

Motivation and Perseverance of Women in Education Leadership in the United States of America

Marie Goretti Nakitende

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Abstract

This study examined executive women leaders in higher education administration in the United States of America. It examined factors influencing women to attain leadership positions. It also looked at the challenges facing female leaders and established strategies women use to overcome these challenges. A sample of 11 women leaders in higher education was selected purposively based on experience, seniority and roles. Multiple sources of data collection were utilised including interviewing, observation and document analysis, which served as a way of triangulation. The nature of the study was exploratory. The qualitative phenomenological method was utilised to organise and analyse the data. The researched data was collected from both primary and secondary sources such as journals, interviews and observations. Findings reveal that senior women leaders in higher education positions are intrinsically moved by a great desire to make a positive difference and a need to help others. External forces influencing women to leadership include mentoring, self-efficacy, networks, prior experience, leadership training, and career planning. The results indicated that the women desire is to achieve personal growth and development. The results are consistent with both leadership and motivation theories (Maslow, 1970; Burns, 1978; Bandura, 1997). The findings are limited to women leaders in the education sector; they cannot be generalised to other business sectors.

Key words: Female Leaders, Motivation, Challenges and Strategies, Higher Education