what they have been labeled as not having ability to do. In view of most of the participants, in spite of the biases against women in the society, women who distinguish themselves are respected and win the favour and confidence of the people. The participants thus prescribe some specific lifestyles which women can adopt to move them forward.

The first three female principals, who were always making similar submissions, probably because they all belong to the same generation and have also gone through similar career experiences, started by sending a message to women who are already in leadership positions. They admonished the *current female educational leaders to*

demonstrate good leadership. According to them, if the current women leaders demonstrate good leadership behavior, they would not only serve as role models to the up and coming female teachers but it would prove to the society what women can offer, and this would consequently change the axiom that women are not capable of leading. This particular suggestion is directly in line with Hoyt's (2010, pp. 492-493) preposition that women who are already in leadership positions can serve as ambassadors to demonstrate what women are capable of doing. S/he opines that female principals can adopt transformational leadership to carry out this mission.

> Those of us already in leadership positions should continue to do our best. We should set good examples for the young ones to learn. And when the people see our good work they will know that we women are not bad as most of them think. (FP2.)

In connection with this, three participants (FP4, FT3 & FT1) also talked about setting good examples but they focused on the female teachers.

> If you are female teacher you have to live an exemplary life. Your life in the school should be positively exhibited because if you are living a life that is not good what are you bringing to the children? It goes back to the issue of the role model I said earlier. (FP4.)

Most of the participants focused their attention on young female teachers. Some stated that female teachers should not alienate themselves from the society but should rather conform to some norms such as modest dressing, pay respect to the elderly and higher authorities, avoid immoral lifestyle such as promiscuity etc. Such lifestyles are considered by the society to be incompatible with leadership. Some also recommended family planning as a way to help female teachers arrange make enough time for their family as well as for their professional development. Last but not the least the participants urged female teachers to be self-motivated, have confidence in themselves, explore opportunities and also have a desire to vie for leadership positions. The suggestion that women need not to kowtow to the barriers that was made by the participants is a replica of that of Hall's (1996, pp. 184-185). The author found from her study of six successful female principals in the UK that women can make it to the top leadership positions if they are intrinsically motivated and rely on their own efforts.

5.4.3 Favourable policies and working conditions for women

The analysis of the data revealed the need for GES to review some of its rules and regulations, and also introduce some incentive packages in order to make leadership accessible and attractive to women. The participants, as stated earlier, threw their suggestions to various stakeholders and the GES was not left out. The participant appealed that the GES should understand the circumstances of women and institute more flexible rules and regulations.

All the principals said that the high authorities need to be more approachable to women principals. They complained about hostile attitudes by the authority towards them as very disincentive and therefore pointed out that the authority needs to be more humanistic. One principal was of the view that women should rather be given sort of preferential treatment in terms of reception and support. She stated also that the authority should take their (principals') professional development as paramount through regular in-services training.

> Sometimes when we go to the office for some information how they will treat us you wouldn't like it. (PQ: is it because you are a woman?) I think so. So I would like to advise them that when we come there (education office) they should treat us well so that everybody will feel happy to do the work. They should also give more opportunity to the women in participating more in programs which develop their interest and skills in leadership. (FP1 & PK.)

In relation to the above statement?, some of the participants suggested the authority should make it a point to recruit more women into leadership positions or set out a quota for women. One participant (FE1) for instance argued strongly that if a woman qualifies equal to a man, the position should automatically be given to the women.

> What they (GES head offices) would have to do to increase the women leadership in education is give preference to women when they are appointing heads. Even looking at the challenges women go through before qualifying, a position which is being competing between a man and woman should automatically be given to the woman. (FE1.)

Other suggestions put across by the participants as far as GES was concerned included a longer maternity leave for women, introduction of paternity leave, introduction of sex education into schools, and extra allowance for female principals and teachers. The youngest female teacher among the participants (FT1) argued that female teachers

incurred extra costs for sometimes hiring a maid servant to help them take care of their babies and thus need an extra monetary cushion. She also said GES can support them to own cars to ease their movements to and fro.

> Females should be given incentives to boost their moral. If possible they should be given a bit higher remuneration than their male counterparts because we pay our maids who help to take care of our children. (FT1.)

5.4.4 Provision of policies and social interventions by the government

Some of the messages the participants put across were directed to the government. In view of some of the participants, governments over governments in Ghana have always promised Ghanaian women a better life but women still face many barriers to their advancement. The implementation of policies has always not been the best. These participants therefore called for the government to come out and implement interventions which would support women's career and professional development. The major interventions identified in the data included: support for girl child education, scholarships for women, improvement of early children education, comprehensive family planning policy and facilities, public education, quota for women in government appointments, and abolition and criminalization of some traditional practices. Above all, the participants implicated that the government should implement strategies which would develop the country's economy in order for girls and women to get adequate educational opportunities.

Two female teachers who enjoyed scholarships during their secondary school days pointed out that many talented girls during their time could not continue their education to due financial constraints. They therefore suggested that a comprehensive financial package by the government for girls' education would make tremendous changes. A male teacher (MT4) also commented that the government should give priority to women empowerment in general and this can be done by making education easily accessible to women and including more women in the government.

> In the first place I have talked about giving priority to women empowerment. This can be done by educating our women and involving them in the government so that they can argue for their fellow women. Women should be given equal opportunity as men are given when it comes to appointments. Base on their qualification if they want 10 administrators to take up positions they should select five men and five women. (MT4.)

World Bank Report (2011, p. xxi) enjoins the states to take advantage of globalization to enrich the lives of women in the developing world. The report suggests the provision of the needed policies and logistics which would open women and girls to the global world and economic opportunities. Thus the above recommendation made by the participants to the state within the Ghanaian context, can be equated to those made by the WB. This is because they are all suggesting that the state should be responsible for enhancing the development of women. Moreover, studies show that women in developed economies are more liberated due to the availability of social supports such as early childhood care and family planning services (Leaper & Friedman, 2007, pp. 563-564).

5.4.5 Socio-cultural change

As the earlier diagnosis indicated, culture was considered by the respondents as the driving force behind all the other factors which make leadership relatively inaccessible and unattractive to women. Hence, participants repeatedly stated that there should be a renewed positive attitude towards women, a new social order, changed social relations, changed of attitude towards girls' education, etc. The analysis of these responses given by the participants revealed that they perceived socio-cultural change as one of the ways forward. As usual, the participants always showed who they were sending their messages to and these particular messages were meant for the entire Ghanaian population, especially the men, as they are the most powerful in the society.

Some of the participants pointed out that the change must start from the home. The way boys and girls are socialized needs to change to allow girls to have the same educational opportunities as their male counterparts. Others also made a point that there should be a change such that men would also take part in domestic responsibilities. Two participants argued that change is inevitable in every human endeavor and therefore people should be ready to accept the fact that gender roles are changing in this modern world. Moreover, two teachers also suggested women organizations and public education as a viable medium to put messages across to sensitize the society about the need to avoid gender biases and the need to lift up the status of women in the society.

> Now one, the culture that frowns on women and consigns them to the kitchen should be broken or should be eschewed. This can be done through educational drive by educational managers. In their bid to bring women appall with men they can organize workshops and impressed it upon the women to take up challenging roles in the educational sector. This will boost their abilities to handle certain difficulties which may be hunting them. Then also they can be taken educational tour to certain areas where women are in leadership positions. Then also the men should see the women as partners in the development of education and not to shun them or look down upon them as people who cannot deliver when it comes to the implementation of policies. (MT2.)

The change in sociocultural structure, attitude and behavior as a way to empower women, which this research suggests, has also been suggested by other studies and reports (e.g. Hall, 1996, pp 185-186; Shafer & Malhotra, 2011, p. 209; World Bank, 2011, p. xxi.). They recommend androgynous socialization to parents to give an equal opportunity for boys and girls to develop certain skills, interest and attitudes equally. Hall (1996, pp. 185-186.) recommends that girls should be given the opportunity to model both parents. World Bank (2011, p. xxi) emphasizes that giving women a mouth in household decisions and management has the potential of giving a good future to the future generation. These, among other things, were echoed by the participants as a foundation for bringing women to the level of their male counterparts as far educational leadership in Ghana is concerned.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the summary and implications of the major results of the study and shows how the research questions have been answered. It then discusses the connection between the findings and the theoretical framework of the study. It also reflects on the research process, unfolding the trust worthiness, validity, ethical issues, and limitation of the study. The chapter ends with some recommendations for future research.

6.1 Overview of findings and their implications

The study purposefully sought to explore the factors behind the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership within the Ghanaian cultural context, and also explore possible remedies. I was motivated by the World Bank (2011, p. 22) report that any effort to bridge a gender gap need to be tackled from root causes. Thus it was necessary to explore the causes and the remedies of the gender gap in educational leadership in Ghana. The importance of including more female educational leaders emerged in the course of data collection. Based on these purposes the study has answered four research questions: How has culture influenced the gender representation of educational leaders in Ghana? What cultural, organizational and social factors serve as obstacles which prevent women from getting leadership positions in Ghana? Why are female leaders needed in the Ghanaian educational system?   How can the number of female representatives of educational leadership be increased in Ghana?

Key choices I made regarding the research topic, questions and design were largely informed by the constructivist philosophical paradigm. Thus findings are considered to be subjective and contextual. As a qualitative case study, nine participants

responded to semi-structured open-ended interview questions. The data from the interviews were subjected to a qualitative contents analysis. The findings indicate that the research questions have well been answered and additional information has emerged as far as gender representation in educational leadership in Ghana is concerned.

The study dug into the history and the present day of four female principals and the results show a *labyrinth* of challenges they had to negotiate to reach their present positions. It also reveals the extra miles they have to go to catch up with the demands of their positions presently. It specifically contains information on the working life of female principals in Ghana, with regards to their career development path, cooperation of teachers, problems encountered and future aspirations etc. Such information can serve as a guide for young female teachers to develop their career towards leadership positions in educational institutions.

Generally, the study confirms the widely held view that women's accessibility to top leadership in an organization is difficult as compared to their male counterparts. It therefore provides evidence of the existence of the glass ceiling in the Ghanaian context which makes leadership inaccessible to many women. Moreover, this study also found that apart from accessibility, women are underrepresented in educational leadership in Ghana because leadership in education seems to be unattractive to female teachers. Specifically, the study found some factors contributing to the situation. These factors include low education attainment of women, influence of societal culture, gendered socialization, some organizational rules and regulations in the GES, some inherent characteristic of women, and activities of some unscrupulous men at the higher authority level of the GES. It is significant to mention here that culture was found to be an overarching factor which nurses and fosters all the other factors.

This study also reveals some reasons why there is a need to involve women in decision-making and building better future generations. One important way to involve women in creating this better future is through attracting more women into educational leadership. The study suggests that women's nurturing ability is useful in enacting high-quality human-oriented educational leadership where the focus is on the holistic development of the children or learners rather than convectional control leadership approach practice by the majority of principals in Ghana. Women's ability to combine multiple tasks at home helps them develop managerial skills which are transferable to

the educational sector. Women leadership is devoid of corruption and relies on fairness and empowerment of followers. Female principals are also good sources of motivation for girls and all women in the communities they live. Educating children requires all hands on deck. Thus schools leaders are supposed to be able to unite all stakeholders to harmoniously work towards a common goal of developing the head, heart and hands of the present and future generations. Hence, according to the present study, women are uniting agents whose involvement in educational leadership can be a catalyst for the educational development in Ghana in particular and African continent as a whole.

Finally, the study presents some counter strategies to the root causes of the gender gap of the educational leadership in Ghana. These strategies can be adopted to make educational leadership accessible and attractive to women. The strategies include: improving girls' and women's access to higher education, making education affordable, enactment of good leadership by women who are already in leadership positions, adoption of androgynous socialization, cultural modernization, abolition of some obnoxious cultural practices, economic improvement, involvement of women in the running of state affairs, adoption of favorable working conditions for women, and improvement of social infrastructures.

Based on the findings, I contend that this study provides evidence of the Ghanaian context of biological, social and cultural perspectives of gender, presented in chapter two. The biological roles played by women throughout history has led to stereotypes which rule women out of leadership (see Archer & Lloyd, 2002, p. 3; Durkin, 1995, pp. 168-169; Elliot, 1991, pp. 25-33; Graves & Powell, 2003, pp. 51-53; Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010, pp. 137-138) and this research has shown that this idea still exists in the minds of many Ghanaians. Also the social perspective which relates gender role segregation to the different social experiences girls and boys go through (e.g. Elliot, 1991, pp. 27-29; Hofstede et al., 2010, p. 151; Leaper & Friedman, 2007, p. 162; Shaffer, 1996, pp. 505-506) was manifested in the findings of the study. Moreover, cultural perspective attributes gender gaps to cultural values and practices of a particular society (Hofstede, 1997, p. 6; House, 2004, p. 5; Yukl, 2006, pp. 428 – 429). Similarly, this study points out that Ghanaian culture is an overarching factor which negatively affects women's access and interest as far as educational leadership is concerned.

It is worth stating that the present conceptualization of leadership is far different from what is used to be. Leaders no longer need to be aggressive, robust or physically outstanding. The society requires a human-oriented leadership style and this quality abounds in women (Eagly, 2007, pp. 5-6). I therefore argue here that the women's biological and social roles rather equip them with leadership and managerial skills which are needed in our current educational institutions. Women's approach to leadership is *cleaner* and reaches the goal without hurting followers. They rely on the transformational leadership strategy and deeper ethical foundation. They also strategically unite all hands on deck to collectively pursue the holistic development of the students.

Certain aspects of the society's culture keep on changing but those which have a strong historical origin are relatively static. Thus, despite the fact that some women leaders are demonstrating innovative leadership in various leadership contexts, people's evaluation of women's leadership abilities seem to be clouded by the stereotypical mindset they have about women. Leadership is still perceived and ascribed to be great men's prerogative. Moreover, in Ghana and for that matter in Sub-Sahara Africa, context attributes (such as ability to control and command respect) of a leader seem to be incompatible with the attributes (such as meekness and submissiveness) of an ideal African woman. Thus many female teachers do not want to conform to the masculine and symbolic expectations of a leader and therefore have a low motivation to vie for leadership positions.

Nonetheless, the study also seems to imply that the future looks brighter. The situation is improving but in a slow pace. Thus it requires catalysts. The suggestions from this study when taken by stakeholders can go a long way to serve this catalytic purpose. In a nutshell, the overall recommendation I would like to make to the government and other stakeholders is *commitment to education and training of girls and women*. There is the need for government especially to step up the investment in the education of the people, even if it requires minimizing the expenditure in other sectors of the economy. This is because education is the key way to enhance human capital development of the people and which consequently moves the nation forward. Thus in the study, education attainment of women emerged as the strongest setback which contributes to the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership in Ghana. In

addition, the challenge for the policy-makers in Ghana and Africa in general is to lessen women's family burden through the provision of social interventions such as well-equipped day care facilities, accessible and affordable family planning facilities as well as suitable maternal care. There is also the need for comprehensive career guidance and counseling as well as sex education at the school level.

6.2   Trustworthiness of the study

Establishing standardized criteria for evaluating the quality of qualitative research has always been a challenging issue due to the need to incorporate rigor, subjectivity, and creativity into a scientific process (Whittemore, Chase & Mandle, 2001, p. 522). Also due to the diverse approaches to qualitative research it would be incompatible to generate common criteria for judging the quality and credibility. This has led to many criteria and suggestions on how the quality of a qualitative research can be realized. However, some of these criteria overlap. (Patton, 2002, p. 542.) The author underscores that subjectivity, acknowledgement, trustworthiness, authenticity, triangulation, reflexivity, praxis, particularity, and contribution to dialogue are suitable criteria for judging the quality of a qualitative which are akin to the constructivist tradition (Patton, 2002, p. 544).

Merriam (1995, p. 52) posits that in order to ascertain the trustworthiness of a qualitative research, it is imperative to reflect on the kind of problems and issues which qualitative study is originally intended to deal with. The author further intimates that qualitative research is suitable for clarifying and understanding phenomena and situations which do not require predetermined variables. Moreover, qualitative research is ideal for understanding the inner perspectives of the participants. Thus the ability of a study to serve the purpose for which qualitative design stands for is the sine qua none of the trustworthiness of qualitative research. (Merriam, 1995, p. 52.)

Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p. 5) prescribe the use of multiple perspectives as a means of achieving quality in qualitative research. The more recent framework by Tracy (2010, p. 840) proposes eight criteria and means of achieving them to ensure the quality of qualitative research. These include worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility

resonance, significant contribution, ethical, and meaningful coherence (Tracy, 2010, p. 840).

Right from the onset of the research, most of the decisions I made were consistent with the quality assurance frameworks intimated by the writers above. It is no exaggeration to say that in the Ghanaian context the relevance, significance and timing of the topic cannot be overemphasized. As a developing country, the potential in women has been underutilized and this has partly contributed to the slow pace of the country's development (see World Bank, 2011, p. xx). After realizing the topic, the biggest challenge was my skills or credibility as a novice qualitative researcher (see Cresswell, 2009, p. 175; Patton, 2002, p. 64). On the theory side, I took greater advantage of the research methodology courses and seminars in my department and also stepped out to pursue a five-credit course in introduction to gender study at the department of philosophy of my university (University of Jyvaskyla). Knowing the weaknesses from the onset I opened myself up for receiving advices especially from my professors/lecturers and fellow students from my cohort and other cohorts. The opponent system adopted by the department was also very helpful to me. These activities and supports buttress my knowledge and skills on the topic and the research process and also ensure that multiple perspectives were inculcated into the study.

Philosophically, the study followed the constructivist paradigm so I posed research questions which led to a diagnosis of the root causes of the gender gap between women and men in educational leadership, and also how the issue could be addressed. To ensure rich and authentic data, I travelled all the way from Finland to Ghana, spent approximately ten weeks to interact and interview 12 study participants, using semi-structured open-ended interview questions. I need to state here that the data of nine participants was used for the study. I followed all the protocol, legal and ethical procedures to secure the participants' consent. The interviews were recorded and notes were taken alongside. The data were transcribed in vivo ditto and analyzed through a data-driven content analysis.

The research process and findings of the study have sincerely been presented in a thick descriptive way. As a key instrument of the research process I have continuously reflected on my abilities and beliefs throughout the research and have also acknowledged the subjective nature of the findings. I believe that these would ensure

sincerity to myself and to my cherished audience/readers. (see Patton, 2002, pp. 64-65; Tracy, p. 842.)

6.3   Ethical and legal considerations

Ethical issues are very significant in qualitative research. Hewitt (2007, p. 1149) for instance intimates that attitudes and qualities of the qualitative researcher have the greatest potential of thwarting the outcome of a study. Moreover, qualitative data gathering involves entering into informants' privacy (Stake, 1995, p. 57), thus the researcher is required to plan in advance how ethical and legal requirements of the research process would be met in order to safeguard and respect the rights of the participants (Borg & Gall, 1989, pp. 83-84). In many contexts laws have been made to set some limits or constraints for the researcher to protect the rights of participants and these laws are usually consistent with the ethical standards enshrined in most academic research traditions (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 93).

Researchers have come out with a variety of ethical frameworks which usually serve as ethical guidelines. According to Borg and Gall (1989, p. 86) two ethical issues which are inevitable in educational research are the consent of the participants and *confidentiality* of the information given by the participants. Tracy (2010, p. 847) categorizes practices which embody ethics in qualitative research into *procedural*, *situational, relational* and *exiting* ethics. Hewitt (2007, p. 1155) also summarizes six qualitative research ethical components which include: *acknowledge of bias, rigor, rapport, respect for autonomy, avoidance of exploitation*, and *confidentialit*y. As far this qualitative research is concerned, I strongly adhered to integrated ethical components which were within my repertoire as a novice researcher of the qualitative research paradigm.

Prior to data collection, I presented a research consent request letter to the Kumasi Metro Education Directorate, the body responsible for overseeing all pre-tertiary educational institutions in the metropolis. I was then issued an introductory letter by the metro director to enable me to access the sub-metro offices and then the participants. In all these paths I encountered some level of bureaucratic challenges coupled with the fact that I had a limited time at my disposal. But at the end of the day it did not only ensure

that the rights of the participants were respected, but it also secured me the maximum cooperation of the participants. (See Borg & Gall, 1989, pp. 84, 93.) Knowing very well that in the Ghanaian context verbal communication is sometimes well noted than written, I followed up with verbal negotiation by briefing the participants about the purpose of the study, time span of the interviews, tape recording, and assurance of confidentiality etc. In some cases in spite of how brief the letters were, some of the participants did not read all the content of the letters so the verbal communications were very useful in the context. This brings to mind that I was very mindful about *situational or context ethics*. For instance, there were many occasions where some participants woefully failed to meet the date or time I booked together with them. But in the Ghanaian context such incidents seem to be comparatively normal and thus I had always prepared backups. Cultural specifics such as respect for the elderly, attachment of titles to names, good rapport with participants etc. were also dully observed.

Another important ethical component of this study was confidentiality. Before the interviews I assured the participants on the extent to which their identity and the information they would provide would be confidential. After transcribing the interviews all the audios were deleted. During the data analysis and reporting of the findings I avoided the use of the participants' names, the initials of their names as well as their institutions. I adopted alphanumerical codes to represent the participants and their institutions. The autonomy of the participants was respected so I clarified to them that their participation was voluntary. Hence they could discontinue their participation at any point in time. Some participants objected the recording just at the beginning of the interviews and their will was respected.

When exiting from the field I presented verbal appreciation to all the participants as Ghanaian customs demand and added written appreciation for documentation. In each occasion I reiterated the promise of confidentiality. Finally, throughout the research I have acknowledged all possible biases I have been able to identify. For instance my personal belief in social justice seems to have influenced this research so women's ability seems to have been hyped. Also I have articulated that the findings from the study are subjective and contextual.

6.4 Limitation of the study

In spite of the rigor and my intrinsic motivation, just like many qualitative researches, the research has some limitations. The most prominent one which comes to mind is the richness of the data. The use of variety of data enhances the richness of qualitative data Creswell (2009, p. 175). The interview dug deep into the inner feelings of the participants but considering the nature of the issue studied, the richness of the study would have been enhanced if other sources of data such as observation and documents were included. More specifically, inclusion of statistical documents or documents from Ghana's ministry of gender and children affairs would have revealed more insight into the study. Also the richness of the data would have also been enhanced if the sample had covered some rural schools in Ghana. This is because majority of Ghanaians live in rural areas so the exclusion of rural participants from the study seems to represent a minor fraction of the Ghanaian population.

The study also seems to cover wider aspects of gender gap in leadership which affected the level of depth of the study. The time span of the study was also overdue. I must say that initially my entry knowledge on gender and my skills in qualitative research were a bit superficial. The effect of this weakness as a researcher on the study was that from time to time I needed to pause and concentrate on reading before coming back. This affected the consistency of some of the chapters, especially the literature review. In connection with this I realized that my interview skills at the beginning of the interviews were a bit inadequate and by the time my skills were improved, it was time for me to leave the field. So some vital issues which came up during the later part of the interviews did not receive enough coverage. For instance the issue of sexual harassment seems to be critical but I was able to capture the perspectives of only the last two participants.

However, it is significant to state these limitations among other things do not invalidate the outcome of the study; neither does it significantly affect the purpose the study sought to achieve.

6.5   Recommendation for future research

One of the defects I detected about this study is that is seems to lack specificity and thus seems to only provide superficial knowledge or general ideas about the gender gap in educational leadership within the Ghanaian cultural context. Nevertheless, the study has the potential of setting the pace for more specific and detail studies into the canker. For example, the impacts of social institutions such as marriage, extended family system, and inheritance system in the Ghanaian culture on women advancement can be studied in detail. In this case it is advisable for the study to focus on a single social institution or cultural practice and find how it affects women advancement in general or leadership in specific.

Then also the findings of this study leave some issues and questions unanswered which future studies can be focused on. For instance the study points out that the societal culture excludes women from decision-making and this negatively affects their accessibility and interest in leadership. Hence, a further action research which would seek strategies that teacher training institutions could adopt to enhance the confidence of female teacher trainees to prepare for career advancement is recommended. Similar studies which focus on developing strategies to correct people's negative mindsets about women leadership are also recommended.

Sexual harassment against women and girls emerged as a powerful barrier against women education and advancement. This issue came out during the last parts of the interviews and thus was not deeply dealt with. A further study into the issue is therefore recommended.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Letter of acknowledgment

JYVÄSKYLÄN YLIOPISTO
UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

To whom it may concern

LETTER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is to certify that Mr Patrick Korkor Owusu is a full time student in our Master's Degree Programme of Educational Leadership as of autumn 2011 and has currently completed 68 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System), out of the 120 ECTS required for completion of the progrmme.

Patrick is planning to write his Master's thesis on the topic: **Women in Educational Leadership: A Case Study of Kumasi Metropolis**, for which purpose he is contacting you to gain access to research data in your institution.

The research topic is fully acknowledged by our institution and the thesis is part of the Master's Degree Programme.

Jukka Alava
Director

Tel. +358-40-7380134
Email: jukka.alava@jyu.fi

The permit to pursue data collection for the master's thesis has been given by the 1st and 2nd advisors of the thesis on October, 2012.

Signed by 1st advisor   Signed by 2nd advisor

Appendix 2. Introductory letter from the GES

GHANA EDUCATION SERVICE

Tel: 24571 / 33621/28308

In case of reply the number
and date of this letter
should be quoted

REPUBLIC OF GHANA

Metro Education Office
P.O. Box 1918
Kumasi – Ashanti
Ghana

Our Ref No : GES/ASH/KM/EP.119/ vol.11/68

Your Ref. ....

30th November, 2012

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION
NAME   :   PATRICK KORKOR OWUSU

Mr. Patrick Korkor Owusu is pursuing a Master's Degree Programme on Education Leadership on the topic "Women in Educational Leadership: A Case study of Kumasi Metropolis".

Mr. Patrick Korkor Owusu is a student at the UNIVERSITY OF JYVASKYLA, FINLAND and has introductory letter to that effect.

Please accept and offer him the necessary assistance for the conduct of the research.

The Sub-Metro for which the research would be conducted are:
Suame Sub-Metro
Manhyia Sub-Metro
Bantama Sub-Metro

Thanks for your co-operation

E. NAANA ABUDU (MRS)
METRO DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
KUMASI

cc:
OIC, Suame Sub-Metro
OIC, Manhyia Sub-Metro
OIC, Bantama Sub-Metro

Appendix 3. Reduction of data into key ideas and sub-categories

Theme 3: Possible ways to increase female educational leaders in Ghana

From text (Original expressions by respondents)

1. FP1 my advice to them is for them to go for further studies.

   Comment [PK1]: Higher education for women

2. FP1 they should dress well because everybody is watching them in their community

   Comment [PK2]: Acceptable physical appearance

3. FP1 So we should do good things for them to emulate

   Comment [PK3]: Trs should serve as model

4. FP1 when we come there (education office) they should treat us well so that everybody will feel to do the work

   Comment [PK4]: Those high authority should avoid hostile attitude towards women

5. FP1 They should be calling us every now and then for some programs which will encourage the females and upgrade themselves

   Comment [PK5]: Training and professional development

6. FP1 They should also give more opportunity to the women in participating more in programs.

   Comment [PK6]: Training and professional development

7. FP1 women should be given some kind of preferential treatment in the field of education to enable us move higher.

   Comment [PK7]: Preferential treatment to women

8. FP2 I had a scholarship

   Comment [PK8]: Scholarship

9. FP2 girl child education is being projected these days

   Comment [PK9]: Promotion of girl child education

10. FP2 So the authorities feel that when they select more women to be leaders it will motivate the girls to be in school

    Comment [PK10]: Appointment of more women

11. FP2 when ladies put in more efforts they will be opportune to reach the highest position

    Comment [PK11]: women should commit to their own development

12. FP2 early childhood care could help

    Comment [PK12]: early childhood care

13. FP2 Those of us already in leadership positions should continue to do our best

    Comment [PK13]: female principals should set good examples

14. FP2 We have to invest more in purchasing teaching and learning materials

15. FP2 They should be confidence enough and do away with shyness

    Comment [PK14]: develop confidence

16. FP2 When they are chosen to attend meetings they shouldn't hesitate because when they go and see their fellow women giving speeches it boost their confidence

17. FP2 They should not relax and should always put in effort to take any role given to them.

    Comment [PK15]: participation in career enhancing programs

18. FP2 we have to put more effort in our education too

19. FP2 Women should have self motivation

    Comment [PK16]: self motivation and commitment to duties

20. FP2 when there is any vacant position they should apply for it because that may be their chance

    Comment [PK17]: female teachers should desire to lead

21. FP2 I would also like to encourage the women to upgrade their academic qualifications

    Comment [PK18]: higher education

22. FP2 Women also need to plan their lives very well so that they can make time for their studies

    Comment [PK19]: planning of life

23. FP2 Those women who are already up on the ladder should also mentor the up and coming ones.

    Comment [PK20]: mentoring of young female teachers

Appendix 4. Organization of sub-categories into main categories

Theme 1: Factors which affect women's access and progress in educational leadership.

FP1 Parental attitude towards girl child education

FP1 Less priority for women education

FP2 Poor parental support for girl's education

FP3 Women's interest in family life at the expense of education

FP3 Poor parental support for girls' education

FP4 Poor attitude towards girls' education

FT3 Poor parental care for girls' education

FT1 Educational levels of women

FE1 Unequal educational opportunities for boys and girls

FE1 Too much household chores for girls affect their education

MT4 Inadequate opportunity to higher education

Low educational achievement of girls and women

FP1 the society do not respect the women principals

FP2 Suppression of women by the society

FP2 Occupational stereotypes

FP3 Society's attitude towards educated women

FP4 Societal perception about women

FP4 Society's attitude towards women's leadership

FT3 Societal perception about women

FT1 women are seen as inferior in the society

MT2 Society's perception about ideal roles for women

Socially constructed hindrances

FP1 Inflexible school time table

FP2 Mode promotion and of selection educational leaders

FP4 Strict supervision of teachers

FT3 Inadequate maternity leave for teachers

Organizational rules and regulations