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## From the Editor

Dear intWOJDE Readers,

Welcome to the Volume 3 Number: 3 of intWOJDE;

In this issue, 4 articles of 7 authors from 4 different countries around the world have been published. These published articles are arrived to the intWOJDE from, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Nigeria and Turkey.

The 1st article is arrived from Malaysia written by Siti Hajar HALILI, Department of Curriculum & Instructional Technology, Faculty of Education, University Malaya, Shukri SULAIMAN and Dato' Dr. Mohd Razha Abd. RASHID, School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia, on "Exploring Adult Learning Principles By Knowles And Gender Differences of USM Distance Learners".

Their study is aimed at identifying the differences on the adult learning principles by Knowles based on gender with the use of videoconferencing technology. The theoretical foundation for this study is the andragogy theory by Knowles (1980) that holds a set of adult learning principles such as learners' self concept; motivation to learn, readiness to learn, role of learners' experience, learners' need to know and learning orientation. A total of 394 respondents answered the questionnaire distributed to them and collected data were analyzed using chi-square test, t-test and descriptive analysis (mean and standard deviations). The SPSS software version 17 was utilized for data analysis. This study showed that significance differences existed between the adult learning principles by Knowles (1980) with the use of videoconferencing technology based on gender. The researchers recommend that further studies explore other adult learning theories looking at the gender differences besides including a larger sample from different institutions. Male and female students need to have the same opportunities in education with the use of technology to support teaching and learning process.

In the 2nd article titled as "GIRLS STEP TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT: Bangladesh Open University Ladder To Hope Through Gender Lens", written by Zobaida AKHTER, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Civilisational Dialogue, University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, MALAYSIA. Women's access to education must be treated as their fundamental right. And it is only through education that they would get the chance to prepare themselves in order to play their roles in nation's social, economic and political spheres as equal members of society. In Bangladesh, very few women can enjoy such rights and live a healthy and prestigious life. At present due to government initiatives, girl's enrolment in primary and secondary education is little bit higher than the boys. Despite of such encouraging scenario, there is a dark side behind this. Due to prejudice, mistaken education from family and society, lack of security, gender biased curriculum, dropout rate of girls is higher and their retention rate is low. Though there are facilities with free education till secondary education, lack of social motivation, mistaken education and increasing rate of violence against in different form, refrain them from education and encourage them in child marriage. Marriage is considered as the alternative to education, which ultimately leads to violence against women due to unpaid dowry.

The article will analyze the issues of some social problem with special emphasis on mistaken family education. Curricula and textbooks are gender biased and classroom environment are more gender biased. Bangladesh Open University has all the freedom, access and opportunity to overcome the problems with their unlimited innovations to refrain the girls from education. Some textbooks of BOU will be reviewed from gender perspective and will put some alternative approaches. The article will emphasis on the uniform gender code, gender sensitivity and gender balance in among all the Open and Distance Learning Institution of the developing countries

The 3rd article is join study from Nigeria, on "Distance Education as a Woman Empowerment Strategy in Africa", written by Felix Kayode OLAKULEIN and Olugbenga David OJO, from National Open University of Nigeria, Victoria Island, Lagos, Nigeria. This paper aims in line with the studies over time have revealed that education is the most potent instrument for the emancipation of any group of people (Azikiwe 1992; Ocholi 1999; UNIC, 2000). Sambo (2000) also opined that mental freedom, which usually precedes all other forms of freedom, can only be guaranteed by an effective education system.

This view was further crystallised by Okeke (1995) when she observed that education is a sure pathway to the liberation of the mind and the improvement of socio-economic status of people. History, the world over, is replete with the achievements of men folk and their contributions to the development processes and from time immemorial the position of women in the structure of society has never been considered on the same plain as that of men, they have been regarded as a second-fiddle. It is on this believe that Ker (1999) argued that women all over the world have been categorized under the disadvantaged groups of people and society itself has systematically and consistently pursued the socialization of women into accepting the notion of disadvantaged group.

Given the preponderance of this categorization of women as a disadvantaged group of people, a social reengineering process is required to introduce equality through emancipation of the mind. This is where education has been found to be useful as a liberating force and agent of social change especially in developing countries like Nigeria. It is on this premise that the Open and Distance Learning scheme is hereby considered as an effective strategy for women empowerment, within the functional framework of the general lifelong education process.

The 4th article is from Turkey. Written on "Women's Perceptions Of Leadership in Distance Education", by Gülay EKREN, from Sinop University, Ayancık Vocational School. The purpose of her study is to evaluate whether any leadership style has convenient for women in distance education and how women assess themselves as a distance education leader and to assist in improving the leadership capabilities of distance education leaders by identifying women's perceptions of leadership characteristics of distance education leaders.

By choosing one of the most focused leadership styles in the literature, an appropriate leadership style has asked to participants (132 women staff of distance education institutions in Turkey) for defining themselves, then the demographic and personal attributes (age, appellation, duty, management status, distance education experience. From point of the leaders who are making differences because of having different characteristics than others. In the literature, definite leadership styles were described which were arising from these different structures of leaders.

Studies on women's leadership styles began in the mid-1970s. In the 1990s researches focused on leadership style which was most suitable for women or men.

"In the Success Stories section it placed as A WOMAN, 99, GETS COLLEGE DIPLOMA 75 YEARS AFTER GRADUATING Learn How It Will Change The World It's All In This Free Investor Rpt. A 99-year-old woman was finally awarded her college diploma at a special graduation ceremony after a \$5 diploma fee prevented her from receiving it 75 years ago.

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Hope to stay in touch and wishing to meet in our next Issue on 1st of October 2014.  
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## **EXPLORING ADULT LEARNING PRINCIPLES BY KNOWLES AND GENDER DIFFERENCES OF USM DISTANCE LEARNERS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study is aimed at identifying the differences on the adult learning principles by Knowles based on gender with the use of videoconferencing technology. The theoretical foundation for this study is the andragogy theory by Knowles (1980) that holds a set of adult learning principles such as learners' self concept; motivation to learn, readiness to learn, role of learners' experience, learners' need to know and learning orientation. A total of 394 respondents answered the questionnaire distributed to them and collected data were analyzed using chi-square test, t-test and descriptive analysis (mean and standard deviations). The SPSS software version 17 was utilized for data analysis.

This study showed that significance differences existed between the adult learning principles by Knowles (1980) with the use of videoconferencing technology based on gender.

The researchers recommend that further studies explore other adult learning theories looking at the gender differences besides including a larger sample from different institutions. Male and female students need to have the same opportunities in education with the use of technology to support teaching and learning process.

**Keywords:** Gender, adult education, distance education, videoconferencing technology.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The role of media in the learning process can be defined as technology that brings information which can be used for fulfilling teaching and learning (T&L) needs. Information technology (IT) has opened a new information delivery platform in the teaching and learning process, especially for distance learning program. The use of videoconferencing technology in teaching and learning is related directly to the concept of use of IT in education because it can help to narrow the gap between students and teachers who are in different locations (Visser, 2002). Videoconferencing technology also known as "USMVideoNet" had been introduced at School of Distance Education, Universiti Sains Malaysia (SDE-USM) since 1995 as one of the teaching and learning delivery mechanism.



The videoconferencing technology connects the USM main campus to other regional centers throughout Peninsular Malaysia. This technology uses international internet protocol of H.323, including the ability to integrate data and video with the TCP/IP network.

Many literatures showed that there are many advantages of videoconferencing in educational institutions. According to Martin (2005), Rose et al. (2000), Townes-Young and Ewing (2005) and West (1999), videoconferencing technology minimizes the time and costs savings between remote locations, helps to fill in the gaps of teaching services besides improving access to learning.

The effectiveness of videoconferencing as a teaching tool has been researched thoroughly. (Katz, 2002; Wheeler, 2002). Findings by Carville and Mitchell (2001) showed that student have developed learning strategies and skills with the use of videoconferencing technology. However, the technology capacity and constraint should be given attention as it would affect the students' learning process Belanger and Jordan (2000), Simpson (1991), Holden (1994), Yocom and Whitson (1995) stated that voice acceptance will be unclear at the different locations when the students speak slowly. Latchem and Rapley (1992) also found that during videoconferencing implementation, many problems occurred as seen from the quality of audio, screen and image.

One-way communication can also occur if the student did not participate during the session. A study conducted by Shaffe (2000) found that students were more passive to interact during the videoconferencing session.

Distances between location of the campus or regional center are usually far apart. Distance, time and cost of travelling to attend the videoconferencing session may account for failure to attend the live videoconferencing.

Students in SDE-USM are mainly composed of adult students. Adult students have their own careers, family responsibility and have years of experience. They bring years of experience and knowledge to any learning situation. Andragogi adalah salah satu perintis konsep mengenai pembelajaran orang dewasa. Knowles (1980) has listed several criteria and characteristics of adult learners, namely: adult learners are free to act in a self-directed way, lecturers need to play a role and thus must obtain the views, opinions and ideas of learners related to the topic being taught. This is because adult learners often will associate their learning with their existing experiences. They are more experienced and knowledgeable in various aspects involving work and are those who have family responsibilities. Adult learners also have objectives that need to be achieved.

The lecturer only functions to help the learners achieve their goals at the start of the course. The main aim of learning among adult learners centered on the objective and knowing the real reason for their learning. The learning process can be applied at work to add value. Hence, it is important for lecturers to identify the learning objectives of the learners before the course begins.

Further, Knowles also stated that adult learners are more interested in knowledge and skills that can benefit them. Lecturers need to explain in a much clearer way regarding how the learning will be useful in their career and life. The experience and knowledge possessed by adult learners must be respected and appreciated.

These learners must be given equal opportunity to give their opinion related to their experiences and knowledge. Hence, adult learning needs to look into the needs to learn a certain matter, besides being suited to the existing attitude, knowledge and skills possessed by the adult learners.

According to Waldeck et al. (2001), Yu et al. (2001), and Santovec (2002), although literature review related to gender has been studied widely, there is still a lack of research related to the aspect of gender and learning style, online learning and student involvement in the T&L process.

Thompson (2002) and Kramarae (2001) stated that of late, female students were found to enroll in online courses as compared to male students. Rooney et al. (2006) predicted that beginning in 2006 until 2015, females will be starting to participate in programs offered by educational institutes to enhance their qualifications. Richardson and King (1991) as well as Perraton (1993) declared that female learners dominate entry into distance learning (DL) programs. In the SDE-USM program, data on the number of students for the Academic Session 2009/2010 also shows that female students outnumber males in furthering their education online.

In an internet-based learning environment, Lee (2002) found that male learners showed more positive change in behavior and higher motivation for learning as opposed to female students. In looking at the gender aspect with respect to efficacy in computer usage at the Open University Malaysia (OUM), male students were found to be more skilled in operating equipment and maintaining the computer as opposed to females (Abdul et al., 2003). According to Demiray and Sensus (2000), the skills knowledge level of women in daily life is lower as compared with males in general in Turkey. One of the best ways for women to get an education is to follow DL programs. DL programs give them the opportunity to enhance their qualifications and open wider opportunities for career advancement. Fischer (1992) and Dimmick et al. (1994) stated that the differences with respect to gender can also lead to differences in usage of media between males and females in the teaching and learning process. Nancy and Barbara (2011) also stated that when adult students especially women are pursuing degrees, they will face particular constraints such as family responsibility, economic and workplace matters.

A study by Idrus et al. (2001) found that at the initial stage, female adult students had to make some sacrifices when they became students at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). In contrast, male students do not face this conflict although they have a minimal time to spend with family. Atan et al. (2003) discovered a significant reduction in adult learners' time spent on family and recreation activities when they joined the distance learning program. Sorenson (1995) also found that as compared to female students, male students are participate more and have a positive attitude toward the teaching and learning process.

Busch (1995) reported that in the 1980s and early 1990s most studies on the aspect of gender mainly investigated the issues of self efficacy of students in the mathematics and science subjects. The aspect of computer use in the teaching and learning process also showed that a significant difference existed from the aspect of gender. On the whole, findings of studies show that male students had higher self efficacy than female students in the related fields. The study by Margolis and Fisher (2002) revealed that male students, unlike female students, favored the use of computers in the teaching and learning process. Through a ten-year analysis of the trends in educational technology, Masood (2004) stated that delivery systems were revolutionized by the new technologies.

A study by Bray, Aokyi, and Dlugosh (2008) found that 69.3% of student responded that the advantages of distance learning are the ability to study at anytime and anywhere they decide.

Kear, Williams, Seaton, and Einon (2004) suggested that the use of information and communications technology (ICT) in a distance learning course should support a resource-based learning approach which means that students are given the choice of

learning materials, allow them to participate in virtual communication as well as to promote an active learning approach.

Thus, this study attempts to fill the gap in adult education research by investigating the impact of information technology, specifically videoconferencing technology for distance learners. The main objective of this study is to identify the application of adult learning principles by Knowles (1980) across gender with the use of videoconferencing technology in SDE-USM.

## METHODOLOGY

This study is a descriptive study on the aspect of adult students in SDE-USM. Descriptive research is suitable for use in research that aimed at describing a scenario that is happening in the population. This study focus on the videoconferencing technology as it is one of the educational tools for the teaching and learning process in SDE-USM and the best tool that has been recognised in Malaysia (Md Noor, 2001). The adult learning approach or better known as andragogy theory introduced by Knowles (1980) is used in this research to identify the differences in principles of adult learning in usage of the videoconferencing mode. Andragogy theory holds a set of assumptions about how adults learn and put emphasis on the value of the learning process. It uses approaches of problem-based and collaborative learning as well as underline more equality between the teacher and learner.

Knowles had outlined several learning principles known as the andragogy model that can be used as a guideline in evaluating effectiveness in the adult learning field. Knowles identified the six principles of andragogical assumptions such as learners self concept, motivation to learn, readiness to learn, role of learners' experience, learners' need to know and learning orientation. According to Merriam (2001), andragogy is accepted as a guide in adult learning. It is clear that learners in the distance learning program in SDE-USM are adult learners. This model is suitable for use in this research to help and thus encourage the process of more effective T&L among adult learners using videoconferencing technology.

Source information used in this study consisted of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained through the use of a questionnaire. The secondary data were obtained by reviewing reference books, journals, theses, and internet online sources. All respondents in this study were off-campus undergraduate students enrolled in a Bachelors degree program for courses such as Management, Social Sciences, Humanities and Sciences. Researchers used stratified random sampling to ensure that the subjects are truly represents the population in SDE-USM. 394 students were selected as the subjects and they answered the questionnaire distributed to them.

A number of statistical parameters have been used to analyze the data such as Chi-square test and *t*-test. Chi-square test was used with significance level of .05 to indicate the level of confidence in making the decision on whether to accept or reject the hypothesis of this study (Majid, 2000). Meanwhile, *t*-test was used to compare and determine the differences between variables with the significant level of .05. The data were then analyzed using statistical analysis of SPSS software version 17.0.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, the researchers assumed that a significant difference existed among students of different gender toward the use of videoconferencing technology. To answer the hypothesis that is to determine the differences between adult learning principles by Knowles (1980) with gender, chi-square test was used with the confidence level of .05.

The findings showed that the significant values for male and female are smaller than the significant level of .05. Thus, the hypothesis which states that there are significant differences between adult learning principles by Knowles (1980) with gender is acceptable.

From the students' responses, it is clear that there are significant differences based on gender with the use of the videoconferencing technology in the teaching and learning process.

**Table: 1**  
**Chi-square test for gender**

Adult learning principles by Knowles			
	Chi-Square Value	df	<i>p</i>
Gender	12.411	5	0.000

df – degrees of freedom, *p* – significant value, \* Significant level of 0.05

The *t*-test analysis was used to determine the significant value that is statistically different from each group with the significant level of .005 and 95% confidence level.

Referring to Table: 2, the result showed that the *p*-value for the learners' self concept, motivation to learn, readiness to learn, role of learners' experience, learners' need to know and learning orientation are less than the significant level of .05.

This means that there is a significant difference between six principles of adult learning principles by Knowles (1980) with male and female students.

Thus, this study found that male and female students in SDE-USM have different preferences on the adult learning principles, which were learners self concept, motivation to learn, readiness to learn, role of learners' experience, learners need to know and learning orientation via videoconferencing technology in the teaching and learning process.

**Table: 2**  
**Result of the *t*-Test for gender**

Differences between adult learning principles by Knowles with gender			
There is a significant difference	<i>p</i>	There is no significant difference	<i>p</i>
Learners self concept	0.00		
Motivation to learn	0.00		
Readiness to learn	0.00		
Role of learners' experience	0.00		
Learners need to know	0.00		
Learning orientation	0.00		

*p* – significant value, \* Significant at the level of .05

Further analysis such as descriptive analysis (means and standard deviations) were used to determine the differences between adult learning principles by Knowles with male and female students. This analysis is appropriate to be used to analyze the value of the mean score that differed significantly.

Table: 3 showed that female students choose the learners' self concept 3.10 (0.64), readiness to learn 2.82 (0.78), learners' need to know 2.72 (0.76) and learning orientation 2.68 (0.73), whereas male students agreed on the motivation to learn 2.89

(0.74) and role of learners' experience 2.80 (0.79) with the use of videoconferencing in the learning process.

In summary, this result suggests that female students who followed the DL program at SDE-USM favored the learners' self concept, readiness to learn, learners' need to know and learning orientation, whereas male students agreed on the motivation to learn and role of learners' experience with the use of videoconferencing technology.

**Table: 3**  
**Means and standard deviations of adult learning principles based on gender**

Adult Learning Principles	Gender	Means	Standard Deviations
Learners self concept	Male	2.59	0.62
	Female	3.10	0.64
Motivation to learn	Male	2.89	0.74
	Female	2.80	0.69
Readiness to learn	Male	2.78	0.72
	Female	2.82	0.78
Role of learners' experience	Male	2.80	0.79
	Female	2.71	0.75
Learners need to know	Male	2.69	0.74
	Female	2.72	0.76
Learning orientation	Male	2.60	0.70
	Female	2.68	0.73

Each student is an individual with different objectives, learning style, ability and ambitions. Male and female students need to have the same opportunities in education and derive benefit from the teaching style, orientation of education, counseling and curriculum free from gender bias (Hata & Sadatul, 2005). The female students, especially married females and those who had responsibilities as mothers, usually face various challenges in terms of allocating time and energy when furthering their studies. Houtz and Gupta (2001) stated that although males and females showed a positive attitude to technology usage, the male students had a more positive view of technology use as opposed to the females. Emine and Sensu (2000) also stated that in general the level of knowledge and skills of female students in all aspects of daily life is low when compared with male students. This study implies that there are significant differences based on gender with the use of the videoconferencing technology in the teaching and learning process. Female students who followed the DL program at SDE-USM agreed on four adult learning principles, which were learners' self concept, readiness to learn, learners' need to know and learning orientation. In contrast, male students were more in favor for motivation to learn and role of learners' experience with the use of videoconferencing technology in T&L process.

## CONCLUSION

Distance education program is different from conventional programs. Limited contact and student-lecturer interaction may make the students experience feelings of isolation when enrolling in a distance education program.

It is clear that students following the distance learning program are adult learners who usually already have families and careers. Of late, changes have occurred in trends of learners entering distance learning programs nowadays; it was found that younger learners in their twenties are also following distance learning programs. Even so, the

studies they undertake are only part-time considering that they have their own careers to manage.

They need to allocate time for studying, completing their coursework or assignments and they need to sacrifice their weekends to attend lectures. Allocating a special time and scheduling time for career, family and learning is very much needed so that adult learners can succeed in their learning when following a distance learning program.

Hence, learning among adult learners need to address the needs to learn a topic, and accommodate the attitude, knowledge and skills they already possess.

The use of videoconferencing has its own advantages in the teaching and learning process. Awareness of the adult learning principles with may help the institution to design an effective course and teaching instruction to the students. Perhaps, the institution will provide new methods of instruction for teaching and learning process that match with the learners' needs and also provide better student support services. It is important for the lecturers to ensure that their instructional methods match the needs of the learners during the teaching and learning process. Researchers also suggested that students should take their own initiative to work in a group, sharing ideas as well as initiate discussion in order to avoid feeling isolated and unmotivated when they sign up for distance education programs.

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## **GIRLS STEP TOWARDS EMPOWERMENT: Bangladesh Open University Ladder to Hope through Gender Lens**

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### **ABSRTACT**

Women's access to education must be treated as their fundamental right. And it is only through education that they would get the chance to prepare themselves in order to play their roles in nation's social, economic and political spheres as equal members of society. In Bangladesh, very few women can enjoy such rights and live a healthy and prestigious life. At present due to government initiatives, girl's enrolment in primary and secondary education is little bit higher than the boys. Despite of such encouraging scenario, there is a dark side behind this. Due to prejudice, mistaken education from family and society, lack of security, gender biased curriculum, dropout rate of girls is higher and their retention rate is low. Though there are facilities with free education till secondary education, lack of social motivation, mistaken education and increasing rate of violence against in different form, refrain them from education and encourage them in child marriage. Marriage is considered as the alternative to education, which ultimately leads to violence against women due to unpaid dowry.

The article will analyse the issues of some social problem with special emphasis on mistaken family education. Curricula and textbooks are gender biased and classroom environment are more gender biased. Bangladesh Open University has all the freedom, access and opportunity to overcome the problems with their unlimited innovations to refrain the girls from education. Some textbooks of BOU will be reviewed from gender perspective and will put some alternative approaches. The article will emphasis on the uniform gender code, gender sensitivity and gender balance in among all the Open and Distance Learning Institution of the developing countries

**Keywords:** Women, Education, Empowerment, Distance Learning, flexibility

### **INTRODUCTION**

Constitution of Bangladesh guarantees equal rights for men and women, prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and strives to promote social and economic equality. Article-28 states "women should have equal rights with men in all spheres of state and public life". But, practically, very few women and girls can enjoy such rights and live a healthy and prestigious life. Young girls are curtailed from education, which is their basic right due to social evil. Parents are afraid of their daughter's honor, family and social prestige, so ensure the safety of the daughters; sometimes they take the decision to withdraw their daughters from schools and colleges.

Most of the time this type of occurrence like eve teasing happen when girls were in the way to educational institutions. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*' a revolutionary book; Mary Wollstonecraft that says women are always judged first as women and second as human beings.

On the other hand, men are judged individually on their own merits. Wollstonecraft says that that through proper education, women could acquire self-respect. Knowledge is

power and knowledge imparted through education is more powerful. In our country most of the people especially women are devoid of their basic rights and they are considered as the disadvantaged class. The fruits of technology and modernity are the subject of enjoyment of the privileged class of the society. So the Open University is the bridge of information among the disadvantaged people based on their needs, culture, environment and economic status.

Societies often impose physical restrictions on women's mobility. Studies from Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan have clearly shown that parents refrain from sending their daughters to school not so much because they fear for their daughter's safety, but because they are worried of upsetting traditional gender roles which give girls little choice in matters of education (Kanwar and Taplin, 1999). Distance education overcomes many of the obstacles faced by the girls and women in the mainstreaming education of Bangladesh because, in distance education time, needs and places of the students are regulated according to their convenience. It becomes the second chance to the disadvantaged group of Bangladesh.

### WHAT IS ODL CULTURE

Distance learning as a process that is sensitive to social, cultural, and contextual factors (Warschauer, 1998; Wegerif, 1998). Considering the cultural dimension as a crucial element in the effectiveness of women education towards empowerment, the paper supports and elaborates on the idea that successful ODL is not only dependent on optimal uses of available technologies, teachers' pedagogical-content knowledge, and students' motivation level, it is also dependent on the cultural (mental) representations learners and teachers bring to the learning situation and the content and approach in textbooks.

Culture is a complex term to define precisely. As such, it has a long and complicated history. In most disciplines, the historical tendency has been to connect culture to nationality and ethnic origin. Grounded in the influential work of Hofstede (1980), the inclination has been to assume national groups as having the same patterns of thought, action, and values.

More recently, however, culture has been seen as an entity that transcends ethnic and national boundaries. Viewed from this perspective, culture encompasses "the patterns shaped by ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, geography, profession, ideology, gender, and lifestyle" (Branch, 1993, p. 7). This more recent definition of culture embraces the idea that every person and human group is both cultural and multicultural. This paper is consider culture as acquired behaviours, perspectives, values and characteristics of a particular group or community. Gender Sensitivity from Different Perspective

- Gender discriminated practice prevailing in the family
- women's and child's human rights
- Gender discrimination in the educational intuitions
- Examples from the textbooks of NCTB
- Examples from the Textbooks of BOU
- Determine the ODL culture from gender perspective
- Recommendations for making ODL, more gender sensitive Family and Gender Issue

Family is original and historical shelter for the people. We know that all types of education originate from the family. When a child born then he or she started gradually to understand everything by following their parents. The reflection of the behavioural attitude between the parents integrated in the children.

Family is the strongest driving force for moulding the children into the right direction. If the family's impact is negative on this regard, justice could not expect from society. If a father brings a big fish from market, generally, mother will give the head of the fish either to father or any male child. This is other male member of the family.

## **WOMEN'S AND CHILD'S HUMAN RIGHTS**

UN charter and later on in 1948, 10 December in the Universal Declaration has been known as human rights bill. Its objective was two:

- To flourish the basic rights and possible talents
- and to implement it through international process.

In 1979, 18 December the general assembly of UN has declared this convention or bill considering the issue of discrimination against women. Let's now we look into the matter, why CEDAW is so important? Before this there were many convention but those did not get priority because those were not based on human rights.

### **The Importance of CEDAW**

- CEDAW is the only bill or contract which speaks about women issue
- By equality in CEDAW means equality of law and practical equality
- It determines the international standard regarding women rights.
- CEDAW gives the complete definition about the discrimination against women.
- It put equal importance to remove the discrimination on the private and public of women.
- The supporting countries of CEDAW are legally bound to implement the CEDAW

## **GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION**

The goals of education for All (EFA) are currently concerned with equality. If children are excluded from access to education, they are denied of their human rights and prevented from developing their talents and interest in different dimensions.

Bangladesh is committed to EFA and Dakar Framework and UN Millennium Goals for 2015. Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girl's full and equal access to basic education of good quality is one of the major goals of Dakar framework.

A significant achievement of the last decade was to attain gender parity in primary school enrolment. Other components are improvement in gross and net enrolment in primary education and reduction in dropout and improvement in completion of the cycle, encouraged by provision of free textbooks to all students, food for education and lately stipends for stipends for poor children.

Apparently many positive changes have been achieved but in reality some gender discrimination still remains in the different educational areas in Bangladesh which we much addressed to the students so that they could identify the problem themselves.

## **GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN NATIONAL TEXT BOOK BOARD**

National Curriculum and textbook Board (NCTB) had already made some progress towards gender-balanced curriculum and textbooks. They have adopted policy to change

the textbooks in order to make it more gender-sensitive. Some issues should be considered.

- Truth should not be hiding regarding the role of women, example, freedom fighter, breadwinner, scientists, pilot etc.
- No functionally defined role of men and women should be depicted in the textbooks
- No degrading language should be used which expose the inferior position of the women
- Social mobilization of women should be depicted
- Biological differences should not be portrayed
- Religion should be expressed as a morality not to restrict women from empowerment
- Textbooks should be the symbol of truth, prosperity, progress. Workable and free from dogmatism and superstition
- Textbooks should be the agent of changing world to a positive direction.
- No description regarding girl's beauty and boy's strength should be emphasized.

### **ROLE OF BANGLADESH OPEN UNIVERSITY (BOU)**

The Bangladesh Open University is the only open and distance Learning University in Bangladesh. It is turning to a positive goal towards empowerment of the disadvantaged class; especially women. The Open School of Bangladesh Open University (BOU) is presently imparting two educational programs, namely Secondary School certificate and Higher Secondary School Certificate programs.

These programs are basically providing an excellent opportunity of continuing education to those, who were either dropped out from basic education program, both in formal and non-formal education sectors or were unable to avail further educational opportunities due to various reasons.

The Open School is one of the faculty of BOU providing two vital programs, SSC and HSC, for last couple of years to the students of secondary and higher secondary level who have not the privilege to complete it through the national system. Open School is supplementing the initiative of the govt. to achieve the goal of EFA and MDG. While secondary age group students are definitely demands the environment of the school as support for their learning, the opportunity should be given to the students to complete their education with competence, fairness and justice, gender sensitivity in curriculum, textbooks, class environment, audio-visual program is needed. Reformation should not come if the mind-set of the authority changes.

### **CURRICULUM OF BANGLADESH OPEN UNIVERSITY**

Bangladesh Open University is following National curriculum, in its act it is written that BOU should follow NCTB curriculum but it could add something more but not less. So BOU has an unlimited scope to make its curriculum according to its desire and ambition. The textbook of BOU are written in a self-learning system with many examples and illustrations.

The students of BOU are deprived to be in direct contact with the teacher. Most of the students are from disadvantaged class, so they are not getting educated parents and surroundings, books are the only medium for them to learn new something and mould their opinion. Practically secondary students are most vulnerable considering their age and environment. What they learn, they apply in future.

They are very sensitive in receiving knowledge. Bangladesh Open University is bearing strong responsibilities to mould the mind-set of the students with modern concepts, gender sensitive and concept towards justice. It should play a role of a teacher, reformer and guide.

### **Review of the Selected Textbooks Gender Perspective**

- In this book it is defined, how the children help their parents in the household activities. In this book division of labour is very stereotyping and prominent from gender perspective. It is mentioned that a boy of agriculture based family can help father and on the other hand girl has to manage whole household work with mother when mother is in post natal stage. The boy of the urban educated society goes to bank; give electric bill and telephone bill. Sometimes they go to grocery shop instead of father. In lower middle class family, a boy work in factory, industry, on the other hand a girl takes care of the younger siblings, cook, entertain the guests actually she is taking the whole responsibilities of mother inside the house. Boy can go for fishing and girl has to make a bed, breakfast etc. As a result boys and girls are receiving the idea about their stereotyping responsibilities. If an accident occur in the road, a boy can help, if any younger siblings get slapped by other friends, they go to their elder brother for justice as if only brother are the person to judge what is right or wrong. If younger sibling torn their clothes, they go to their elder sister for sewing. From above discussion, it is established that the role of boys and girls are very stereotyping and functionally defined role. It is not acceptable. Boys and girls should work according to their desire, capability and merit. There are many problems in the family, sometimes it arises suddenly, e.g.' unhealthy relation between parents, father loses job, sudden death of breadwinner, marriage problem of sister, quarrel with the neighbor, any type of problems an adolescent boy can manage. In this textbook, it is written in this textbook that boy's muscles are wider compare to girls. As a result boy become stronger and feels superior. This is also one of the main cause of violence against women, torture by stronger upon weaker sex.
- All the participants are boys. Girls are totally excluded from this tour. It is again established that public field is allocated for the boys and private field for the girls. Both boys and girls should be depicted in the picture, so that the girl students will get interest to see the picture and read the story.
- Only boys go to outside to visit friend's house, for shopping etc. ---where are the girls? It is established that girls have no friend only kinship and household burden. Truth is always hidden.
- There is a story and picture of a writer who is a male person—no female writer? In Bangladesh many famous writer and poet are female. If they are not portraying the textbooks, how could the students know about this, how could they overcome the misconception that women have no talent?
- In a science fair only male students are taking part, no girl students are there. We know that practically many girl students are taking interest in this issue. Our government is trying to make Bangladesh a digital country, how it will be possible, by excluding 50% population from science and IT. Sewing a new dress, cooking, taking care, mopping —all are functionally defined role are presented in the textbooks. The entire example tall taller, better are male--- completely male based book
- In maths books, it is mentioned that Anu has 6 dolls, mother gives another 4 dolls, Anwar has 17 marbles, this type of stereotyping example should be avoided in the textbook, as if girls are born to play with doll and boys with marble. There should be choice of selecting their role.



- There is a picture in which all the male persons are in a decision making committee, which is formed for the welfare of the village. Why the female community is excluded from this decision making body. They are also the member of same species so they should be involved in this decision making body. They have the right to know what is going on in any development issues. Actually, things have changed, many women are taking part in the decision making body but truth is hidden in the textbooks.
- There are pictures of eight different professions among which only one profession belong to the female that is nursing profession. Here presenting nursing profession for the female is reinforcing the stereotyping role of the women. Why not any female in other profession like judge, lawyer, teacher, journalist, doctor, engineer and agriculturalist. Actually large number of females are working in the non-stereotyping profession which are not reflected in the textbooks, if women is shown as a doctor, they are portrayed as a gynecologist, why not cancer Specialist or cardio specialist or surgeon. It is reserved for the male doctor in the mindset of the society.
- In a picture of the textbook, it is shown that three boys are writing in the blackboard and one boy is reading loudly in the classroom for other students. Why not any girls are in the blackboard. Generally the girls of Bangladesh are shy and do not feel comfortable to raise their voice and to speak or do something in front of public. They should be encouraged to take active part in the classroom and develop their leadership quality.
- In a poem a girl is compared to the calmness of a river and a boy is explained as a dushtoo (naughty, clever) Here the stereotyping mindset is exposed in defining the nature of boys and girls. It is expected in our society that the girls should be submissive and the boys should be aggressive. The textbooks has a mandate to reinforce this nature of men and women which ultimately creating violence against women considering that the women has a high level of tolerance power
- It is defined that Elina's complexion is very good and hair is black. Again it is mentioned, she likes banana and she is as sweet as banana. This type of description is creating sex appealing image of the girls.
- In a Nabbanna occasion (paddy cutting season in winter) women are cooking payesh sweet with milk and rice and jiggery and rice cake. Here women are not shown as a farmer though they do most of the work in farming. Still they are not recognized as a farmer they are called the helper of their farmer husband.
- It is shown that the boy is operating computer and in the monitor it is shown that a girl is mopping the floor. Practically most of the girls are using commuter equally to the boys.

### **Text Analysis through a Gender Lens**

#### **Narrative Presentation**

- Action-productive? Reproductive activities?
- Technology -who has the skills?
- Whose work is recognized? Who "leads" and who 'helps'?
- Location -who is seen where?
- Power -who has it?
- Language -who is named? Who is not?
- Language -nouns and pronouns?
- Language-how are people described?

### **GUIDELINE FOR REVISING**

## SECONDARY EDUCATION CURRICULUM AND TEXTBOOK OF BOU

- Gender-specific training should be provided to the authors, illustrators and editors, who will develop the textbooks and materials to address gender.
- Ensure widespread consultation in drawing up a curriculum to facilitate participation by group who may be marginalized because of gender-neutral and ethnic-minority sensitive language or social practices.
- Conduct a subject based gender training for the writer, illustrator with a view to make the textbook more gender-balanced.
- Initially, good numbers of the female editors, authors and illustrators for the development of textbooks and materials in support of the curriculum is expected. Materials should be presented in such a way as to eliminate damaging feelings of superiority based on patriarchy in the male person.
- Role of women in the development of society and nation should be portrayed. Subject matter is the case study on the role of woman from historical perspective are more. Why not more women from present age from different dimensions.
- One chapter should be included on gender issues in social science book mentioning different perspective---education, family, society, and workplace. It was already included in the junior secondary program, social science book of Bangladesh Open University in collaboration with NGO and facilitated by Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, Canada.
- Audio-visual program should be more gender sensitive
- There should be a balanced number of male and female experts in different committee
- Expression should be selected which will not use as demeaning expressions to describe women.
- Expressions should be avoided, which portray women as a home maker only not as a breadwinner.
- The three most important issues to be considered from gender perspective: content, language and illustrations.
- Tutor should get training on gender sensitive issue to keep the learning environment healthy.
- The material, language and expressions should not feed into and perpetuate the sexist myths, which have been developed about women in our society, such as women are too emotional rather than rational, they like to nag etc.
- Women should be shown as a decision maker concerning the important issues that affects their lives
- Gender sensitive media training is needed.
- Administrator and the member of important committees should be gender sensitive
- Equal number of participation in the decision making body
- Counselling centre in each regional centre should be introduced.

## CONCLUSION

The review and recommendations will help to guide the curriculum specialists in designing a new curriculum and textbooks. The expected outcome is a gender balanced presentation throughout the curriculum that will eventually result in changing attitudes for a more equitable society. Bangladesh Open University and National Curriculum Textbook and Madrasah Board could achieve a gender sensitive and gender balanced textbooks and curriculum which will help the students in becoming gender aware. A uniform gender sensitive curriculum and textbooks will be a subject to trust and mould their attitude to make violence free gender balanced society.



## EXPECTATION FROM THE PLATFORM OF OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING

- There should be an international network or forum including the expert on gender issues and distance education from the commonwealth countries.
- It will create a standard guideline to make the textbooks and curriculum gender friendly.
- It will set code of conduct towards justice to gender issues
- Regional and international meeting at least once in a year should be arranged to review the progress with revision
- Research opportunity and grant should be included.
- Sharing of knowledge regarding gender issues between commonwealth countries should be encouraged
- Effective guideline should be introduced for gender sensitive words and language. Committee with a one member from each country could be formed. Finally, women empower and gender issues should not be separated from specific perspective.

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## **DISTANCE EDUCATION AS A WOMAN EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY IN AFRICA**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Studies over time have revealed that education is the most potent instrument for the emancipation of any group of people (Azikiwe 1992; Ocholi 1999; UNIC, 2000). Sambo (2000) also opined that mental freedom, which usually precedes all other forms of freedom, can only be guaranteed by an effective education system.

This view was further crystallised by Okeke (1995) when she observed that education is a sure pathway to the liberation of the mind and the improvement of socio-economic status of people.

History, the world over, is replete with the achievements of men folk and their contributions to the development processes and from time immemorial the position of women in the structure of society has never been considered on the same plain as that of men, they have been regarded as a second-fiddle. It is on this believe that Ker (1999) argued that women all over the world have been categorized under the disadvantaged groups of people and society itself has systematically and consistently pursued the socialization of women into accepting the notion of disadvantaged group.

Given the preponderance of this categorization of women as a disadvantaged group of people, a social reengineering process is required to introduce equality through emancipation of the mind. This is where education has been found to be useful as a liberating force and agent of social change especially in developing countries like Nigeria.

It is on this premise that the Open and Distance Learning scheme is hereby considered as an effective strategy for women empowerment, within the functional framework of the general lifelong education process.

**Keywords:** Women, education, distance education, empowerment, Nigeria.

### **ISSUES IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT**

The need for empowerment arises from the inability of an individual or a group of people to actualise their dreams and reach their greatest potentials due to artificial barriers created by individuals and other groups within the same society.

It is the manifestation of an incontrovertible inequality, segregation or marginalization. To Oxfam (1995) "Empowerment involves challenging oppression which compels millions of people to play a part in their society on terms which are inequitable, or in ways which deny them their human rights" Okeke (1995) submitted that "to empower means to give power to, to give authority to, to enable a person or a group of persons gain power".

Batliwa (1995) in her definition of the term empowerment stated that:

***Empowerment is the process and the result of the process whereby the powerless or less powerful members of the society gain greater access and control over material and knowledge, resources, challenges and ideologies of discrimination and subordination and transform the institutions and structures through which unequal access and control over resources is sustained and perpetuated.***

The foregoing definitions show that empowerment implies that an individual or a group had hitherto lacked power or authority by circumstances, denial or default. The issue of women empowerment has become a part of popular debate. It has however been misconstrued in a myriad of ways; to a great majority empowerment suggests women's power to fight men, including their husbands.

The very mention of the term empowerment generates strong emotional connotations that construe violent revolutionary action of some sort or the other, organized by the women against the established institutions. Since the days of yore, the oppression of women has been a major global dilemma and a source of concern to many international institutions like ECOWAS, UN, AU etc. The concept of empowerment based on assuaging the oppressions of the women has led to the establishment of the United Nations development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) whose primary role is to promote the participation of women at all levels of development planning and implementation. Recently in Nigeria, the federal ministry of education in conjunction with the UNICEF established a Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls' Education in Nigeria (SAGEN). It is hoped that SAGEN will lead to a further expansion in the access of girls to education and ultimately the emancipation of women in Nigeria.

#### **PROBLEMS OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN NIGERIA**

The issues of women have been viewed differently in social relations including economic activities. This has formed a barrier even when democratic movements have sought to extend the base of participation of women. It will be fallacious to assume that the problems of Nigerian women have been totally solved through the various emancipation initiatives (Beijing conference 1975; 1985; 1995, International decade of women, Strategy for the Acceleration of Girls Education etc) or through the collaborative efforts of the various Government and Non-governmental Organisations. Certain inequalities and segregations, which have been established over the ages and reinforced through the male-dominated structures still persist inspite of the various instruments of the United Nations and the concerted efforts of the federal government and a number of NGOs on alleviating women discrimination.

Without gainsaying, illiteracy remains at the centre of women empowerment problems in Nigeria. Majority of the womenfolk and a large number of girls in this country are still grappling with the problems of basic reading and writing skills (Unicef 2003).

The gross enrolment rate (GER 2001) indicated that 71percent of out-of-school children are girls. According to ARFOL (2000) the literacy rate for males is 58 percent but only 41 percent for females. The Human Development Report 2002 published by the United Nations development programme puts the statistics of illiterate women at 57 percent as against male's 43 percent. As seemingly insignificant as this difference may appear, it is completely unacceptable, if the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) must be achieved. In Nigeria, girls and women comprise about 49.69 percent (SAPA 1993) of the total

population. Incidentally, about 61percent of the total female population are reported to be illiterates as against 37.7 percent illiterate male population.

Women are discriminated against in access to education for social and economic reasons. For instance, the Islamic practice of *Purdah* precludes many women from benefiting from school instructions and/or participating in economic activities, which are likely to elevate their positions. The most egregious segregation is probably the prevention of girls to go to school in some communities. This has probably led to the greatest social harm of the twentieth century, when a whole group of females were denied access to education, on the basis of gender differences.

There is palpably a deluge of problems besetting the Nigerian women, but all of them arise from illiteracy. This suggests therefore that a large part of the empowerment process is associated with education of the women themselves. The root of the problem is the degree of importance women themselves have attached to education. Many of them believe that the life of a successful woman revolves around her children, her husband and domestic chores. This lack of personal ambition prevents her from thinking about pursuing other educational goals, which may have great influence on her life.

In the case of the workingwomen in the cities, there had been a gradual predilection to abandon further training because of the demands work and family as well as the huge costs associated with pursuing higher studies in conventional school system or universities.

#### THE PLACE OF EDUCATION IN WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Education according to Fafunwa (1974) refers to the sum total of experiences that a person acquires in partaking in everyday activities and how these experiences have served to make the individual a better person. Many social commentators hold the view that education is a sine qua non to any meaningful development process. The impact of the level of educational attainment in any society and the corresponding level of development (in terms of the Science & Technology) is a true yardstick of this phenomenon. Majasan (1997) had asserted that 'Development in any society is anchored primarily to Education progress'. In a similar vein, Lockheed and Verspoor (1994) had earlier described education as a cornerstone of economic and social development. According to them, the future of the world and of individual nations hinges, more than ever before, on the capacity of individuals and countries to acquire, adapt, and advance knowledge.

Education has been viewed traditionally as a social leveller, it is the only instrument designed for piercing the social barrier that has been created by all other structures of society. The only effective way to meaningfully contribute to the emancipation of women in Nigerian Society is to widen the access of the women and girls to quality education. There is the need to take the issue of women empowerment 'beyond mere rethorics'. It is quite easy to canvass for small credit loans for a few women, or negotiate a secondary political appointment for some others, just to align with the sentiments of the time. In fact, it is easy to pass legislations couched in very elegant language against women discriminations in all spheres of national life, but it is far easier and ultimately more cost effective to educate women. Creating access to quality formal education gives women a sense of belonging and their individuality will then be projected beside their husbands'.

According to the UNFPA (1994) education opens the opportunity and choice for women. When women are given the requisite education, relevant to their needs and environment, they will gradually become more visible and recognised in the mainstream of activities both at home and in society at large. Given the fact that education enhances a person's

sense of self-worth, confidence and also creates an awareness of capacity, women will become more assertive of their roles in social activities and take initiatives for themselves rather than wait for the decisions to be made for them. It can also be surmised that their income-earning potential and development will rise with the new educational status.

Another crucial advantage of women education is the role it plays in reducing women fertility levels and infant mortality. It is incontrovertible to state that the family of an educated woman tends to appear healthier than that of her non-educated counterpart.

### **DISTANCE EDUCATION AS A WOMEN EMPOWERMENT STRATEGY**

The social realities in contemporary times has shown that the limitation in the access of many women to Education Opportunities which would have enhanced their empowerment is due chiefly to the inability of the learner and the instructor to be in face-to-face contact. There are above 880 million illiterate adults in the world (UNESCO 2002) who have been deprived access to education, because they are required to be present in the four walls of a conventional classroom before they can gain access to quality education.

Each day, the futility of this arrangement becomes clearer to most educational planners as the unfolding fact shows that the knowledge based society of the twenty-first century demands more effective methods of dissemination of Information/Knowledge. It is obvious that due to limitations in resources; both human and financial, the traditional conventional approach of teaching in classrooms can no longer satisfy the snowballing population of a country like Nigeria, which has estimated population of 120 million people (Common Country Assessment, 2001) and an average annual population growth rate of 2.3% (Mabogunje 1999).

Clearly a realistic alternative is long overdue, and this is what has necessitated the introduction of the Open and Distance Learning Model otherwise referred to as Distance Education.

The term Open and Distance learning reflects both the fact that all or most of teaching is conducted by someone removed in time and space from the learner, and that the mission aims to include greater dimensions of openness and flexibility, whether in terms of access, curriculum or other elements of structure. The desire to anchor as much as possible to the train of globalization demands that all sectors of society must be literate and this kind of mass education can only be afforded through the distance-learning scheme. Jegede (2003) observed that all nations of the world desirous of a cost-effective, convenient, conducive, efficient and comprehensive way to educate all its citizens have embraced Open and Distance learning'.

The concept of open and distance education is a scheme that affords a nation the opportunity to effectively transmit educational benefits to all its citizens cheaply and more effectively, especially those hitherto unreached or denied access on the basis of one social consideration or the other. Nigeria women undoubtedly fall within this category and this system of education affords them the opportunity to pursue the gift of knowledge without contradicting any societal dictates. The uniqueness of distance education as a women empowerment strategy can be gleaned from the fact that it straddles so many facets of the social system.

First to be considered are the class of women who are full time house wives, many of who have never had access to formal education or had to give up school at early stages of their lives. Women in this group are not usually enthusiastic about formal education because their husbands had indicated that they are to sit at home and take care of the



home and the children. Such women are usually unable to leave their spouse and children to travel away to a conventional university system.

The challenges posed by this social system is far reaching, in the sense that the woman cannot venture out of the home to a formal school system where she can pursue the much craved training, skills development and education.

Many of them have to be contented with seeing their dreams come alive in their children's lives and they unconsciously transfer their dreams to their children's lives. Women in this category will definitely be grateful for distance education, since it allows them to sit at home and study for a programme without jeopardising their marriages or abandon their children. It is certainly a means of fulfilling the life dreams of many women who have been saddled with the function of a full time housewife. The issue of women education is essential for rural development and women are not well equipped to contribute their useful quota to the society as a result of illiteracy (Azikiwe 1992)

Another group of women, whose position is only slightly different from the previous group, are those women who have been denied the access to formal training provided by schools and colleges because of their obedience to the Islamic practice of *Purdah*. These women can still have access to qualitative education through the open and distance learning approach that allows them to pursue their education at a 'safe distance' from the instructors. They can study, turn in assignments and write examinations after adequate arrangements have been made. A woman in *Purdah* can be trained and given the opportunity to contribute her own quota to national development without disobeying any of the injunctions of her religion. Distance education is an alternative that affords this group of women access to quality study materials on any field of their choice without any of the barriers associated with the conventional system and her religious dedication.

A third group, which has, for long been suffering in silence are the workingwomen. The plight of the workingwomen has been that of an unrecognised and unremunerated labour. In Nigeria, workingwomen tend to live unfulfilled lives, having their dreams aborted prematurely. After a college degree, a workingwoman finds herself in marriage and the demand of childbirth makes her postpone going back to school a little longer. By the time her last child will be out of primary school, she finds that the first is already grappling with the challenges of prepubescent years. Her family of creation and her family of procreation places so much social demands on her and her husband's family are not relentless in their demands.

All these family duties make the workingwoman postpone furthering her education one more time. As the years roll by she finds that it is becoming increasingly difficult to actualise the dream of going back to school. The socio-economic factors against the family of a typical workingwoman in Nigeria today are multifarious. Society prefers that only the husband pursue further educational improvement while the funds available should be spent on taking care of the children.

This of course is never to the best advantage of the workingwoman but she has to continue to suffer in silence. The open and distance learning mode of education is the sure answer to the prayers of many working women in Nigeria who could not abandon their families and their work to pursue better educational qualifications which will enhance their career progression. It allows them to pursue qualitative education that will improve on their sense of self-esteem in the estimation of their family friends and husbands. These can be achieved without jeopardising either the important family relationship or the relatively responsible position in her place of work that she has worked so hard to create.

The itinerant nomadic women are yet another group of women who could benefit immensely from this radical approach to instructional processes. The social dictates and the vocational practices of women in these nomadic societies require that they be always constantly on the move with their families.

Their subsistence is based solely on this means and the educational pursuit is secondary, if at all it exists, to subsistence. For generations, women in these societies have been denied access to quality education of whatever form due to the peripatetic nature of their livelihood.

Women in this category can benefit from the open and distance learning model if they are properly sensitised about the advantages that education holds for their lives, their subsistence and their families. Introducing the ODL scheme, which does not take them out of their social environments, yet seeks to deliver qualitative education about their social environment and other societies can then reinforce this.

## CONCLUSION

In the final analysis, there seems to be no end to the palpable advantages of the distance learning system. The foregoing shows that the functional implications and advantages of the scheme cover a broad spectrum of society such that everyone and anyone can benefit at no great a cost. While the focus of this work are primarily the women, the distance learning system holds great advantages for the entire society, almost anyone can benefit from this unique system of education.

The system however holds special implication for the women, especially in a developing society such as Nigeria. Lots of market women, traders, and itinerant businesswomen, women in *Purdah*, working women as well as women and girls resident in the sub-rural societies could benefit from this scheme. Another implication of the study is that it would go a long way in increasing the literacy level of Nigerians generally and the women especially. This observation confirms the assertion of Okeke (1995) that education is the most effective strategy for promoting women empowerment and the United Nations report on human development which states that in sub-Saharan Africa education seems to be the only effective means of empowering women. The influence of quality education in these societies have been much discussed, it is a poverty reduction scheme, it can be used to sensitize women about family planning issues, HIV/AIDS issues, issues relating to peace and governance within their societies, primary health maternal and infant mortality as well as environmentally sustainable practices.

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## **WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP IN DISTANCE EDUCATION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Leaders are making differences; they are leaders because of having different characteristics than others. In the literature, definite leadership styles were described which were arising from these different structures of leaders. Studies on women's leadership styles began in the mid-1970s. In the 1990s researches focused on leadership style which was most suitable for women or men.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether any leadership style has convenient for women in distance education and how women assess themselves as a distance education leader and to assist in improving the leadership capabilities of distance education leaders by identifying women's perceptions of leadership characteristics of distance education leaders. By choosing one of the most focused leadership styles in the literature, an appropriate leadership style has asked to participants (132 women staff of distance education institutions in Turkey) for defining themselves, then the demographic and personal attributes (age, appellation, duty, management status, distance education experience) of these women were compared with their own leadership styles defined by them.

Then thirty-seven leadership attributes identified by Leadership Attributes Inventory (LAI) have been asked to participants to describe the characteristics of distance education leaders. This study is also drawn an attention to the lack of women managers in especially senior managements of distance education institutions.

**Keywords:** Women, distance education, leadership, Turkey

### **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership is a concept that is often perceived as masculine so regardless of capacity or performance women is not seen as a leader. Therefore, effective leadership is attributed to men associated with communication and decision-making styles more than women associated with communal and inclusive styles. Gender discrimination also affects the acceptance or the perception of women as managers or leaders (Eagly & Carli, 2003; DCWA, 2010; Folta, Seguin, Ackerman & Nelson, 2012).

There are several studies focusing on leadership and management of women (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009; Lord and Preston, 2009; White & Ozkanlı, 2011; Folta et al., 2012; Li, Bao & Jiang, 2013). Because, improving the participation of women in leadership roles is seen essential for freedom, rights and opportunities of women all around the world (Odhiambo, 2011).

For becoming a leader, women need to have right knowledge, skills and attitudes and the ability to work hard, being aware of what is happening around such as the culture and climate of department and organization working in, taking advantages of strengths as an empathic, conservative and communicative, adopting some masculine attributes when leading projects and managing people (Kaur, 2013) and as stated by Panigrahi (2013),

the perception of women are dependent on male, passive, emotional, certain of themselves, sensitive and weak leaders is not valid.

According to Gourley (2013), significant attributes of leaders are integrity, orientation to service, optimism, decisiveness, courage, resilience, self-reflection, discipline and a sense of humour. Gourley have some advices for women who want to be a leader as follows:

- act not like a man; woman bring balance to the workplace,
- have more skills than acknowledged; many skills need for good leadership can be found in good parenting,
- women should get on with male colleagues; being one woman in academic and professional networks requires to be at ease in such setting,
- learn to listen more and talk less; listening and reading the body language of people are important skills for difficult situations,
- reflect and learn; people can learn a lot from their mistakes,
- be not risk averse; recognise risk, engender "risk management",
- be a team player; commitment to a common purpose is an important component of leadership,
- 8) be brave; be well prepared what to say, get feedback on drafts and test ideas with trusted people,
- encourage other women; giving someone courage, inspiring courage,
- be accepting of delays born of family responsibilities, children are more important than any work could possibly be,
- care for people; caring about the concerns of people working with is part of being human,
- build networks and relationships; women must persevere cultural prejudices when trying to network with men and social media can help them as one of the new forms of networking,
- respect others; women have greater capacity for compromise when the answers are not clear.

The purpose of this study is to evaluate whether any leadership style has convenient for women or how they felt themselves as a distance education leader and to assist in improving the leadership capabilities of distance education leaders by identifying woman's perceptions of leadership characteristics of distance education leaders. Also it is drawn an attention to the lack of women managers in senior managements of distance education institutions.

#### **GENDER STEREOTYPES IN LEADERSHIP STYLES**

Researches on gender differences in leadership styles are seen important. But gender discriminatory leadership style is often translated as "facilitator and collaborator" versus "command and control" and whichever leadership style are they perform, women behaviours are seen as embroiled by colleagues and superiors. On the other hand, women are seen as requirement for a variety of leadership styles because they have embraced the flexibility instead of stereotype in any case but the diversity in leadership styles is considered to be acceptable when there are enough women leaders (Bronznick & Goldenhar, 2008).

As stated by Gourley (2013), women need to be encouraged by others to see themselves at the head of things because of they have more skills than they know and have softer skills and special capabilities (Shahtalebi, Yarmohammadian & Ajami, 2011) and attributes of leadership. On the other hand, according to White, Carvalho and Riordan (2011), "soft" management skills are not valued in dominant managerial cultures so

courageous and resilient women should apply for a senior management positions. Gallant (2014) investigated this issue and found out that the definition of a leader and leadership have associated with soft skills and women leaders are well communicators, relation-oriented and nurturing social structures but men leaders are revealed gendered thinking and attributed with hard skills.

Apart from these, Ugurlu & Hovardaoglu (2011) remarked that women mostly choose democratic leadership style against autocratic leadership style compared with men. Moreover, women tend to adopt the leadership style of task (organization structure, division of labor, school achievement, appreciate and practice the rules etc.) oriented compared with considerate leadership style (Dris, 2012: 25). It has been seen as an important issue whether women and men differ in leadership styles (Eagly & Carli, 2003). Vinkenbunrg, Engen, Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt (2011) examined whether are there any gender stereotypes about leadership styles such as transformational, transactional and laissez-faire styles and are there any obstacles in assigning leadership positions in organisations. They stated that leadership style is thought to be important for promotion and also gender stereotypes about leadership styles are accurate. Women display more transformational and laissez-faire behaviours than men according to the participants who have noteworthy management experience.

Especially in business and educational sectors, women were more likely to have a transformational leadership style (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & Engen, 2003; Folta et al., 2012). Maseko & Proches (2013) conducted a quantitative study about leadership styles of fifteen women project managers and have found that they perceive themselves to have qualities of transformational, democratic and people-oriented leadership styles.

Different from those, Blount (2012) stated that male-dominant leadership styles such as situational leadership or transformational leadership were offered to lead people who have not any vision. So these understandings do not work in today's organizations. According to Blount (2012), it is time to create new, dynamic leadership styles supported by flexible systems.

## THE EMERGENCE OF WOMEN LEADERSHIP IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

Women are not strategically positioned on pathways to leadership, so male dominance of leadership positions is visible globally (Morley, 2014).

Most academics are discontented with going university management and view academic careers as less desired, women academics are underrepresented in senior and leadership roles so universities are fundamentally seen as gendered and missed opportunities to contribute for shaping more democratic, inclusive future universities (Blackmore, 2014; Aiston, 2014).

According to Fisher (2005), women are in tendency to generalize, synthesize and take more integrated point of viewpoint of any issue, called "web thinking" but men tend to focus their attention on one thing and analyze information in a straight line, called "step thinking".

As stated by Fisher, web thinking provides women some leadership attributes such as holding several things concurrently in mind, enabling to exercise more in tuition, updating to think long-term planning and mental flexibility, imagination, executive social skills, verbal skills etc. As defined by McDermott (2014), some requirements for women for sitting leadership positions as follows:

- aspiring the positions, getting the right education, training, experiences and put strategies in place,
- establishing credibility and innovative business ideas,
- building a support team or strategic networking,
- being comfortable in demonstrating leadership competency of self-promotion,
- making a transition from “good girl” to great woman.

In distance education there are also barriers about women leadership. Abiodun (2008) has focused on identifying strategies of marginalization that women are confronted in distance education, especially in attendance to educational efforts such as gender inequalities in the management of distance education programmes, under-representation of women in higher education, wage discrepancies, lack of protection of working women during pregnancy and after birth, lack of respect for human rights of women. As stated by Department for Communities of Western Australia [DCWA] (2010), the factors affecting women under-representation in leadership roles are business drivers, cultural contradictions including leadership perceptions and pathways to leadership, work/life interactions, workplace dynamics, key relationships and networks.

As mentioned by Bradley (2013), the barriers to women’s advance to leadership positions are as follows:

- the nature of workplace such as the need to attain further qualifications, the culture of workplace, the perception of female authority by other workers, building the establishment of carrier in late 20s or 30s,
- women themselves such as taking the responsibility for managing burdens of home and family, the disruption for maternity or childcare, less likely to take risks than men, not applying for positions until having all required skills and experience.

Barriers preventing advancement of women into senior management positions can be summarized as gender stereotyping, lack of qualifications, fear of not succeeding, family responsibilities, lack of networking skills and lack of time (Maseko & Proches, 2013; Panigrahi, 2013).

On the other hand, as stated by White and Ozkanlı (2010), there are no barriers to promotion for women in their universities and women can create their own barriers.

Moreover, Bradley (2013) believed that there are no structural barriers to prevent woman as an educational leader in so rapidly progressing areas such as distance education.

It is seen important for women seeking to advance and women can deal with senior positions in distance education with persistence, resilience and a commitment to self-development.

## METHODOLOGY

**This research is quantitative and consists of two parts.**

**In the first part there are questions about demographic attributes and leadership styles (democratic, transactional, situational, transformational, visionary, laissez-faire, and autocratic) of participants.**

**In the second part there is a scale called "Leadership Attributes Inventory (LAI)" (adapted from Moss, Lambrecht, Jensrud & Finch, 1994) used to describe the characteristics of distance education leaders.**

**Leadership attributes defined by this scale consists of 37 items. Leadership characteristics (attributes) of distance education leaders have been asked to participants using 6-point Likert type scale with responses options of 1=very undescriptive, 2= undescriptive, 3= somewhat undescriptive, 4=somewhat descriptive, 5= descriptive, 6=very descriptive). The reliability coefficient of the whole scale was 0,975 (Cronbach Alfa value).**

**And, SPSS Statistics 21.0 software was used to do all statistical analysis in this research.**

### Participants

**The participants were 132 women who were working for distance education institutions in Turkey and had work experience at least one year in distance education.**

**Basic demographic and personal characteristics (age, appellation, duty, management status, distance education experience) of 132 women are shown in Table: 1.**

**In this study, it is aimed to access all women who are working for distance education in higher education in Turkey, 187 responses were received and among these 132 women were given valid responses to scale of LAI to identify effective leadership attributes of distance education leaders.**

**Table: 1**  
**Demographic Characteristics and Personal Attributes of Participants**  
(N=132, Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent)

Category		f	%	Category		f	%
Age	Under 25	4	3,0	Appellation	Prof. Dr.	17	12,9
	25-30	23	17,4		Assoc. Prof. Dr.	17	12,9
	31-35	23	17,4		Assist. Prof. Dr.	37	28,0
	36-40	26	19,7		Lecturer/Expert /Instructor	40	30,3
	41-45	27	20,5		Research Assistant	12	9,1
	46-50	18	13,6		Administrator	2	1,5
	51-55	8	6,1		Official	8	6,1
	56-60	2	1,5		Others	6	4,5
	Over 60	1	0,8		Missing value	6	
Question	Category	f	%	Question	Category	f	%
What is your own leadership style?	Autocratic	19	10,2	Do/Did you have any management status? (in Distance Education or Traditional Education)	No	39	29,5
	Democratic	68	36,4		Rector	1	0,8
	Laissez-faire	2	1,1		Vice Rector	0	0,0
	Situational	14	7,5		Dean	2	1,5
	Visionary	50	26,7		Vice Dean	6	4,5
	Transformational	21	11,2		Manager	8	6,1
	Transactional	12	6,4		Vice Manager	9	6,8
	Others	1	0,5		Department Head	27	20,5
	Missing value	2			Vice Dept. Head	20	15,2
					Coordinator	45	34,1
			Vice Coordinator	14	10,6		
			Others	9	6,8		
			Missing value	12			

**Table: 1 (Cont.)**  
**Demographic Characteristics and Personal Attributes of Participants**  
(N=132, Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent)

Question	Category	f	%	Question	Category	f	%
How long have you been in distance education? (Professional Experiences)	1 years	24	18,2	What is your duty in your distance education institution?	Instructor	72	54,5
	2 years	19	14,4		Coordinator	27	20,5
	3 years	19	14,4		Content Development Specialist	3	2,3
	4 years	15	11,4		Support Staff	12	9,1
	5 years	18	13,6		Evaluation Specialist	4	3,0
	6 years	7	5,3		Manager	2	1,5
	7 years	2	1,5		Top Manager	1	0,8
	8 years	1	0,8		Instructional Designer	3	2,3
	9 years	2	1,5		Editor	2	1,5
	10 years	5	3,8		Specialist	2	1,5
	11-15 years	6	4,5		Board Member	1	0,8
	16-20 years	7	5,3		Office Manager	1	0,8
	21-25 years	1	0,8		Others	2	1,5
	26-30 years	4	3,0				
	Over 30 years	2	1,5				

### Professional Experiences of Participants in Distance Education

Professional experiences of participants in distance education are shown in Table: 1. There can be seen a significant effect with 5-6 years period for professional experiences of participants.

The number of open and distance education institutions have been considerable increasing since 2009 in Turkey, professional experiences of participants in distance education have been accordingly increasing (See Table: 1., Table: 2.).

In 2009, by providing flexible learning, distance education classes had been constituted to 30 universities (HEC, 2010) and 16 of them were engaged in distance education (See Table: 2).

Table: 2 have been created with the data provided from the official websites of these universities and distance education regulations of universities published by official newspapers of Turkey.

In this table open education was also evaluated in the context of distance education. Especially Anadolu University, which founded in 1982, is recognized with open education system, not only in Turkey but also all around the world as a mega university.



**Table: 2**  
**Universities which are engaging in distance education in Turkey**

Start Date of Distance Education	N	Name of Universities providing distance education
1982	1	Anadolu
1996	1	İstanbul Teknik
1997	1	Sakarya
2002	4	Ahmet Yesevi, Ankara, Mersin, Bogazici
2003	1	Çukurova
2008	4	Beykent, Gazi, Süleyman Demirel, Trakya
2009	16	Afyon Kocatepe, Atatürk, Balıkesir, Cumhuriyet, İnönü, İstanbul, İstanbul Aydın, Karadeniz Teknik, Kırıkkale, Marmara, Maltepe, Okan, Ondokuz Mayıs, Plato Vocational High School, Uşak, Zirve
2010	7	Bartın, Karabük, Yıldız Teknik, Dicle, Dokuz Eylül, Kocaeli, Akdeniz
2011	5	Başkent, Beykoz Lojistik Meslek Yüksekokulu, Bitlis Eren, Fatih, İstanbul Arel
2012	7	Amasya, Celal Bayar, Ege, Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart, Mevlana, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman, Yıldırım Beyazıt
2013	7	Gediz, Kahramanmaraş Sütçü İmam, Nevşehir, Namık Kemal, Bülent Ecevit, Atılım, Yıldız Teknik

## RESULTS

### **The Relationship between Demographic and Personal Attributes and Leadership Styles of Women**

The research explored if there are any relationships between women's demographic or personal attributes and leadership styles that are defined themselves.

The relationship between participants' professional experience and leadership style was significant ( $\chi^2=176.645$ ,  $df=126$ ,  $p=0.002$ ) at the level of significance 0.05.

In the sample, 11 (8,3% of all participants) women with one year professional experience were defined themselves as democratic leaders, 7 (5,3% of all participants) women with two years professional experience were defined themselves as democratic leaders, 8 (6,1% of all participants) women with two years professional experience were defined themselves as visionary leaders, 7 (5,3% of all participants) women with three years professional experience were defined themselves as democratic leaders and 5 (3,8% of all participants) women with three years professional experience were defined themselves as visionary leaders, 4 (3% of all participants) women with four years professional experience were defined themselves as democratic leaders and 8 (6,1% of all participants) women with four years professional experience were defined themselves as visionary leaders, 8 (6,1% of all participants) women with five years professional experience were defined themselves as democratic leaders and 4 (3% of all participants) women with five years professional experience were defined themselves as visionary leaders (See Table: 3).

**Table: 3**  
**Relationships between professional experience and leadership style**  
(N=132, Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent,)

Professional Experience of women	Leadership styles of women defined by themselves								Total
		Democratic	Transactional	Situational	Transformational	Visionary	Laissez-faire	Autocratic	
1	f	11	3	3	2	2	0	3	24
	%	45,8%	12,5%	12,5%	8,3%	8,3%	0,0%	12,5%	
2	f	7	0	0	3	8	0	1	19
	%	36,8%	0,0%	0,0%	15,8%	42,1%	0,0%	5,3%	
3	f	7	1	2	1	5	0	3	19
	%	36,8%	5,3%	10,5%	5,3%	26,3%	0,0%	15,8%	
4	f	4	0	0	2	8	0	1	15
	%	26,7%	0,0%	0,0%	13,3%	53,3%	0,0%	6,7%	
5	f	8	3	1	1	4	0	1	18
	%	44,4%	16,7%	5,6%	5,6%	22,2%	0,0%	5,6%	
6-10	f	6	1	1	1	6	0	1	16
	%	37,5%	6,3%	6,3%	6,3%	37,5%	0,0%	6,3%	
11-20	f	5	0	3	0	4	0	1	13
	%	38,5%	0,0%	23,1%	0,0%	30,8%	0,0%	7,7%	
Above 20	f	2	0	0	2	1	2	1	8
	%	25,0%	0,0%	0,0%	25,0%	12,5%	25,0%	12,5%	
Total	f	50	8	10	13	38	1	12	132
	%	37,9%	6,1%	7,6%	9,8%	28,8%	0,8%	9,1%	

The relationship between leadership style (defined by participants) and participants' age ( $\chi^2=50.95$ ,  $df=48$ ,  $p=3.58$ ) or appellation ( $\chi^2=35.25$ ,  $df=42$ ,  $p=7.60$ ) or count of management status ( $\chi^2=31.04$ ,  $df=30$ ,  $p=0.413$ ) was not significant at the level of significance 0.05. The relationship between participants' duty in distance education institution and leadership style was significant ( $\chi^2=109.107$ ,  $df=72$ ,  $p=0.003$ ) at the level of significance 0.05.

In the sample, 24 (18,2% of all participants) women instructor were defined themselves as democratic and the other 24 were visionary leaders, 12 (9,1% of all participants) women coordinators were defined themselves as democratic and 7 (5,3% of all participants) women coordinators were defined themselves as visionary leaders and 6 (4,5% of all participants) women support staff were defined themselves as democratic leaders (See Table: 4).

**Table: 4**  
**Relationships between duty in distance education and leadership style**  
**(N=132, Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent)**

Duty in distance education	Leadership styles of women defined by themselves								
	Democratic	Transactional	Situational	Tranformational	Visionary	Laissez-faire	Autocratic	Total	
Instructor	f	24	5	6	8	24	0	5	72
	%	33,3%	6,9%	8,3%	11,1%	33,3%	0,0%	6,9%	
Coordinator	f	12	3	2	0	7	0	3	27
	%	44,4%	11,1%	7,4%	0,0%	25,9%	0,0%	11,1%	
Content Development Specialist	f	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	3
	%	33,3%	0,0%	33,3%	0,0%	33,3%	0,0%	0,0%	
Evaluation Specialist	f	2	0	1	0	0	0	1	4
	%	50,0%	0,0%	25,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	25,0%	
Instructional Designer	f	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	3
	%	66,7%	0,0%	0,0%	33,3%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Manager	f	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
	%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Top manager	f	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
	%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Editor	f	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	2
	%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Specialist	f	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	2
	%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	
Support staff	f	6	0	0	2	2	0	2	12
	%	50,0%	0,0%	0,0%	16,7%	16,7%	0,0%	16,7%	
Board member	f	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Office manager	f	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
	%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	
Others	f	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	2
	%	0,0%	0,0%	0,0%	50,0%	0,0%	50,0%	0,0%	
Total	f	50	8	10	13	38	1	12	132
	%	37,9%	6,1%	7,6%	9,8%	28,8%	0,8%	9,1%	

The relationship between leadership style and participants who have management status in traditional or distance education was significant ( $\chi^2=22.433$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p=0.001$ ) at the level of significance 0.05.

In the sample, 35 women (26,5% of all participants) who have management status in traditional or distance education were defined themselves as visionary leaders and the other 28 (21,2% of all participants) of them defined themselves as democratic leaders, and also 10 (7,6% of all participants) of them were defined themselves as transformational leaders. On the other hand, 22 (16,7% of all participants) women who

have not any management status in traditional or distance education were defined themselves as democratic leaders (See Table: 5).

**Table: 5**  
**Relationship between having any management status and leadership style**  
(N=132, Percents rounded to the nearest whole percent)

		Leadership styles of women defined by themselves							Total
Have you been any management position before or now?		Democratic	Transactional	Situational	Tranformational	Visionary	Laissez-faire	Autocratic	
Yes	f	28	4	5	10	35	0	11	93
	%	30,1%	4,3%	5,4%	10,8%	37,6%	0,0%	11,8%	
No	f	22	4	5	3	3	1	1	39
	%	56,4%	10,3%	12,8%	7,7%	7,7%	2,6%	2,6%	
Total	f	50	8	10	13	38	1	12	132
	%	37,9%	6,1%	7,6%	9,8%	28,8%	,8%	9,1%	

### Womens' Perceptions of Leadership Characteristics of Distance Education Leaders

The research also explored the leadership characteristics of effective distance education leaders. Women have described five leadership characteristics of effective distance education leaders as follows:

- Communication (listening, oral, writing) – listens carefully to people, organizes and clearly presents knowledge in an understandable format in distance education environments (Mean=5.49).
- Intelligent with practical judgment – a quick learner, knows when and how to apply knowledge (Mean=5.35).
- Ethical-acts in a consistent manner with principles of fairness that can stand the test of close public scrutiny (Mean=5.33).
- Problem solving - identifies, analyzes and resolves uncertainties and difficulties in distance education environments (Mean=5.30).
- Adaptable, open to change - accepts, supports suggestions and constructive criticism from colleagues and is willing to reconsider plans (Mean=5.30).

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Organizations can not survive without leadership and every member is a leader whether it is within her classroom or when she shares educational and personal expertise while functioning as a professional (Hoag & Schrunck, 2011: 45) also in distance education institutions. As defined by Simonson (2004), the distance learning leader must have a clear understanding and acceptance of the organization's worthwhile, shared vision and goals when leading the organization and its people who have faith in them and have competence in knowing, designing, managing, leading and visioning distance education.

**Women marginalization in distance education is seen as an important issue in international and at regional conferences and platforms (Abiodun, 2008). Therefore more studies are needed to understand women's impact in management (White, Carvalho & Riordan, 2011) and to understand the status and experiences of women in management or leadership (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009).**

**As stated by Gallant (2014), mid-career women academics aspire to leadership which is leading horizontal promotions because of workplace relationships institutionally inherited or lack of interactions, almost half of the women left their positions before the planned date (Acker, 2014).**

**This study consists of 132 women who are working in distance education positions such as instructors, coordinators, content development specialists, evaluation specialists, instructional designers, managers, top managers, editors, experts, support staff etc. and 70,5% of these women have at least one management status in distance learning or traditional learning and they are mostly instructors or coordinators and also faculty members in distance education institutions. However, they are rarely in senior or top management positions.**

**In this study, according to women staff in distance education institutions in Turkey, communication is seen as the most important characteristics of effective distance education leaders. This is consistent with a research that communication skills are one of the key characteristics of good leaders (Folta et al., 2012).**

**Besides, in view of a study conducted by Blount (2012), women administrators in distance higher education agreed that leadership qualities and attributes of distance education administrators are respectively; experience and knowledge, building relationships, communication skills, management/organization skills and technology. Together with communication, the other characteristics of distance education leaders that seen important by this study are intelligent with practical judgment, ethical, problem solving, adaptable and open to change.**

**As also can be seen in this study, women who are working for distance education institutions in Turkey are defining themselves mostly as democratic or visionary leaders. The presence of women in distance education is seen significant not only in the success of women as functionaries in the field but also in the recognition of women's experience in distance education. Theories of distance education generated by men cannot speak for the experience of women.**

**Keeping in mind that women are central figures for a growing female learner population (Janaki, 2006). Thus, gender is not simply a demographical variable; it is a never-ending production via socio-cultural and organizational practices (Morley, 2014: 124). They are breaking through the so called glass-ceiling and introducing new ways of approaching the opportunities and challenges of 21th century higher education such as open-schooling and non-formal education (Latchem, Kanwar & Ferreira, 2013: 157). Women who are marginalized in management, senior management or leadership status of organizations must generate survival strategies for seizing a place so women leaders may be effective within distance education institutions.**

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## **WOMAN, 99, GETS COLLEGE DIPLOMA 75 YEARS AFTER GRADUATING**

**Learn How It Will Change The World It's All In This Free Investor Rpt.**

**A 99-year-old woman was finally awarded her college diploma at a special graduation ceremony after a \$5 diploma fee prevented her from receiving it 75 years ago.**



**99-year-old Jessie Rose White graduated from Beal College in Bangor, Maine 75 years after completing courses. A \$5 diploma fee prevented her from receiving her diploma in 1939. (Credit: Eben White)**

**Jessie Rose White of Belfast, Maine, received a degree in stenography and bookkeeping after completing courses at Beal College in Bangor in 1939.**

**"I'm delighted!" White said Monday, "I didn't have the money to pay for the diploma, so I didn't get it."**

**White says she put herself through bookkeeping courses with \$500 her uncle had given her years before she enrolled at Beal.**

**"It stayed in the bank, and he specified it couldn't be used for anything but education," White said.**

**White says she used all her money to complete the required courses and could not afford the \$5 diploma fee.**

**Dona Gilbert, a friend of White's who recently learned about her education plight, contacted the college to share White's story.**

**"She deserved a diploma. I just thought it needed to be done," Gilbert said. Beal College President Allen Stehle presented White with her diploma. "He gave me a receipt showing that it was paid for," White said. "He has a great sense of humor."**

**Diagnosed with polio at 18 months old, White used crutches to make her way around the Beal campus when she was a student. She struggled to get a job after because of her disability, working as a bookkeeper and later a seamstress.**

**Today, after a number of foot surgeries, White uses a wheelchair. A regular on the computer and the Internet, White intends to keep pursuing an education. "I've**

always had a great thirst for learning, and I try to learn something new every day. I'd love to go back to college now if I had the strength."

Gilbert says she is constantly impressed by White's attitude.

"When I visit her, we just never stop talking," Gilbert said. "She's curious and always asking questions. She has taught me and enriched my life in tremendous ways."

White was joined at her graduation by her son, daughter-in-law and three grandchildren.

"We're very appreciative of the care and attention to detail that was put into the graduation ceremony," said her son, William White.

The diploma gives her maiden name, Jessie Rose Jones. "I'm glad I had to wait 75 years, because it was more fun than it would have been in the first place," White said.

Read more: <http://ktla.com/2014/05/27/woman-99-gets-college-diploma-75-years-after-graduating/#ixzz32yyzYkOV>

A 99-year-old woman finally has her college diploma, 75 years after a \$5 diploma fee prevented her from receiving it.

Jessie Rose White says her uncle gave her \$500 to pay for college. She used all the money for tuition, so when it came time for graduation, she couldn't afford the \$5 diploma fee.

Beal College in Maine honored White at a special ceremony attended by her children and grandchildren.

"I'm glad I had to wait 75 years, because it was more fun than it would have been in the first place," White said.

Read KTLA's story here: <http://ktlane.ws/1klOvOJ>

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