

RESEARCH REPORT

THE IMPACT OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION (HE) ON WOMEN UNDERGRADUATES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF GUYANA (UG)

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Guyana is one of the smaller less developed countries located geographically on the South American mainland. It has historic, social, cultural and economic links with the Commonwealth Caribbean, having been a British Colonial possession from 1803 to 1966 when it gained political independence. It comprises three counties: Essequibo, Demerara and Berbice. The overall position of women in Guyana is governed by ethnic, economic, political and socio-cultural factors. Although women are employed in all spheres the number that occupy senior or top management positions in higher education is small.

This study (Austin, 1998) examined the status of women students and managers at the Turkeyen campus of the University of Guyana (UG). It considered enrolment and graduation statistics of the six faculties to identify the pool of women eligible as employees for management at the university. The roles and responsibilities of women in managements toward women students between 1995 and 2000, were explored through formal and informal interviews with female lecturers, administrators and students. The results were analysed against a review of the relevant literature.

Women students were a majority of those enrolled in some faculties: Social Sciences (66.4% women) and Education (80.7% women), Law (54%) ,Natural Sciences (46.9% women) and Technology (8.2% women). Women are, however, a minority of staff at the University of Guyana.

The Table (next page) shows how men predominate in academic positions at all levels. This situation requires examination as women make up a majority of student enrolments.

The interviews revealed that in addition to basic qualifications criteria for staff appointment included qualities related to charismatic leadership and self-confidence. Women felt that they could not compete against such criteria. Longer years of service meant that men were more eligible for leadership positions Fewer women were eligible because of their comparatively late entry into employment in the academy. Women tended to prefer teaching and managing at the department rather than the university level,

TABLE 1: Academic positions at University of Guyana by gender 2001

DESIGNATION	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Senior Lecturers	31	7	38
Lecturers & Assistant Lecturers	70	46	116
Associate Professors	2	0	2
Professors	9	2	11
Directors	3	0	e
Co-ordinators & Heads of Departments	30	13	43
Deans	6	1	7
Assistant Deans	5	2	7
Researchers	2	1	3
TOTAL	158	72	230

and women managers tended not to support each other. However a number of women staff working at departmental level felt their work at this level was exceedingly stressful. Some senior women administrators were content to serve as deputies and did not aspire to higher positions in the university. The small numbers of women in leadership undermined any significant representation of women's issues at decision-making forums

The data substantiate views (DeSimone, 1995; Hollenshead et al., 2001; Hunt, 1998; and Morley, Unterhalter & Gold, 2002) that quantitative growth resulting from the feminisation of Higher Education is not an indication of qualitative growth in terms of employment in HE management. Inadequate scholarships and student loans for postgraduate study, plus persistent conflicts of child care and household responsibilities hinder women's employment.

The study highlights the need for support through a range of schemes including mentorships and discussion forums to help women undergraduates and staff employed on low grades acquire the knowledge and skills that will motivate them to pursue academic careers. There is also a need for the University of Guyana to consider the structural barriers that hinder women's progress, address inequalities in promotion and explore alternative promotion criteria that value the contribution women make.

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CLAUDETTE COLLETTE AUSTIN is a Lecturer II in Educational Administration and Head, Department of Foundations and Education Management in the School of Education and Humanities, University of Guyana. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Arts and a Diploma in Education from the University of Guyana as well as a Masters degree in Women and Management in Higher Education from the Institute of Education, University of London. Prior to her appointment as a Lecturer in 1998 she worked for over a decade as an Administrator in the University of Guyana. Claudette has written courses in Issues and Perspectives in Education and Gender and Education Management for distance education delivery. She is currently carrying out research and writing on Gender Equity in Higher Education, Women and Management and current issues in education.

Depuis 1998, **CLAUDETTE COLLETTE AUSTIN** est maître de conférence en Administration scolaire et dirige le département de Fondements et Gestion en éducation au sein de la School of Education and Humanities de l'Université de Guyana. Elle détient un Baccalauréat-ès-Lettres et un Diplôme en éducation de cette même université, ainsi qu'une Maîtrise portant sur les femmes et la gestion universitaire de l'Institute of Education de l'Université de Londres. Avant sa nomination en 1998, elle a, pendant dix ans, œuvré dans l'administration de l'Université de Guyana. Claudette est l'auteur de cours d'enseignement à distance portant sur les problèmes contemporains en éducation et sur la parité sexuelle dans les postes de direction en éducation. Ses recherches en cours touchent aux questions d'équité dans l'enseignement supérieur, à la place des femmes dans les postes de direction et à des questions qui se posent aujourd'hui en éducation.