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**FEMALE LEADERS NAVIGATING CHALLENGES IN SELECTED
DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS IN JOHANNESBURG NORTH DISTRICT**

BY

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MINOR DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for degree

MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS

In

FACULTY OF EDUCATION



UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

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2014

ABSTRACT

The focus of this study is to investigate strategies employed by females in school leadership in disadvantaged communities in South Africa. Disadvantaged communities in the South African context have arisen from a patriarchal and prejudicial system that was structured according to race, class and gender. Currently, many South African educational institutions bear the residue of this prejudicial system. This research will explore how female leaders in four disadvantaged primary schools in the Johannesburg North District navigate through the challenges of leading in a disadvantaged as well as patriarchal context. A specific emphasis has been placed upon feminist literature and debates in the context of female leaders. Discourse analysis is utilised to interpret the experiences of the female leaders.

Analysis of recorded data on challenges facing females in school leadership in disadvantaged communities revealed themes on stereotyping of women, collaboration and liaison with stakeholders, leadership traits of women, the social stigma associated with schools in disadvantaged communities, women and emotional intelligence, women and conflict resolution.

Themes on balance between family and school, opposing gender discrimination, networking with stakeholders, overcoming stereotypes emanated from the strategies employed by females in school leadership to overcome barriers in disadvantaged communities.

The study reveals that in spite of significant gains since the implementation of favourable legislation on gender equity, women in school leadership continue to experience challenges within schools, from the community and in their personal lives. Stereotyping prevails especially in communities where patriarchal systems dominate. The research concludes with suggestions and recommendations for future research.

Keywords: effective management, cultural stereotypes, disadvantaged communities, female school leaders, gender equity, leadership styles



DEDICATION

My husband, Imran Mia: you are very much appreciated for being tolerant, supportive, and sharing with me all the pleasures that come with academic success. Thank you for your constant inspiration.

My son, Mohamed Zia: thank you for your patience, understanding, interest, curiosity and concern.

I would also like to thank my mum Mariam Kajee, for her love, understanding and helping me realize that the beauty in all things lies in my ability to appreciate them. My appreciation is also extended to my late dad, Mohamed Kajee, for his encouragement. I also express my special thanks to my late mum in law, Hawa Mia for her inspiration.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Juliet Perumal for her supervision of this dissertation. She guided this work from conception to conclusion thus ensuring its contribution to knowledge generation. I am definitely indebted to her for all the skills she has passed on to me during the process of my writing the dissertation. Her constant encouragement, advice and thoroughness have been a source of inspiration to me.

Thank you to SANPAD for the workshops and conferences which were sponsored and the participants for their willing contributions during the interviews. Their insight and deliberations were very helpful in the completion of this research study.

Thank you to my friend Dr Mustafa Mheta for his advice and guidance during my journey.



DECLARATION

I Feroza Mia, declare that this research report: Female leaders navigating challenges in selected disadvantaged schools in Johannesburg North district, is my own work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete references. This research report has not been submitted for a degree at any other university.

FEROZA MIA



LIST OF ACRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
DET	Department of Education and Training
DOE	Department of Education
GETT	Gender Equity Task Team
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
MGSLG	Mathew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance
SANPAD	Southern African Netherlands Partnership for Alternatives in Development
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team

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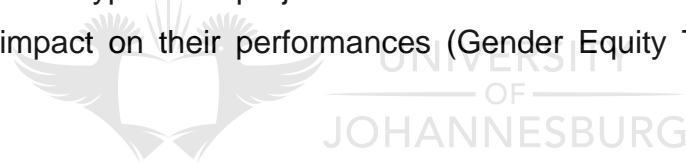
PREAMBLE

INTRODUCTION

This study is part of the SANPAD (Southern African Netherlands Partnership for Development) project. The aim of the study is to investigate women leaders in disadvantaged communities within the framework of the SANPAD project. The research concentrates on the challenges and strategies employed by females in schools in the Johannesburg North District. These educational institutions are disadvantaged due to the low socio-economic status of their learners. After the abolishment of apartheid in 1994, schools drew up their own admission policies and learners had the freedom to choose which schools they could enrol at. This subsequently led to the migration of previously disadvantaged learners to better equipped schools. Disadvantaged learners are associated with poor academic achievement, poor nutrition, inadequate health services, high rate of illiteracy and criminal behaviour leading to learner transience, absenteeism and ill-discipline (Drysdale, Jacobson & Yilmaki, 2007: 364). Such social challenges render it difficult for school leaders to effectively manage the education of disadvantaged learners.

Leithwood and Reihl in Drysdale et al (2007) describe four core principles for effective educational leadership in disadvantaged communities namely; setting direction, developing people, redesigning the organization and managing the curriculum. These challenges apply to male and female school leaders in schools overall. However, in a disadvantaged school environment, such challenges are multiplied manifold as socio-economic dysfunction spills over into the school setting. Dysfunctional societies are challenged by high rates of unemployment, insecure and overcrowded living conditions, poor health and sanitation as well as high levels of domestic violence. Children residing in such conditions have difficulty concentrating on their education and often struggle to cope with curriculum demands. It therefore becomes the challenge of school leaders to navigate around these disadvantages to enable their learners to engage in their education. This study focuses on the challenges faced and strategies employed by female school leaders in disadvantaged schools.

In addition to the challenges posed by disadvantaged communities, women leaders in disadvantaged schools are also plagued by patriarchal views and gender stereotyping about the space men and women occupy in society. Traditionally, men have been leaders in society with women occupying a subservient role, thus there are views among some men that women cannot be good leaders (Hendricks 2003: 18). However, research indicates that women are as capable as men in managing and leading schools (Al-Khalifa in Bennett, Crawford & Riches, 1992: 99). Tsoka (1999: 23) contends that the absence of women in power positions is being measured against ideals that have historically served men best. At the organisational level women are prejudiced by traditionally, deeply embedded patriarchal values and practices that devalue transformation processes aimed at achieving gender equity (Chisholm, 2001). A patriarchal culture which is dominant in schools has placed constraints on the advancement of women to senior management levels. South African women still suffer discrimination and there is a disparity of power between males and females in education (Sboros, 1994: 13). These deep seated inequalities accompanied by stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes about women's competencies are barriers that impact on their performances (Gender Equity Task Team, 1997: 195).



The problem does not entirely lie in men not wanting women to advance in leadership positions. McCullum (2008: 16) states that societal, sex-role stereotyping contributes significantly to the development of the imposter phenomenon. Some women in leadership seemed to have internalised societal, sex-role stereotypes that women are not competent and as such they have consistently lower expectations than men in their own ability to perform successfully.

Mckeen and Burke (1992) argue that women attempting to exercise leadership in a male environment can expose themselves to critique from men. Since a successful manager is seen as assertive, failure to fulfil her role would cause her subordinates to perceive her as weak. If she demonstrates assertiveness, many men and women will see her as being hostile and over controlling. This criticism is often levelled against female managers by women in lower positions in an organization. Women have the capacity to build effective management and leadership through confidence, courage and respect for the opinion of others (Magudi cited in Damons, 2008: 37).

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

After the demise of apartheid in 1994 and the subsequent liberalization of schools to reflect the change, a serious problem emerged in some schools in the Johannesburg North District which saw an influx of learners from many disadvantaged townships of Johannesburg that were previously demarcated according to race. The fact that schools were given the choice to draw up their own enrolment and acceptance criteria, subsequently led to migration of township learners to previously white-only schools because they were better resourced. Due to financial constraints associated with the escalating costs of education, having to travel a distance to school, transport expenses and low salaries or even unemployment of caregivers, many children are further disadvantaged. These factors result in poor nutrition, inadequate health services, poor academic achievement, high rates of illiteracy and criminal behaviour leading to learner transience, absenteeism and ill-discipline (Drysdale, Jacobson & Ylimaki 2007:364). These socio-economic conditions prevail across vast areas of South Africa and require that educational leaders extend themselves beyond what is ordinarily expected of them. Leithwood and Reihl in Drysdale et al (2007) describe four core principles for effective educational leadership in a disadvantaged community, namely: setting directions, developing people, redesigning the organisation and managing the curriculum.

Some of the challenges faced by the female leaders in disadvantaged schools may include the following:

1. Patriarchal views amongst some men that women are not good leaders (Hendricks 2003: 18). However, research indicates that women are as capable as men in managing and leading schools (Al-Khalifa in Bennett, Crawford & Riches, 1992: 99).
2. The absence of women in power positions is being measured against ideals that have historically served men best (Tsoka, 1999: 23). At the organizational level women are prejudiced by traditionally, deeply embedded patriarchal values and practices that devalue transformation processes aimed at achieving gender equity (Chisholm, 2001).

3. A patriarchal culture which is dominant in schools has placed constraints on the advancement of women to senior management levels. South African women still suffer discrimination. There is a disparity of power between males and females in education (Sboros, 1994: 13). Naidoo quoting renecke (2012) stated that in the Gauteng Province where research was conducted only 727 of 2164 principals in 2012, were women.
4. Deep seated inequalities, stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes about women's competencies are barriers that impact on their performances (Gender Equity Task Team, 1997: 195).
5. Women in leadership who internalize societal, sex-role stereotypes that women are not competent and as such they have consistently lower expectations than men in their own ability to perform successfully.

This research looks at the experience of four women who are school leaders in disadvantaged communities. By combining their career histories and views on leadership (as highlighted in the interviews) the study focuses on their leadership experiences as females in disadvantaged communities. The study further explores ways in which females in school leadership navigate the challenges encountered and strategies employed to meet these challenges in disadvantaged schools.

AIM OF THE RESEARCH

The aim of this study is to investigate female leaders navigating challenges in selected disadvantaged schools in Johannesburg North District. Through semi-structured interviews, this study captures the voices of four females in school leadership regarding their experiences as leaders in disadvantaged communities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

- To describe the challenges facing women in leadership positions.
- To explore how these challenges affect females in leadership positions.
- To investigate how they think these challenges can be overcome.

The following critical questions guided the study:

- What challenges do female leaders in disadvantaged schools experience?

- How do these challenges affect them as leaders?
- What strategies do they employ in overcoming these challenges?

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study utilises qualitative research to investigate how female leaders in disadvantaged schools navigate their way around challenges. I chose to focus on four schools with women as principals and deputy principals in the Johannesburg North District. The research was gender related, hence purposeful sampling was used. The sample chosen was also indicative of the different racial group's namely black, white, Indian and coloured females in leadership. Semi structured interviews were conducted with individual participants.

RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is relevant in the context of South Africa which is in the process of implementing national policies on gender equity (RSA Constitution Chapter 2, Bill of Rights, Act 108 of 1996). Furthermore, it is relevant to women leaders in the education sector who are navigating their way through a labyrinth of systematic as well as societal challenges that render it difficult to pursue their career effectively.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of this research are only valid for the sample studied, it cannot be generalized. Numerous limitations such as race, education, marital status and leadership styles challenge it.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

This research report is presented in four chapters.

CHAPTER ONE

This chapter provides an overview as well as the literature review of the study. Relevant literature reviewed include discussions on: feminist perspectives, theories on leadership and management styles of women, interpersonal skills of women in

leadership, female managers and emotional intelligence in their management and communication styles, women managers' collaboration with stakeholders, women's transformational leadership, women leaders and conflict resolution, gender equity in the education sector in South Africa, challenges of females leading in disadvantaged schools, disadvantaged communities, stereotypes and prejudices, and conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO

The chapter presents the research methodology of the research. A qualitative research paradigm was chosen. Data was collected by conducting interviews of the four females in leadership positions at schools located in the disadvantaged communities in the Johannesburg North District. The chapter also provides a profile of the participants and the sites where the study was conducted. Semi-structured interviews were used because it presented the opportunity for participants to clarify their responses. The chapter draws attention to the role of the researcher and to issues of trustworthiness. The interviews recorded were transcribed then common factors from the transcriptions were assembled into codes. Ethical considerations are also discussed.



CHAPTER THREE

This chapter concentrates on the analysis of the data collected. A critical discourse analysis methodology was used to analyse the data because this type of data collection method encourages discussion and reflection. Coded data which emerged out of the analysis was categorized into themes. The themes responded to the aims and objectives of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

The final chapter of this research presents the findings of the research as well as the conclusion and recommendations for interventions to support female leaders in disadvantaged schools.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PLIGHT OF FEMALE LEADERS: CHALLENGES AND PRECONCEPTIONS

1. 1. INTRODUCTION

The plight of women at both national and international levels is similar. These similarities however, differ in the degree of discrimination experienced by women in different contexts. Women in the West for example, seem to have made a lot of strides as far as gaining their individual rights is concerned; however, they still face discrimination at other levels for example in the division of labour. Western women still bear the burden of child rearing, managing a home as well as employment in the labour force as do their counterparts in Africa. Nationally, even though South Africa boasts of having one of the most liberalized constitutions in the world, with many human rights enshrined in it, it still lags behind in practical terms as discrimination against women is rampant across all sections of society. Discrimination against women is evident at work places and in traditional family circles. One of those work places where patriarchy prevails in South Africa is in the education sector. Women remained in subordinate positions as teachers in schools whilst policies example the Bantu Education Act (no 47) of 1953, provided fertile grounds for men to aspire to positions of leadership (Kiamba in Wagadu, 2008:5).

Theorists all over the world engage in discourse in attempts to understand discrimination over women in the private and public spheres. Likewise feminist scholars, who in the various strands of feminism, strive to situate the discrimination of women in the traditional social and political framework governing society.

1. 2. FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

There is a wide variety of feminist views regarding the relationship between feminism and traditional social and political thought. Feminism challenges conceptions of women and sexual difference in traditional thought. Beasley (1999: 51) identifies four major different types of feminism: liberal feminism, radical feminism, Marxist and

socialist feminism. A perusal of these strands of feminism adds value to the discourse on feminist perspectives in relation to the challenges facing women in leadership and how they think these challenges can be overcome. Each of the strands of feminism is examined according to the tri-partite scheme which involves the norms, description of society and strategies used to articulate feminist arguments.

1. 2. 1. Liberal feminism

Liberal feminism is the most widely known form of feminist thought and it is often seen as synonymous with feminism *per se*. Responses to the question “what is feminism?” or “are you a feminist?” are commonly drawn upon liberal versions of feminist thought. It is certainly the “moderate” or “mainstream” face of feminism. In this approach, the explanation for women’s positions in society is seen in terms of unequal rights or “artificial” barriers to women’s participation in the public world, beyond the family and household. Thus in liberal feminist thought, there is a focus on the public sphere, i.e. equal pay and equal opportunity, on legal, political and institutional struggles for the rights of individuals to compete in the market place.

In liberal feminism there is also a critical concern with the value of individual autonomy and freedom from supposedly unwarranted restrictions placed on women by their male counterparts. Though sometimes this associated with freedom from interference by the state or government, more often it is seen as freedom from the bonds of custom and prejudice. Therefore, public citizenship and the attainment of equality with men in the public arena are central to liberal feminism. There is a presumption of sameness between men and women in liberal feminist thought. Liberal feminist political strategies seem to reflect a conception of a fundamentally sexually undifferentiated human nature i.e. women should be able to do what men do (Tapper, 1996: 37-47). Given an assumed commonality between the sexes and the focus on access to what men have in society, liberal feminists do not perceive the sexes to be at “war” or dismiss that which has been associated with men. Not surprisingly, liberal feminism involves an emphasis upon reform of society rather than revolutionary change.

A well-known example of this kind of approach may be found in the work of Naomi Wolf (1990: xvii-xix). Wolf promulgates what she calls power “feminism”, feminism based on a sense of entitlement, which embraces monetary and other forms of “success” in existing society. She explicitly rejects strategies which might be less palatable to mainstream women and men, effectively dismissing more critical or revolutionary agendas. This view is seen by some as offering an increasingly conservative version of liberal feminism that is associated with men. They want what men have got, rather than questioning the value of what men have in any thorough sense.

Liberal feminism follows a line of thinking that specifically asserts that women are not fundamentally different from men and yet are denied opportunities on the basis of their sex. Sex therefore, constitutes unwarranted disadvantage, a barrier to completion and the recognition of merit. Hence women’s position in society may be the legitimate subject of government intervention. In this setting, liberal feminism provides a framework for the development of moderate feminist policies and practices which can be employed, for example, by government agencies. However, it seems the extent of liberal feminist interest in links with government is very context specific. The extent ranges from the comparatively greater emphasis on individual rights and freedoms as against connections with the state as in North American liberal feminism to the myriad of interactions between feminists and government to be found in Australia (Curthoys, 1994: 25). Whatever the context, given liberal feminism’s concern with working for attainable social change within the existing confines of modern societies, it is not surprising that most feminists have perforce made use of this framework (Eisenstein, 1986: 65).

In liberal feminist thought there is a focus on the public sphere i.e. equal pay and equal opportunities on legal, political and institutional struggles for the rights of individuals to compete in the market place. There seems to be similarities between what female leaders in disadvantaged schools are fighting for as stated in this study, and liberal feminist thought. Furthermore, the fact that liberal feminism involves an emphasis upon reform to society rather revolutionary change seems to link very well with the approaches advanced by these female leaders in the disadvantaged schools in Johannesburg North District where the interviews were conducted.

The above may be summarized in terms of the tripartite scheme as follows: first, with regards to norms, individual freedom is emphasized; women are deemed to be equal to men, sharing the same sphere of activity. Their value basis is not clearly articulated. Second, from a descriptive angle women are viewed as not having what men have. Third, as far as strategies for change are concerned, the role of state intervention is often pleaded for. Within the suggested tripartite scheme the focus is on the third aspect, i.e. strategies for change, rather than normative issues. Following is a discussion on radical feminism.

1. 2. 2. Radical feminism

Radical feminism, unlike liberal and Marxist/socialist feminisms, is not drawn directly from previous bodies of “male stream” thought. Furthermore, radical feminists state most strongly of all feminist traditions, that men are the main enemy (Delphy, 1984: 57-77). It is in the light of the above assumption that radical feminism considers that all men are ambiguously viewed as having power over at least some women. Indeed this approach commonly suggests that any man is in a position of power relative to all women, and possibly some men (Rowland & Klein, 1990: 280). Radical feminism offers a real challenge to, and rejection of, the liberal orientation towards the public world of men. Indeed it gives a positive value to womanhood rather than supporting a notion of assimilating women into arenas of activity associated with men. Radical feminism pays attention to women’s oppression as women in a social order dominated by men. According to this approach, the distinguishing character of women’s oppression is their oppression as women, not as members of other groups such as their social class. Hence, the explanation for women’s oppression is seen as laying in sexual oppression. Women are oppressed because of their sex (Rowland & Klein 1990: 272-5).

The notion of shared oppression is intimately connected with a strong emphasis on the sisterhood of women. While differences between women are sometimes, particularly in more recent writings acknowledged, there is strategic focus on women’s similarities and the pleasures of forming political and other bonds between women in a world where such bonds are marginalized or dismissed. Such an agenda

encourages some degree of “separatism” from men, which may range from simply supporting other women to living as far possible in the exclusive company of women. Furthermore, this identification with women and rejection of male dominance involves both a critique of the existing organization of heterosexuality as prioritizing men and recognition of lesbianism as a challenge to that priority (Rich, 1980: 631-660). Here, one can rightly assert that radical feminism stresses that in a social order dominated by men the process of changing sexual oppression must, as a political necessity, involve a focus on women.

According to Atkinson (1974: 73), sexual oppression is seen as the oldest and even the most profound form of inequality. Radical feminists often view other forms of power for example, unequal power relations within capitalism as derived from patriarchy (Millet, 1971). Given the significance of patriarchy to radical feminism, it is appropriate to provide a brief account of the term. Although, it is a subject of considerable debate, this term remains widely used and refers to the systemic organization of male supremacy and female subjugation. Stacey (1993: 52-9) summarizes three major instances of its usage: historical, materialistic and psychological. She notes that some feminists employ patriarchy to trace the historical emergence and development of systems of male domination. Others use the term to explore the sexual division of labour, which is to explore the material or concrete structural, bodily, and physical aspects of social organizations which divide up and differentially value tasks and activities on the basis of sex. And, finally, certain feminists perceive the term as enabling recognition of the deep-rooted nature of male dominance in the very formation and or unconscious internalizing of social hierarchy.

Radical feminists have adopted an approach in which the recognition of sexual oppression (patriarchy) is crucial, in part at least, as a counter to the politics of the radical left in the 1960s and 1970s, which either ignored sexual inequality or deemed it of secondary importance (Morgan, 1978: 13). Radical feminism describes sexual oppression as the greatest or at the very least a fundamental form of oppression and the primary oppression of women. In this regard, men as a group are considered to be the beneficiaries of this systematic form of power.

Perhaps the most useful way of summarizing this point, to allow for some potential differences within radical feminism, is to state that radical feminists perceive all men without exception as sharing in the benefits of a social system of male supremacy (patriarchy). This does not mean that all men are invariably oppressive to all women all the time (Thompson, 1994: 177), nor does this approach deny that some men at least may struggle to overcome this system of domination. Radical feminism's strong interest, it would seem, lies in recovering or discovering positive elements in femininity thus asserting in essence that it is good to be a woman and to form bonds with other women, in combination with its location of men as the beneficiaries of power relations, resulting in a relatively sharp division drawn between women and men. Radical feminists usually present a historically continuous, clear-cut difference between men and women. Sometimes this is argued to be the result of an ontological difference. However, other writers note that male domination is a social structure and not the consequence of some in-built male propensity, even if motivations towards mastery are typically male (Thompson, 1994: 173-4).

In other words, feminists in this tradition see a difference between men and women as inevitable i.e. given by nature or, at least as so established historically that it is very deeply embedded. Worthy of mention here is the point that radical feminists, may pursue a revolutionary agenda but, like liberal feminists, they stress practical political strategies. Nevertheless, in contrast to liberal feminist framework, radical feminism is inclined to be suspicious of government intervention, perceiving the state itself as being intrinsically patriarchal, and tends to focus on the politics of the private sphere, in particular sexuality, motherhood, and female bodies (Rowland, 1990).

Summarized within the categories of the suggested tripartite scheme, the norm is that women are equal to men, but need not share the same public domain. Women are seen as separate from men, but part of womanhood. Present society is characterized as being patriarchal in essence. Women are allotted a disproportionate percentage of power. The strategy of radical feminists is to restore the rights of women in general and in particular. Focused areas are often that of the private lives of women.

Radical feminism highlights sexual oppression and inequalities thus link up with the challenges facing females in leadership positions. There is also a similarity between radical feminism and the unequal power relations as derived from patriarchy. However, the point of departure between radical feminism and the female leaders approach studied here is that radical feminism pursues a revolutionary agenda in seeking change whilst the other[s], i.e. female leaders, attempt to seek change through reforms in these schools.

1. 2. 3. Marxist feminism

The third major feminist tradition is Marxist feminism. Marxist feminism was an influential school of Western feminist thought in the 1960s and 1970s. While the impact of Marxism on feminist theory remains evident in a number of contemporary approaches such as psychoanalytic and post-modern/post-structuralist feminisms, as well as those concerned with race/ethnicity, Marxist feminist tradition is waning. Its place in advocating the significance of Marxism and class analysis for feminism has now largely been overtaken by a range of socialist feminisms.

Curthoys (1994: 21) asserts that both the Marxist and socialist feminism traditions “more or less died at the end of the 1980s, when socialism itself collapsed throughout Eastern Europe”. Curthoys concurs with Felski (1991: 22) that the meaningful use of terms like Marxist or socialist may have fallen out of favour within feminism and that feminism may have abandoned the issues most associated with this grouping such as economics, class, historical analysis and interventions in the social policy development. Nevertheless, the pronouncement of socialist feminism’s eclipse seems a little premature. While few feminist theoreticians in the 1990s continue to describe themselves as Marxist feminists, some groups of Marxist feminists continue to be politically active and are usually found within broadly based Marxist organizations or parties, rather than in specifically feminist associations. Additionally, there are many numbers of writers and activists firmly within the socialist feminist tradition, as well as many contemporary theorists who may be regarded as being influenced by and engaged in reworking the boundaries of the tradition.

In Marxist feminism, following the work of Karl Marx, hierarchical class relations built on unequally distributed or owned sources of wealth, including monetary and other resources are seen as the source of coercive power and oppression, of all inequalities ultimately. Sexual oppression is seen as a dimension of class power. In this model the earliest forms of class division historically gave rise to male dominance; class oppression predates sex oppression. According to Marxist feminists, the emerging organization of the first forms of private wealth, and therefore of class hierarchy, led to the treatment of women as property. In other words Marxist feminism offers a version of history and society which is in some ways the opposite of that proposed by radical feminism.

In radical feminism, the earliest forms of male domination over women produce a framework of hierarchical social relations in which class divisions arise; sexual oppression predates class power. One can clearly observe that what is at stake in this difference of views is the question regarding which aspect is the primary oppression for women, hence which should be given the highest priority in feminist political struggle. By comparison with radical feminism there is typically less concern within Marxist feminism with ideas and attitudes and more of a focus on labour and economics when exploring women's positioning. Since labour is viewed as fundamental to all economic activity, historical specific analysis of the organization of labour is crucial to Marxist feminist approaches. The Marxist feminist approach tends, like liberal feminism, to be oriented towards the public sphere and, given its concern with the organization of labour, generally pays particular attention to women's position in relation to waged labour. The significance of unpaid labour undertaken in the private realm, which is very much associated with women, is controversial in Marxist feminism because Marxism largely equates the economy with the capitalist economy and the capitalist market-place (Beasley, 1999: 3-27). However, unlike liberal feminists, Marxist feminist thinkers are deeply antagonistic to the capitalist economy and to advocate a revolutionary approach in which the overthrow of capitalism is viewed as the necessary pre-condition to dismantling male privilege.

Looking at it relatedly, it seems there is less emphasis in this model than in radical feminism upon men's involvement in power or the benefits for men resulting from

power relations. Power is not primarily associated with sex but with the imperatives of class, private wealth, property and profit. One example of this inclination to describe women's subordination within the terms of a Marxist account of the requirements of class society may be found in the work of Lise Vogel, *Marxism and the Oppression of Women* (1983: 244-7). The main enemy in this form of analysis is the class system i.e. capitalism, in modern societies which creates divisions between men and women. According to Grosz (1988: 92-104) Marxist feminism shares with liberal feminism an assumption that there is an underlying sameness between men and women. Grosz points out that, while women seem too oppressed by the men around them, they like men are ultimately oppressed by capitalism, and hence the interests of men and women are not crucially different.

Analysing the above statement critically, it can be said that although both men and women have been oppressed economically, women within the Marxist system can also be oppressed just because they are women. Gender and economic oppression share a lot but are not identical.

Stated in terms of the tripartite system, one may suggest that in Marxism the norm is, however, labour relations. In describing society women is viewed as part of the exploited class. The strategy is thus to restore women to their rightful position in the labour domain. The similarity between Marxist feminism and the female leaders in this study is that both are agreed that there is oppression of women with regards to the distribution of wealth generally. The approach of Marxist feminism is also similar to that of liberal feminism and that of the female leaders in disadvantaged schools. Seemingly, all are oriented towards the public sphere, given its concern with the organization of labour, generally paying particular attention to women's position in relation to waged labour.

1. 2. 4. Socialist feminism

Socialist feminists, on the other hand, attempt to maintain some elements of Marxism regarding the significance of class distinctions and labour. While incorporating the radical feminist view that sexual oppression is not historically a consequence of class division. In other words most socialist feminists assert, along

with radical feminists, that women's subordination predated the development of class-based societies and hence that women's oppression could not be caused by class division.

In brief, three major socialist feminist traditions may be described as deriving from debates between radical and Marxist feminists (Beasley, 1999: 62). The first strand involves a concern with the social construction of sex and gender. This approach tends not to perceive sexual oppression through the lens of women's unequal socio-economic position (in Marxist terms, the so-called material organization of social life), but rather conceives oppression as the effect of psychological functions. At the same time, the approach continues to make use of a Marxian understanding of class relations. Hence this first strand of socialist feminism offers what has been termed a dual-systems model of social analysis, investigating sex and class power according to different procedures and identifying two systems of social organization corresponding to these forms of power, that is, patriarchy and capitalism (Mitchell, 1974). In broad terms a psychological model of sexual power is presented alongside a historically specific, economically based account of class power. Moreover, the former is moulded or historically contextualized by the organizing force of the latter. Because the overall model makes use of Marxist materialism that is, a methodology which sees economics as the fundamental motor of social relations shaping the form of society, it tends to adopt a version of the Marxist based superstructure model in which class is still ultimately the fundamental base and sex is merely the psychological superstructure. Hence this is more a two-tier, rather than a mutual or dual, theory of social relations.

The second major strand of socialist feminism attempts to draw the work of radical and Marxist feminists into one theory of power and describes a unified system sometimes referred to as capitalist patriarchy. In capitalist patriarchy, both sex and class power have a material aspect that is, they both are conceived as having an economic form. In other words, what is meant by this is that patriarchy is not seen as simply psychological. These versions of socialist feminism are identified by their views of the relationship between class, sex and gender, which is the relationship between capitalism and patriarchy. Other categories of power such as race tended to be marginalized in the initial accounts of debates among socialist feminists. It seems

like the issue of race and ethnicity, for example, increasingly became a point of contention within socialist feminism given its concern with power that cuts across both class division and sexual difference. It is important to note that, recently, such debates have contributed to the development of post-colonial feminist perspectives, indicating ongoing interactions between socialist feminist themes and feminist concerns regarding race and ethnicity.

The diverse types of feminism distinguished above can be summarized as follows: the norm in liberal feminism is that women are seen as individuals who should have the same rights as men. In other words, women should be equal to men. Their description of society is that woman as individual is limited by gender from participating in all spheres of life. Their strategy is that reform of society with role of state (power structure) is rather indeterminate. Liberal feminism focuses on individualism even while striving to improve the overall position of women. The norm in radical feminism is that which locates women as part of womanhood within a stratified society. Their description of society is that woman as part of womanhood is allocated an inferior position within a patriarchal, male-dominated society. Their strategy is that a revolutionary agenda may be pursued; government is viewed suspiciously as part of the male-dominated power structure. Women should negotiate as groups. Marxist feminism has as its norm that of seeing women as part of an economically determined class structure where women should be equal to man. Their description of society is that woman as part of a hierarchical class structure is exploited by capitalist powers. Their strategy is that of a revolutionary approach. Capitalist systems (including government) should be overthrown. Women struggle as under-privileged class. The norm in socialist feminism is that women are seen as part of a disadvantaged segment of society, allocated in terms of gender and class. Their description of society is that woman as individual and group is economically and sexually deprived. Their strategy is an undefined process of change.

The norm in socialist feminism which sees women as part of a disadvantaged segment of society is similar to what the females in disadvantaged schools have. Furthermore, their description of women as individuals and groups that are

economically and sexually deprived is compatible with what these female leaders in disadvantaged schools are fighting for.

The following sub-section looks at the theories on leadership and management styles of women.

1. 3. THEORIES ON LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT STYLES OF WOMEN

This sub-section tries to identify women management and leadership styles and at the same time investigates what management and leadership styles (qualities) they possess. Additionally it looks at the ways in which these styles, in turn, compliment their performances. There is need to establish if these styles are effective in developing primary schools and, if not, ways of managing and leading should be enhanced in order to develop primary schools effectively. Van Deventer & Kruger (2003: 145) state that there is not one correct leadership style. Each of these leadership styles has certain advantages. As more women begin occupying positions of leadership, questions as to whether they lead in a different manner from men and whether women or men are more effective as leaders have generated great attention. There are indeed gender differences in leadership styles. Shakeshaft (1989: 166) contends that there is either a subtle or an obvious leadership style that women may employ in their routine, which may be different to that of men. Eagly and Carli (2007) found that women exhibited more tendencies of transformational or charismatic leadership than did men, despite typical stereotypes of women as less effective leaders. Various researchers such as (Eagly & Carli 2007, and Young & Hurlic, 2001) have asserted that substantial leadership style differences between women and men do exist, but should not disadvantage women and should even offer females advantage because the glass ceiling makes it so difficult for women to attain elite leadership positions, the ones who do make it tend to be very competent.

It would be appropriate at this juncture to say that discussing the theories on leadership and management styles of women makes one appreciate the “other[s]” (i.e. women). In this study in particular, it helps by enhancing the argument that women leaders who feel left out in many of these leadership positions, do possess

similar or much better qualities than their male counterparts in certain instances. This in turn links up very well with what this study aims at unravelling.

The following sub-sections endeavour to investigate women's management and leadership styles by examining the following: interpersonal skills, emotional intelligence, communication styles and collaboration with stakeholders, transformational style and conflict resolution.

1. 3. 1. Interpersonal skills

According to Winstanley and Woodal (2000: 151) interpersonal skills are perceived as the process of relating well to others and revealing the intrinsic characteristics of relationships and communication with others. Wolpe, Quinlan, and Martinez (1997: 204) argue that women's ways of leading and managing are influenced by their attributes and the various situations in which they find themselves. Judith (1992: 22) points out that these attributes have to do with interpersonal skills. Accordingly, Bush (1995: 66) adds that women generally have an ethical and caring approach to the leading-managing process. It is generally believed that women in leadership seem to demonstrate qualities such as warmth and empathy and they pay special attention to honesty, gentleness, compassion, gender and trust.

Women leaders are more assertive and persuasive, have a stronger need to get things done and are more willing to take risks than male leaders. Women leaders are also empathetic and flexible, as well as stronger in interpersonal skills than their male counterparts which enables them to read situations accurately. These women leaders can be very persuasive, an attribute that helps them to bring others around to their point of view because they understand and care about where others are coming from so that the people they are leading feel more understood, supported and valued. Women leaders also demonstrate an inclusive, team-building leadership style of problem solving and decision making. Goodman (1996: 1) reflects that women seem to display different emotions such as anger at work. Their anger can be associated with attributes such as being sharp-tongued, persistently annoying, cruel, nasty and prone to crying. Their tears can also be used manipulatively or, on the other hand, reveal their openness. Women also appear to show guilt by crying

and this crying conveys the message that they care about their employees and inspire excellence.

Judith (1992: 2) declares that women tend to hold on to anger rather than return to business as usual. This could by implication be reflected in their management and leadership roles they may not always have emotional hiding places. In contrast, Magudi (2000: 15) argues that women seem to have the capacity to build effective management and leadership through attributes such as confidence, courage and respect for the opinion of others. They are affectionate and considerate of other people's existence and dignity. Morgan (1994: 69) affirms that some women display successful managerial and leadership qualities, whilst other women fail to become effective managers, much the same as male managers. Success or failure may be indicative of the differences in women's management styles. Goodman (1996: 2) states that differences in women's ways of leading and management may be due to other factors like, their domestic responsibilities and limited mobility, changes at work, sexism and styles of childhood socialization. The ways in which women managers incorporate these factors into their styles of management can be attributed to emotional intelligence. The following sub-section discusses female managers and emotional intelligence in their management styles.

This theme resonates within the broader aim of this study which is to investigate how women think the challenges they face can be overcome. By articulating their interpersonal skills, women are saying that they also possess some key ingredients to better management styles.

1. 3. 2. Emotional intelligence

Goleman (1996: 316) defines emotional intelligence as the ability to recognize one's own feelings and those of others in order to produce emotions and then reason with these emotions. It also refers to being able to motivate one and others and to manage our emotions well in ourselves and in our relationships. Winstanley and Woodal, (2000: 144) have described emotional intelligence as being the intelligent use of emotions in different situations. Weare (2000: 83) expresses that leaders in schools need the ability to relate sensitively to people whose assumptions are

different to their own. Weisinger (1998: 16-17) has defined emotional intelligence as “the intelligent use of your emotions”. One may intentionally make their emotions work for them by successfully using them to help guide their behaviour and thinking in ways that will enhance one’s capabilities in order for them to reach a higher level of emotional and intellectual growth.

LeRoux and DeKlerk (2001: 10) add that inter-personal intelligence and intra-personal intelligence are the main components of emotional intelligence. Gardner (in Weare, 2000: 68) also defines interpersonal intelligence like Goleman above as “the ability to understand others, how they work, what motivates them and how to work cooperatively with people”. Intra-personal intelligence is “the ability to understand oneself, to form an accurate model of one self and use this model to operate effectively in life”. A combination of intelligence of interpersonal and intra-personal skills can be seen as emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence may as well be described as a group of capabilities, competencies and skills which influence one’s ability to succeed in coping with the environmental demands and pressures that directly affect overall psychological wellbeing. According to Pauquet (1998: 94) emotional intelligence may also be considered to be a learnable intelligence that can be developed and improved at any time and at any age. In the light of the above definitions, one may describe emotional leadership as “the ability to understand and manage both your own emotions, and those of the people around you”. It helps to maintain a high degree of self-motivation and to motivate others and to be continuously in control of one’s emotions and being able to effectively manage emotions. Therefore, emotional Intelligence could be seen as essential for success.

Winstanley and Woodal (2000: 144) have described women manager’s emotional intelligence as the intelligent use of emotions in different situations. Some people intentionally make their emotions work for themselves. They also seem to utilize their behaviour and thinking in ways that enhance their results. Marshall (1995: 175) affirms that women have the ability to work with others due to their sense of caring. Goodman (1996: 2) states that females in leadership are more likely to influence teachers to use more desirable teaching methods and techniques than their male

counterparts. This shows that women have skills to persuade people, encourage, motivate and build interpersonal relationships.

Stated in terms of the aims of this study, this theme describes women as being rational and emotional beings who are capable of reasoning contrary to the views of their male counterparts who see them as not being capable of reasoning hence denying them, a chance at getting into leadership positions.

1. 3. 3. Communication styles

There are few management skills that are important to the education manager such as the ability to communicate effectively both in writing and orally. This can be augmented by the ability to have in place mechanisms that allow for a simultaneous flow of information and ideas from the top down and from the bottom up. This allows the education manager to develop amongst other things, a proper vision, a mission statement, aims and objectives that will ensure action is taken. In order to achieve the set outcomes, oral and written communication is necessary in management for making decisions and help in solving problems that may arise from time to time. Communication is also essential for organizing and coordinating activities. Byars and Rue (1994: 15) define communication as “the process by which meanings are exchanged between people through a common system of symbols”. According to Van der Westhuizen (1997: 214), research has shown that the education leader spends 80% of his/her day communicating. Bennett et al (1994), and Riches and Morgan (1994) all point out that women acknowledge that they need to possess excellent communication skills, which will allow them to give clear guidance and to be decisive when necessary.

Other scholars such as Durden-Smith and de Simone cited in *Women Leaders advancing Careers* (2012: 72) add that women are communicative and integrative. Scholars like Marshall (1995: 176) are of the opinion that women seem to be good communicators and are highly effective in communicating with others. He also states that women seem to utilize unambiguous communicating styles. This stems, he argues, from their strong sense of identity. Wolpe and Martinez (1997: 20) and Magudi (2000: 15) agree that women leaders display effective communication skills

that empower individuals and groups. Furthermore, Wolpe and Martinez (1997:20) as well as Magudi (2000: 15) state that some women managers may utilize informal communication in a way that treats people as individuals whose ideas and opinions matter to the organization. Bilimaria (1999: 8) asserts that in many corporations led by women, face-to-face communication is common. Purkey and Schmidt (1996: 10) state that women's communication strategy is of an inviting nature that recognizes a person's worth and is not intended to demean, degrade, dissuade or humiliate the receiver who may probably feel insulted to participate.

Women seem to apply collective communication skills in a way that encourages shared governance of the schools which in turn, encourages individuals to think creatively and productively. Bailey (1997: 9) emphasizes the view that women work well through group structures. These female managers seem to be sensitive to others' ideas, listen to their opinions and are capable of sharing all facets of work as well as being able to evaluate the personal needs of those whom they lead.

Analysing the above statements, one can rightly say that female leaders seem to care deeply about the well-being of staff members, learners and parents. Silver (1994:4) adds that women managers and leaders seem to be good implementers. This is evident in the way that they apply collective conflict resolutions; utilize teamwork in planning and action strategizing. Their recognition of stakeholders' autonomy and ownership in the holistic organization could result in curriculum, educator, learner and parent-centred, goal-setting management that could lead to the advancement and development of primary schools.

This theme seeks to highlight the fact that women use their communication skills to address challenges and is in sync within the aim of the study which seeks to investigate how women in leadership positions think these challenges can be overcome.

1. 3. 4. Collaboration with stakeholders

According to Kroon (1996: 367) communication skills create a complex interaction between women managers, followers and the circumstances in which they find

themselves. He further argues that women's personal communication skills assist them in identifying stakeholder's needs, demands and goals and in adjusting their management styles accordingly. This in turn creates an environment in which women managers are able to consider parents, learners, educators and the community as stakeholders. Women in school leadership prioritize stakeholder satisfaction and strive to meet their needs. Bailey (1997: 12) asserts that women empower stakeholders by motivating them to feel they are part of the institution which, in turn, encourages their commitment in sharing the institution's vision and mission with the purpose of accomplishing its set goals. Another aspect of women management and leadership styles can be seen in their practising of collegiality and collaboration. High performing women leaders collaborate with families, business and community members, and they respond to diverse community interests and needs. They also work effectively within the larger organization and are able to mobilize community resources. They also understand the benefits of having and using a variety of partnerships, coalitions and networks while actively engaging the community to promote student and school success. Cunningham and Cordeiro, (2003: 146), adds that "for schools and educators, partnership means that family and school share power". While, community involvement in schools has become a catch phrase in our time, there seems to be agreement that the community should be involved in the activities of the school (Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003: 260). This is also echoed by Witten (2004: 18) who states that there has to be a connection between the school and the community and other stakeholders in order to improve teaching and learning. School governing bodies (SGBs), representing educators, parents, learners and the community are expected to make crucial decisions that ensure the school is administered properly. This can only be achieved by means of open and constant collaboration with all the stakeholders (Prinsloo in Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003: 203).

Female school leaders exemplify this collaborative framework by sharing the management, vision and mission of the organization and other capabilities to benefit the school (Gordon, 1996: 3). Bush (1995: 66) supports the above statement when he affirms that women seem to implement a collegial culture that focuses on collaboration, while also emphasizing the individual. In women management and leadership styles the school can be identified as an organization with a culture of

co-operation, co-ordination and commitment. The healthy atmosphere created by women's styles stems from the power to encourage the collective sharing of ideas in the formulation of a vision, mission statements and strategies leading to goal attainment.

Mathur-Helm (2002: 125) states that although participation increases stakeholders' it does not always build ownership and commitment. Participation takes time; hence everyone's opinions are taken into consideration and analyzed before consensus is achieved. Women can be viewed as interactive leaders when they actively encourage the participation of their staff, the sharing of information and power, and enthusiasm for work.

This theme resonates with how women think these challenges can be overcome. By consulting with stakeholders, women leaders seek to be inclusive before coming up with a collective decision where everyone has a say thus minimizing chances of dictatorial tendencies creeping into their management styles.



1. 3. 5. Transformational leadership

According to Lethopa (1998: 51), transformational leadership is perceived as being charismatic, delegating, responsible, open, and communicative. It also identifies organizational strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities. According to Du Brin (2004: 82) transformational leaders are charismatic, visionary and innovative and give positive feedback to their staff. Women apply transformational styles that allow people to transform their self-interest into goals, and they do perform well when they are feeling good about themselves.

Good women leaders also prefer work that involves sharing of power and information that encourages involvement. According to Bailey (1997: 7), this style of leadership helps to build transactions between women as leaders and their followers. Richards (1999: 122) affirms this when he claims that women's transformational styles include a shared vision, empowerment of others, challenge to the status quo, an adoption of a pro-active stance, communication, vision and a positive self-regard.

Since many of the women interviewed espoused the ability of practicing as transformational leaders, which seeks among other things to be charismatic, delegative, and communicable, this resonates well with the aims of this study in order to describe the challenges they face, and how these challenges affect females in leadership positions. It also offers them a chance to reflect on how these challenges can be overcome.

1. 3. 6. Conflict resolution

Conflict does not simply explode; rather it develops through various stages, and in each of these stages certain factors contribute to the possibility of conflict. Gerber, Nel and Van Dyk (1997: 384) define conflict as “the difference of opinion that influences the interaction between independent parties.” Conflict can also be defined as “an open disagreement between two parties who have different goals and values.” Conflict involves people’s feelings, as well as their set objectives. Feelings of the parties involved must be resolved amicably and an agreement or compromise must be found or worked out (Snyman, 1993: 49).

In this regard, people, despite their diversity, must work together as a group or individuals in a coordinated manner to realize the general aims of the school. Conflict can thus have a negative effect on the actualization of the educational aims in school (Untiedt, 1993: 79). According to Everard and Morris (1996: 88), the ability to handle conflict is a key factor in ensuring managerial success. When conflict arises among staff members, female school leaders should intervene and mediate to reduce interpersonal conflicts. According to Goleman (1996: 178) people who are skilled in conflict management have the ability to handle people and tense situations with tact and diplomacy. All conflicts do not have negative effects but valuable insight can be achieved if conflict is handled constructively. A female school leader should, however, be aware of what causes conflict, as well as the effect this has on the behaviour of teachers.

Since conflict seems to be inevitable in the workplace, as such, it is the task of the school leader to prevent conflict from obstructing the realization of the school’s objectives through proper management. School principals often find themselves in a

peculiar position of trust with respect to their colleagues, and the way they communicate with the parties will either be a motivating or demotivating factor in solving the conflict. In order to defuse a potential explosion, she requires listening skills, confidence structured problem-solving and must have knowledge of the staff's social standing and abilities. When a female leader attempts to solve a destructive conflict, she may make use of a variety of possible conflict management styles and these differ from person to person.

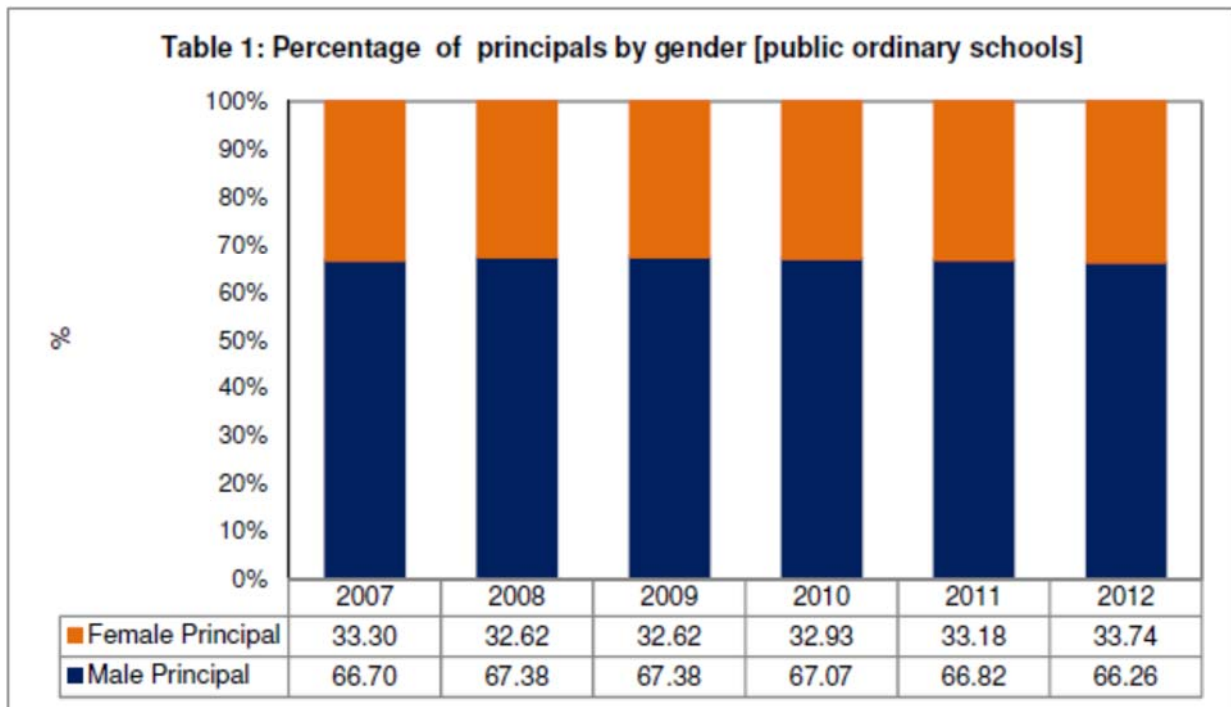
The theme of conflict resolution is at sync within the broader aim of this study which seeks to find answers to some of the challenges women in leadership are striving to overcome. By employing good conflict resolution mechanisms, women display that they have the ability to reflect good leadership qualities.

1. 4. GENDER EQUITY IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION SECTOR

Gender equity means doing whatever is necessary to ensure equity of outcomes in life experiences of women and men. However, equity is very difficult to legislate. As such, identical treatment may satisfy the equality but not the equity criterion.

In South Africa, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 seeks to “eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, the previous marginalized (mainly blacks) and the disabled with a view to affirming their career patterns”. The issue of gender seems to have been politicized in South Africa simply because there is power dynamics involved. The gender issue has always been about power. The platform from which this power emanates has been clouded by society's perception of gender differences. Women are regarded as secondary and therefore subordinate to men. Naidoo (2013: 14) quoting Reynecke (2012) stated that in the Gauteng province (where research was conducted) only 727 of the 2164 principals in 2012, were women. Table 1 highlights these statistics.

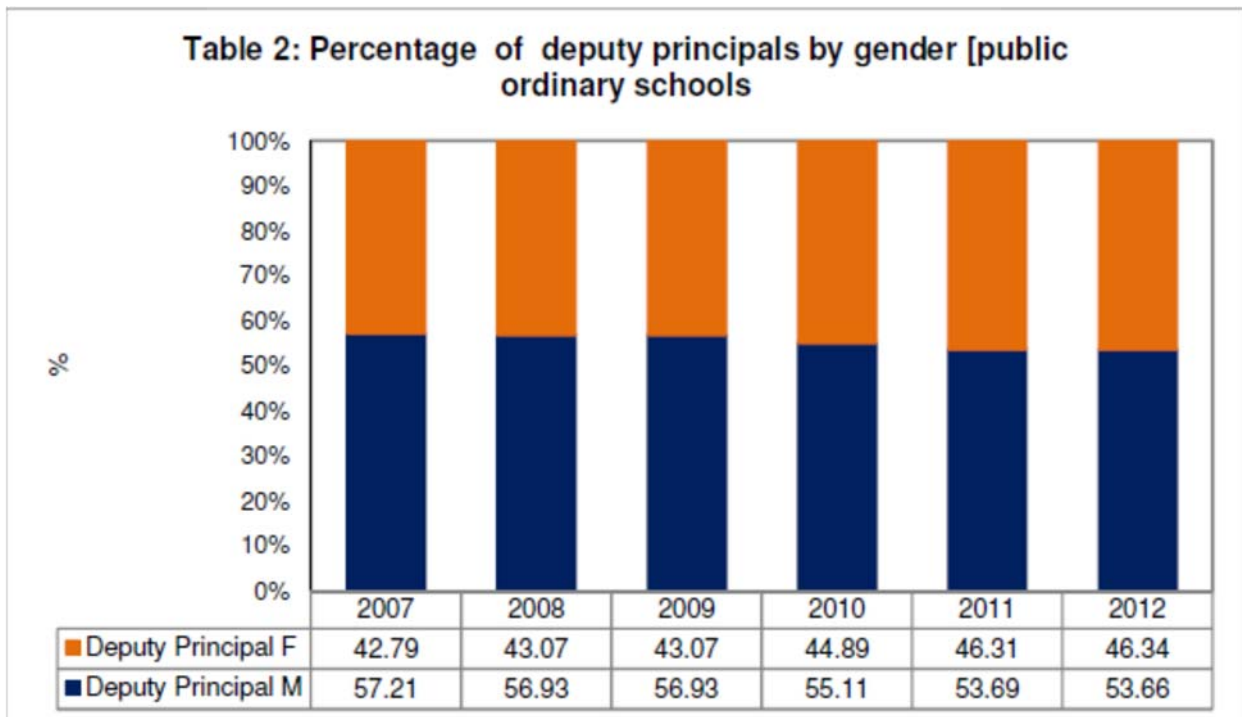
Table 1: Percentage of principals by gender in public ordinary schools



Source: GDE Annual Report 2011/2012

Table 1 indicates gender differentiated by post level, it is noted that from 2007 to 2012, 33% of Principal posts were held by females and 67% by males.

Table 2: Percentage of deputy principals by gender in public ordinary schools



Source: GDE Annual Report 2011/2012

Table 2 indicates the disparity of deputy principals by gender in management. There are 46% females and 53% males in management from 2007 to 2012.

Tables 1 and 2 depict the percentage of principals by gender, when differentiated by post level, in 2012, 33% of principal posts were held by females and 67% by males. It is clear that although female educators constitute the majority of the educators, their representation in school leadership is still low. These gender imbalances in the teaching and management of our educational institutions are difficult to understand and contest. Some scholars like Gerber et al (1997) have charged that the South African educational system has been generally structured like a traditional home where men run the schools and women nurture the learners. Gerber et al (1997) adds that even though women expect to be treated equally, they are expected by the system to give in to discriminatory conditions in a male-dominated working environment. He argues that male-dominated structures and values force women to work particularly hard for merit awards and promotions. As such, there is a need to eradicate gender discrimination. This can be done by ensuring that equal opportunities for both men and women are promoted and that their needs are fulfilled without being discriminated against on the basis of gender (GETT, 1997: 48). Greyvenstein (2000: 30) points out that linking gender equity to management should involve amongst other things, including women in the management hierarchies of education. However, the challenge for females who are now beginning to achieve positions of leadership is whether to transform themselves to fit into a preconceived masculine role or to redefine leadership altogether. Greyvenstein (2000), like Chisolm (2001) all conclude that women should be included in leadership and management in the education sector in South Africa so that gender equity is achieved. My opinion is that women who become leaders are increasingly taking the bold step of breaking new ground. They are challenging the stereotypes imposed on them by men that women leaders are supposed to be like men, they are expressing their own conceptions of leadership.

This sub-division aimed at highlighting the disparities that prevail in the management of schools in South Africa. Women constitute a small percentage of the overall leadership in the education sector in the Johannesburg North District area and the whole of South Africa. In line with the aims and objectives of this research, the theme

gender (females) representation in management of schools thus links up with the aims spelt out in this study.

The following sub-section attempts to discuss the challenges faced by females leading in disadvantaged schools.

1. 5. CHALLENGES FACED BY FEMALES LEADING IN DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

Many recent studies conducted in South Africa such as those of Chisolm (2001), Greyvenstein (2000), Mathipa and Tsoka (2000) as well as Van Deventer and Van der Westhuizen (2003) seem to have shifted the focus from the impact of the apartheid regime on gender and now address the subject from an organisational perspective exploring barriers that women in management are still facing even in the post-apartheid period. What is evident from all these studies is the fact that, although gender discrimination is not a direct result of apartheid, the former cannot be completely divorced from the historical and traditional issues of race and ethnicity that bear huge and different cultural impositions on women managers and women aspirants to management.

The above theme points out that some of the challenges faced by female leaders in disadvantaged areas in the Johannesburg North District.

1. 5. 1. Defining a disadvantaged community

The term 'disadvantaged community' is used to denote the complex cluster of factors that make it difficult for people living in certain areas to achieve positive life outcomes. Community disadvantage emerges out of the interplay between the characteristics of the residents in a community e.g. employment, education levels, drug and alcohol abuse and over and above this, the effects of the social and environmental context in which they exist i.e. "place effects" or "neighbourhood effects", such as weak social networks, poor role models and a relative lack of opportunity (Edward, 2005; Vinson, 2007).

Christie (2008: 101) opines that disadvantaged schools are least supported by government and the community because poverty is rife, a development which renders them powerless to voice their opinions. People see themselves as disadvantaged to the extent they are denied access to the same tools found useful by the majority of society. These include autonomy, incentive, responsibility, self-respect, community support, health, education, information, employment, capital, and responsive support systems (www.effectivecommunities.com).

In the context of this study, disadvantaged communities are those which are impoverished and plagued by resultant social ills. These social ills have a bearing on the child attending school, the educator and the female leaders of these schools. What affects the learners affects the teachers and ultimately the leadership in these schools. This sub-section is in line with the aims of this study which is to identify, discuss, and find solutions to challenges affecting the leadership in disadvantaged schools.

1. 5. 2. Stereotypes and prejudices

According to Mathipa and Tsoka (2000: 130), prejudice is defined as “an act of forming an opinion about a particular condition before assessing and viewing the actual condition”. Women seem to be judged by men on presumptions and preconceived ideas. A good example of a prejudicial act is when the majority of people (men and women) still believe that women don’t make good leaders. In reality, this assumption is a myth that can lead to discrimination.

According to Greyvenstein (2000: 32), the concept prejudice may sometimes be caused by stereotypes or generalizations emanating from culture, custom and beliefs. Daft (1991: 437) explains stereotype as being “a widely held generalization about a group that in turn assigns attributes to them solely on the basis of a limited number of categories”.

Sometimes stereotypes are inculcated in infancy and girls and boys are conditioned differently by social and cultural forces. Al-Khalifa (1992: 96) adds that social conditioning is extended to the professions whereby women applying into leadership

posts are scrutinized according to their strengths and posts are stereotypically offered on the basis of feminine or masculine traits.

There is therefore a need to eradicate stereotypes that prevent women from being promoted to leadership posts. Women are generally as competent as men but this state of affairs can only be achieved when society altogether are able to overcome social conditioning, e.g. patriarchy which seems to be so entrenched in our societies.

Stereotypes and prejudices women face are perpetuated and entrenched by the patriarchy in the sector. The problem does not entirely lie in men not wanting women to advance to leadership positions. McCullum (2008: 16) states that societal sex-role stereotyping contributes significantly to the development of the imposter phenomenon. Some women in leadership seem to have internalized societal, sex-role stereotypes that women are not competent and as such they have consistently lower expectations than men in their own ability to perform successfully.

1. 6. CONCLUSION

In its review of relevant literature, this chapter endeavoured to highlight the plight of women both at national and international level. The findings were that women seem to be facing similar forms of discrimination wherever they find themselves to be. They all face discrimination from their male counterparts even though experiences of discrimination differ according to location and cultural norms which they may find themselves in. Reference was made to women in the West that, though they have made significant gains as far as individual rights are concerned, they still face some form of discrimination at other levels in a disguised way. Nationally, it was found that, even though South Africa boasts of being among the top four countries worldwide with a high number of women in positions of political power, it still lags behind in practical terms as discrimination against women seems to be rampant across all sections of society.

The chapter provided a background and motivations for a study on women in management navigating challenges in a disadvantaged context in the Johannesburg North District. It also provided a summary of prior research conducted on key

aspects of the research questions. To this end, the chapter discussed amongst other issues, feminism in its diverse forms, theories on leadership and management styles of women, gender equity in the South African education sector and the challenges they face.

Four strands of feminism were discussed: liberal, radical, Marxist and socialist feminism. These strands of feminism were chosen in this study because they stand out as the main points of reference by all the other types of feminism. In examining the four strands of feminism mentioned above, the study sought to highlight the norms and description of society given and the strategies employed by them to achieve their desired results. It was pointed out that each strand of feminism discussed has its own view with regards to the norms, description of society and strategies used in pursuing its desired end.

Regarding the theories of leadership and management styles of women, the study pointed out that there is not one correct leadership style. However, the question as to whether women lead in a different manner from men, or that men are more effective as leaders, have generated great attention. The chapter highlighted the fact that there are indeed different leadership styles and that in contemporary society women's leadership is more effective.

In seeking to substantiate the above claim, the study examined interpersonal skills of women in leadership, female managers and emotional intelligence in their management styles, women managers' collaboration with stakeholders, women's transformational leadership, women leaders and conflict resolution, gender equity in the education sector in South Africa, challenges faced by females leading disadvantaged schools, disadvantaged communities, and stereotypes and prejudices.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH: A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH OF FEMALE LEADERS

2. 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter elaborates on the research methodology used in exploring the challenges faced and strategies employed by the female leaders of the selected disadvantaged schools located in the Johannesburg North District. The chapter covers the research design, the sampling and selection of research participants, the description of the participants and research sites, the methods used to collect data, data management, coding and categorising, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

2. 2. RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design refers to the “plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer the research question. The design describes the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained. In other words, a research design indicates how the research is set up: what will happen to the subjects and what methods of data collection are used” (White, 2002: 42).

Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 91) describe the research design as the “complete strategy of attack on the central research problem. It provides the overall structure for the procedures that the researcher follows. Simply put, the research design is research planning.” They add that researchers are more efficient and effective when they are able, from the onset, to link their resources, procedures and data to the central goal of solving the research problem. The research design aided me in structuring and planning the investigation to obtain evidence in answering the research problem.

According to Yin (2011:75), “research designs are logical blueprints”. That is, the design informs the research questions, how data is collected, and what strategies

are used to analyse the data. Henning (2004: 20) emphasises the need for the researcher to gather as much data as possible in its natural setting in order to ensure its accurate understanding and interpretation.

Research methodology includes two broad research designs, namely, quantitative and qualitative research methods. A qualitative research design was selected for the purposes of this study.

2. 3. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Silverman (1997:1) emphasises that the research method utilised “should depend on what you are trying to find out”. In this regard, a qualitative research design was selected for this study. This is because I am interested in the views of the participants. The challenges faced and strategies employed by females in school leadership positions were investigated. Put differently, the researcher explores the educational settings managed by these women to establish the impact that the challenges they face have on them and how they have attempted to address these challenges.



Qualitative research was also adopted because it is descriptive in nature. This is in line with Merriam’s (1998: 6) view of qualitative research as “an effort to understand situations in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. It is not necessarily attempting to predict what may happen in the future, but to understand the nature of that setting and what it means for participants to be in that setting. Furthermore, it also looks at what their lives are like, what is going on for them, what their meanings are, what the world looks like in that particular setting and in the analysis, so as to be able to communicate that faithfully to others who are interested in that setting.” In light of this characterisation, a qualitative research method becomes relevant to the purposes of this study because it seeks to understand the meanings that the participants have constructed to make sense of gender inequalities in school leadership, as well as their experiences in their endeavour to overcome the challenges they face.

Furthermore, a qualitative research method regards realities as socially constructed by individuals and society (Smith, 2001: 56). This is in accordance with this study's view of social realities as always in flux. As such, they cannot always be accurately 'measured'. In other words, a qualitative research design was adopted because the researcher is conscious that the aim of a qualitative study is not to be precise, but rather to "be open to whatever emerges without predetermined constraints on outcomes" (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1996: 444). Thus, in qualitative research, the researcher understands that people's perceptions are influenced by what they consider to be real; this, in turn, directs their actions, thoughts, and feelings. These perceptions become absorbed into their social context. In short, the choice of qualitative research is motivated by the fact that it is concerned with understanding how social contexts inform participants' perspectives.

However, Gillham (2000: 10) raises some concerns regarding reliability in qualitative research. These concerns are based on the fact that reliability cannot always be measured with facts and figures and, sometimes, "(reality and the truth) are not always tidy." Nonetheless, it is the view of the researcher that because people's feelings about certain issues are almost always complex, they need to be explored. In the light of the latter point, the perceptions of the participants can only be explored by means of a qualitative study. Put differently, this study relies on the qualitative research method's focus on analysing people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts, and perceptions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006: 315).

Given that the study explores the challenges experienced by female leaders in disadvantaged schools, semi-structured interviews were used to collect data on the thoughts and feelings of the interviewees regarding the challenges they encounter and the strategies that they employ to overcome these barriers in disadvantaged contexts.

2. 4. SAMPLING AND SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Purposive sampling was selected for this research because it allows me as the researcher to pinpoint people or events that are relevant to this research. This is in accordance with Yin's (2011: 88) claim that in purposive sampling, participants are

intentionally chosen because they provide the most relevant and sufficient data on the topic. For this reason, I must be acquainted with some of the participants and their experiences. This enables me to deliberately select those who will contribute meaningful data to the research. The sampling in this study focused on four schools situated in the Johannesburg North District. These schools have been named after flowers to protect their identities. They are Buttercup Primary School, Magnolia Primary School, Easter Lily Primary School, and Petunia Primary School.

A total of four female school leaders were selected for interview purposes, one from each school. These participants are two principals and two deputy principals. Pseudonyms were also used to protect their identities. All these school leaders are between 35 and 60 years of age. They represent four different races: one is black, one is coloured, one is white, and one is Indian. Apart from being females in school leadership positions, these participants had to also have a vast experience in management and leadership. In this regard, the participants, who were identified through personal contacts, were qualified to teach primary schools and had more than three years of experience.

Table 3: Biographical details of the research participants

SCHOOL NAME (Pseudonym)	PARTICIPANT (Pseudonym)	GENDER	AGE	RACE	POST LEVEL
Buttercup Primary	Mrs Peters	Female	60	Coloured	Deputy Principal
Petunia Primary	Mrs John	Female	52	White	Principal
Easter Lily	Mrs Saunders	Female	51	Indian	Deputy Principal
Magnolia Primary	Mrs Martha	Female	57	Black	Principal

The information reflected in Table 3 was collected from the four participants during the interviews which formed part of the data collection process. The aim of these interviews was to establish the challenges experienced by female leaders in disadvantaged schools, learn how these challenges affect them as leaders, and identify the strategies that they employ to overcome these challenges.

2. 5. RESEARCH SITES

The Johannesburg North District (D 10) is the tenth of fifteen districts in the Gauteng Province. According to the Gauteng Department of Education's (GDE) (2011/2012: 48) Annual General Report, women comprise only 33% of the principals in the province. This imbalance raises questions on the reasons for this situation. One may wonder, for instance, if it is because female leaders are discouraged by challenging socio-economic and prejudicial experiences. Hence, this study was commissioned to investigate the challenges faced by female leaders in the selected disadvantaged schools located in the Johannesburg North District.

Petunia Primary School is situated near an informal settlement. Life in this informal settlement is illustrative of a disadvantaged community. The place lacks proper sanitation and electricity. Many of its inhabitants are unemployed. The area boasts a high crime rate, alcohol abuse, and prostitution. As a result of these social stressors, pupils from this area are not performing well in school.

Easter Lily Primary School is located in a previously relatively-advantaged area which was reserved for poor whites and Indians during the Apartheid era. Many of its learners are children of migrants from African countries experiencing conflict or war such as Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Somalia, and Uganda. Other learners originate from India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. The various learners in this school come from different backgrounds, but most of them are from poor social backgrounds. Some of these learners have lost their parents to HIV/AIDS-related illnesses. Simply put, a significant number of these learners come from child-headed families. This poses challenges for the female school leaders.

Similarly, Buttercup Primary School is also located in a previously advantaged area. The majority of its learners come from welfare organisations that care for destitute children afflicted by various social ills. In clearer terms, most of these learners come from broken homes or from homes where parents are deceased. Consequently, the school runs a school nutrition programme to feed these learners. For many of them, the food received at school is the only meal for the day. This school is also populated

by learners from Soweto and Orange Farm which are also disadvantaged communities. These pupils are usually hungry and tired by the time they get to school. This presents a significant challenge for the female school leaders.

In the same vein, Magnolia Primary School is located in a previously advantaged area. However, many of the learners come from disadvantaged areas characterised by dysfunctional families which are emotionally and socially unstable. This school also runs a nutrition programme to cater for many of these learners. The communities from which these learners come do not provide them with enough support to sustain their emotional and physical well-being. One of the distinct characteristics of this school is the large classes. This makes it difficult to provide these learners with a sound education.

2. 6. DATA GATHERING

Data collection refers to a systematic gathering of information through a range of techniques. Data gathering is the basis of any research study. Interviews and observations of participants are field-based activities which function as means of gathering data in qualitative research (Yin, 2011: 129). Interviews were selected as the data collection method in this study.

2. 6. 1. Interviews

Four types of interviews may be used as research tools, namely, structured interviews, semi-structured interviews, non-directive interviews, and focused interviews. This study used semi-structured interviews to gather data from the different female school leaders that constitute the sample of the study. This entailed using a questionnaire to elicit relevant information from the participants.

Regardless of its type, the distinctive characteristic of an interview as a research technique is that it provides information that has direct bearing on the research objectives. As Merriam (1998: 87) observes the value of an interview consists in “providing access to what is inside a person’s head, it makes it possible to measure what a person knows (knowledge or information), what a person likes or dislikes (values or preferences) and what a person thinks (attitudes and beliefs)”. In this light,

interviews can yield a great deal of useful information. Thus, Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 159) emphasise that the researcher can use the interview to ask questions related to facts, people's beliefs, feelings, motives, present and past behaviours, standards for behaviours, and conscious reasons for actions or feelings. As such, if carefully managed, interviews provide a thick description of information, (Babbie & Mouton, 2006: 277).

In this study, the interviews aimed at gaining a deeper insight into issues relating to the research project, while also providing the participants with the opportunity to speak and construct the reality of their experiences. The semi-structured interviews, in particular, were used to create a frank, open, friendly and interactive opportunity which enabled me to extract information from the participants. Simply put, through these semi-structured interviews, the four female leaders of the selected disadvantaged schools were afforded a chance to freely articulate their own concerns. These interviews also gave me the opportunity to enter the life worlds of the participants.

Prior to starting the interview process, I carefully rehearsed the essential techniques to ensure that my vocabulary level was appropriate and that the questions would be meaningful to all the participants. Thomas and Nelson (1996: 328) emphasise the need for the researcher to "know how to establish rapport to let the interviewee feel at ease". Hence, they advise the researcher to be solicitous of the interviewee. In the case of this research, I enquired if the interview could be recorded, refrained from interjecting into the conversation while the participant communicated, did not argue with the participant, did not undermine the participant and did not deviate from the main theme. The objective of this was to give meaning to the participants responses, without judging them. Thomas and Nelson further advise the interviewer to develop good listening and time management skills (1996: 328) and to manage the interview process.

During the interview process, I managed the interview environment by ensuring that the interview was conducted in a private area with minimal noise. I gave the participants sufficient room to respond to the interview questions. These face-to-face interviews were conducted once, at the respective schools. I ensured that the

participants grasped the research topic, the aim of the study, the duration of the interview (approximately 90 minutes), as well as the importance of their participation in and contribution to the study.

The interview questions related to females in school leadership positions, gender-equity, leadership challenges and the leadership strategies used in the selected disadvantaged schools. A total of 31 questions were derived from the conceptual framework of the study. I asked the specific questions that constituted the questionnaire. At the request of some of the participants, some of these questions were repeated. Probing questions were asked to enable the participants to clarify their responses. This is in line with Grey's (2009: 373) observation that semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to probe more details, if the responses are unclear. The participants were also allowed to ask for clarification during the interview process. This enabled them to understand the questions in order to provide relevant and valuable data.

2. 7. DATA MANAGEMENT

The management of data is a sensitive aspect of research. It is grounded on the principle of the confidentiality of the information obtained from the research participants, especially in the case of qualitative research. This is applicable to this research report whose aim was to gather information pertaining to the experiences of the principals and deputy principals of the selected disadvantaged schools. Given that the information obtained through the interviews comprised the personal views or perspectives of the research participants, strict measures had to be taken so as to manage the data in a manner that guaranteed its confidentiality. Thus, after the participants had given their consent, the interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The relevant transcripts were then sent to the participants for verification of accuracy. Thereafter information was thematically coded and stored in a safe place on the researcher's computer. Hardcopies of the interview transcripts and thematically-coded data, as well as the recordings have also been locked in a safe place to which only I as the researcher have access.

2. 8. DATA CODING AND CATEGORISING

As indicated in the preceding section, the recorded data was transcribed and forwarded to the participants for verification. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used to analyse the data which studies “the way social power, abuse, dominance are enacted, resisted by text and talk in the social political context” (Van Dijk, 2007: 353). CDA is discussed in detail in the next subsection. The data was subsequently used for coding purposes. Coding refers to the organisation of data according to specific criteria. Axial coding was used in this research. In this regard, Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 160) note that in a qualitative study, the researcher begins with a large body of information and must, through inductive reasoning, sort and categorise it to produce a set of abstract, underlying themes. Davies (2007: 191-193) stresses that the coding of data after transcription is the most fundamental and most difficult stage of qualitative research.

2. 8. 1. Axial coding

Axial coding consisted of drawing columns that clearly indicated the major topics, the unique topics, and the general topics. This was followed by a careful re-reading of the data in order to group similar ideas. Once the similarities and differences between the variables were established, the focus was turned to identifying the peculiarities in the statements made by the participants. Consequently, the emerging descriptive themes were categorised. In other words, information was systematically organized into different themes to be analysed.

The data obtained were analysed according to the eight steps suggested by Creswell (1994: 155):

- I read through every transcript carefully before jotting down all the important ideas which came to mind.
- All the important ideas were then written down in the margins.
- After the completion of the above exercise, another list consisting of all the important ideas was compiled and similar topics were put together and later arranged into major topics.

- Thereafter, the most descriptive wording for the topics was turned into categories while related topics were grouped to reduce the total list of categories. Then, lines were drawn between categories to show relationships.
- I then ensured that the data belonging to each category were assembled and put in one place for analysis.

The above steps clearly outline the stages of the process of the preparation of information for analysis.

2. 9. DATA ANALYSIS

In keeping with the feminist perspective of this study, the data analysis was underpinned by the principle of CDA. CDA is defined as “ a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social political context” (Van Dijk 2007: 353). This definition highlights the compatibility of CDA with the aims of this research which are to describe the challenges facing women in leadership positions in the selected disadvantaged schools, to explore how these challenges affect these female leaders, and to establish the strategies that they use to overcome these challenges.

In relation to the focus of CDA, Fairclough and Wodak (1997: 271-80) note that it addresses social problems which may be prevalent in society at large. These social issues include power relations and discourse. Indeed, discourse is, by nature, ideological. This is very significant in that the link between text and society is mediated through discourse. They further emphasise that discourse analysis, which is interpretative and explanatory in essence, is also a form of social action. In this light, discourse analysis is relevant to the feminist perspective adopted by this study vis-à-vis the challenges faced by the selected female school leaders. Lazar (2007:145) sees the interconnection between feminism and critical discourse in that both aim to advance a rich analysis of the complex discourse which sustains hierarchically-gendered social orders. Thus, CDA interrogates the ways in which language is used to sustain social order.

Fairclough (1989: 79) considers CDA as “the study of a text which conceptualises language as a form of social practice, and attempts to make human beings aware of the reciprocal influences of language and social structure of which they are normally unaware”. In this light, CDA is concerned with the investigation of the tension between the two assumptions about language. The first assumption, which relates to language use, is the view of language as “socially determined” (Titscher, 2000: 148). The second assumption refers to Fairclough’s (1989) view of “language as practice of power”. In order to see how the language user brings forth certain ideologies, a holistic analysis is needed. Viewing language from such a perspective has enormous implications. Firstly, discourse is a form of action in that one uses language as means of acting on the world and as a means of representing the world or reality. Secondly, language implies a mutual relationship between discourse and social practice. Here, discourse is divided in terms of social structure and social class which are institutionalized, as is the case in the study of law or education. Thus, CDA is used to explain how gender differences are widened, supported, and refuted through social structures. Put differently, CDA affords me as the researcher and the participants the opportunity to critique society and culture. In education, researchers and developers can use this approach to understand the needs of teachers and learners. In relation to the last point above, this study used CDA to assist in learning about the challenges experienced by the female school principals and deputy principals interviewed. This was possible through listening to how they articulated their experiences, paying attention to the concepts they used to describe their experiences, and reflecting on the meanings assigned to those concepts as well as the ways in which they were interpreted by me as the researcher.

The analysis of the data in this study was also grounded on White’s (2002: 82) view of qualitative data analysis as an inductive process which requires that the information be organized into categories. This is so that the analysis can focus on patterns and relationships between the identified categories. In other words, qualitative analysis is a systematic process of selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising, and interpreting data to explain the phenomenon of interest to the researcher. The analysis of the data focused on the main themes and categories (Krefting, 1991: 216-217). This is in accordance with Mouton’s (2002: 111) view of

data analysis as the process of examining the identified patterns and themes in order to draw conclusions.



Table 4: Excerpt of analysis of data

ENTITY	QUESTION	CODE	THEME	ANALYSIS
RESEARCHER	What would you consider the main challenge of working in a disadvantaged community?			
INTERVIEWEE	It's all about working together as a team within the school, understanding between each other .	Stakeholder Participation Collaboration	Collaboration of stakeholders	CDA
INTERVIEWEE	I specifically want us to embark on programmes where we can engage with community leaders . We need to stretch out to the Garden City, companies and universities	Networking Community participation Collaboration	Collaboration of Stakeholders	CDA

Table 4 illustrates how the data was analysed. This sample leads to the discussion of the trustworthiness of the findings or conclusions of this research.

2. 10. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness refers to the dependability of research findings. It is strongly linked to the reliability and validity of the data collected. In the context of this study, trustworthiness was achieved by ensuring that there was transparency and consultation at all stages of data processing. In this regard, participants were afforded the opportunity to verify the data during the decoding and encoding stages.

2. 10. 1. Reliability

Reliability refers to the integrity of the sources and methods of data processing. It entails that the same results can be reached again if the same issue or phenomenon is explored by another researcher in similar contexts. However, room is allowed for some variance in the replication (Bennett, Glatter & Levocie, 1994: 218). This is because, in social discipline, meaning is constructed by those who are involved in particular endeavours (Wolcott, 1995: 167). In this study, reliability was achieved through a careful selection of female leaders in disadvantaged schools, as well as by ensuring that the targeted schools fit into the category of “disadvantaged schools”. It is important to note that qualitative research often foregrounds ‘authenticity’ rather

than reliability. This is because social reality can change. Thus, the aim of this study was to document the authentic experiences of the selected female school leaders in order to get authentic information which was carefully analysed to ensure its validity.

2. 10. 2. Validity

Validity refers to the fact of checking the quality of research results (Creswell & Clarke, 2007: 13). Fick (1998: 49), for instance, explains validity as “the degree to which a survey instrument assesses what its purpose to measure is like”. In light of this explanation, validity relates to the appropriateness and effectiveness of research instruments and procedures. This ensures that the outcomes are credible and able to withstand scientific scrutiny.

In order to achieve validity, this study used appropriate data collection and analysis techniques and followed the relevant procedures. For instance, the same sets of questions were posed to all participants; the same standard of questioning was maintained throughout; and the accuracy of the recorded information was ensured by allowing the participants to read the preliminary reports before drawing a final report. In short, this research was subjected to examination using both internal and external validity.

2. 10. 3. Internal validity

Internal validity involves ascertaining whether the findings in a research reflect reality. In this context, reality refers to the proceedings from the interviews. These enable the researcher to identify points of convergence between the different sources of information. This convergence allows the researcher to deduce the reality of his/her research context. The similarities in the participants' views and interpretations of their experiences within their particular contexts (Merriam, 1998: 203) served to establish the internal validity of this study. This paved the way for external validity.

2. 10. 4. External validity

External validity refers to the extent to which a study can be applied to similar populations. The participants in this study reflect, to a fair degree, the socio-economic circumstances of disadvantaged schools in post-Apartheid South Africa; this does not detract from the uniqueness of individual experiences. Thus, the study relied on how the participants related their experiences in their respective positions as principals and deputy principals. To ensure the genuineness of the results, the interviews were conducted in a manner that would make it possible to arrive at similar or desired interpretations in different contexts (Creswell, 1994: 158).

Nevertheless, conscious of its qualitative nature, the study refrained from making any generalisations. It stuck to its core undertaking of understanding how the participants related their experiences as leaders of the chosen disadvantaged institutions of learning.

2. 11. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Generally, ethics refers to values and moral standards, that is, it focuses on what is right and what is wrong (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995: 46). Thus, upon embarking on qualitative research, it is imperative to maintain certain ethical standards relating to the participants' rights, confidentiality, mutual respect, and anonymity. In other words, the researcher needs to know that during the process of collecting and analysing the data as well as when publishing the findings, he/she needs to respect the rights, dignity and privacy of the participants in the research project (Grey, 2009: 192).

In the case of this research, an agreement which reflects sound ethical practice was reached between me and all the female leaders of the selected primary schools. The aim of this agreement was to create a safe and confidential atmosphere that encouraged these female school leaders to answer my questions and comment freely and easily. In order to ensure that there was trust and rapport between the two parties, I sought consent from the following offices: the Department of Education, Gauteng Head Office (refer to appendix A), and the manager responsible for the Johannesburg North District. Thereafter, a letter requesting permission to conduct

research was forwarded to the Department of Education's head office under the SANPAD focus area of 'women leading in disadvantaged context project'. This request was endorsed by the Education Faculty at the University of Johannesburg. An overall ethics clearance was issued (refer to appendix D). Subsequently, a clearance letter granting access to the chosen research sites was issued.

Later, appointments with the selected female school leaders were made and confirmed over the telephone. It would be appropriate at this point to state that all the information gathered in the research was used for educational purposes only. All participants were informed in advance of the questions that were to be asked during the actual interviews. Furthermore, they were given the assurance that all the information that they would provide would be treated as confidential and that their responses would remain anonymous in the research report. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw at any stage of the research and that upon completion of the research, they were promised a full feedback on the research.

In a nutshell, consent forms were given to the participants (refer to appendix B) to secure their voluntary participation in the study, after they were assured of their anonymity and the confidentiality of the information they provide. In addition, the participants were guaranteed that they would not be harmed in any way.

2. 12. CONCLUSION

Chapter two identified and justified the methodology used in this study in order to achieve its objectives. In other words, the chapter expanded on the research design, sampling and the sample size, the methods of data collection and analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

The following chapter analyses and discusses the findings of this research.

CHAPTER THREE

THE VOICES OF FEMALE SCHOOL LEADERS: PERSPECTIVES, OBSTACLES AND STRATEGIES

3. 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyses data that was gathered during the interviews with the four female school heads. The focus of the analysis is to ascertain their experiences as leaders of primary schools in disadvantaged communities in the Johannesburg North District. In so doing, the study aims at giving meaning to the data gathered by aligning the findings with other similar research before drawing conclusions. It also links data gathered during the interviews with available literature on the topic.

The research attempted to answer the critical questions outlined in the aims of the research:

- To describe the challenges facing females in leadership positions
- To explore how these challenges affect females in leadership positions
- To investigate how they think these challenges can be overcome

The aim of this chapter is to outline the many experiences of females in leadership within disadvantaged schools. After the interviews, the following themes and sub-themes emerged from participant responses to how these four school leaders navigate the challenges they encounter in disadvantaged school communities.

3. 2. THEMES ELICITED FROM DATA ANALYSIS

Having analysed the data collected during the interviews, the following themes were identified through data analysis:

- Stereotyping of women leaders
- Collaboration
- Liaison with stakeholders
- Leadership style
- The social stigma associated with schools in disadvantaged communities
- Cultural beliefs of women

- Women leaders and emotional intelligence
- Women leaders and conflict resolution

Strategies for females navigating challenges through barriers

- Balancing between family and school
- Opposing gender discrimination
- Networking
- Overcoming Stereotypes

Each theme is discussed with examples from the interviews. In order to maintain transparency and justice to the participants, their quotations are provided verbatim. Where necessary, clarification of the concepts derived from this analysis is given in brackets. The way forward will be to link each theme to the literature reviewed with a view to explaining, supporting and extending the theories that would have been generated in this research. This provides this researcher with a basic understanding of the research problem and the evidence that the study conducted was appropriately based on the current knowledge of the problem (Burns & Grove, 1995: 108).

3. 2. 1. Stereotyping of women leaders

According to McCullum (2008: 16) societal sex-role stereotyping contributes significantly to the development of the imposter phenomenon, whereby some women in leadership seem to have internalized female sex-role stereotypes that women are not competent enough. As such they project consistently lower expectations than men in their ability to perform successfully.

In many patriarchal societies the world over, there is a perception that females in leadership are weak, submissive, emotional and unfit managers. However one of the participants in this research, Mrs Martha repudiates these stereotypes. She argues that:

The male principal before me knew nothing. Females in leadership are very efficient. They run good schools and have good computer skills. Females are level headed and efficient.

Mrs Peters another participant added that stereotyping in the workplace is alive and especially practised by males in management. She explained:

Women in leadership I engaged with unfortunately admitted to their shortcomings and were not strong enough. They were overwhelmed by the patriarchy of the school. Females rather give in too easily; my seniors before I came in had that outlook on leadership roles and bowed out before they should have.

This perception is further strengthened by Greyvenstein (2000: 32) who states that stereotypes based on gender have historically placed women in a nurturing, submissive role while men are seen as the dominant, more aggressive gender.

Mrs Martha emphasized that women were placed into a particular compartment. She explained that:

Historically in certain communities women were viewed as being subservient. Things are changing but there is still an imbalance. Perceptions of society have not changed. SGBs prefer males because they believe males will run schools better instead of basing it on merit. That prejudice does exist to favour males.

Mrs John related an experience that supports Mrs Martha assessment of historical male prejudice against female leaders:

I was HOD for 2 years when the principal advertised the DP post but he wanted a man for that post. I asked why? He said women are not supposed to be promoted to those levels. In those days the male principals actually protected their friends and pushed them into top senior posts. The level of HOD was the highest level females could achieve.

Despite the gains in gender equity since the democratic dispensation, men have not made significant changes in their perceptions of stereotypical role play as reflected by Mrs Saunders:

Men still have the idea women should be in the kitchen. I am having a function at school, they would assume it's the women's role to get up and put glasses on the table, to set out the food, get up and clear after as well.

Historically, stereotyping of women in the workplace was an accepted norm, as perceived and experienced by these perspectives from the female leaders. The

perceptions of society towards women in leadership are changing; however, women have to fight for their right to leadership positions as expressed by Mrs John:

If a male parent walks in here and he is angry about something he would immediately have a different attitude to a woman. I have had to tell them many times where to get off. You need to fight for yourself.

Likewise, Mrs Peters asserts that it is incumbent upon women to succeed despite the obstacles facing them:

Women still have to fight their way. The weighting would lie on women not failing to be empowered, self-assured in the leadership position she holds.

The participants also lament the fact that most women have internalized or accepted patriarchal systems in education as expressed by Mrs Peters:

Females rather give in too easily due to not being able to meet up with the challenges of a school; being too overwhelmed by the patriarchy of the school and not wanting to stick their neck out a little to make changes.

However, the female leaders agreed that assertive behaviour is considered more valuable because of its characteristics of objectivity, impartiality and orientation toward problem solving. Stereotypes are often inaccurate and the stigma will negatively influence communication in the workplace if not dealt with decisively.

Mrs John:

I had a male teacher who I appointed who was an extreme threat. He felt I was a female principal and he would be able to walk over me. He was finally dismissed.

Mrs Martha relates her experience in a school dominated by patriarchal systems:

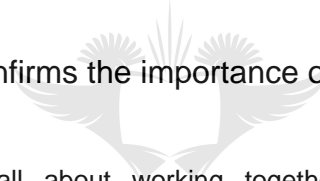
I had a hard time where I came from. Not only were they prejudiced of females and religion. They were openly doing this. I was a victim and I challenged them. I eventually became HOD.

From the responses of the interviewees it is evident that change is necessary and people have to adapt to it. This is echoed by Erasmus (1998: 45) who says women can also and should be part of school management. They have come a long way and contributed immensely in the educational arena.

3. 2. 2. Collaboration with stakeholders

Women leaders in disadvantaged schools seem to have embraced the concept of collaboration, particularly with stakeholders in their communities. They have co-opted stakeholder collaboration into their management styles as a tool for success. This concept provides them with an opportunity to involve parents and teachers, or others with interest in the management of the school, to work together. Collaboration places everyone on an equal footing and enhances effective communication which in turn promotes mutual understanding and language out of which a common culture can then emerge between the stakeholders. Collaboration stimulates discussion, dialogue and the sharing of knowledge, expertise, thoughts, aspirations, visions and difficulties in a supportive and positive environment thus building trust between stakeholders. In order for people to work together, there is need for them to get to know one another which may include knowing their values, how they think and why they think in that way. This creates understanding and respect for each other and builds commitment to the common purpose.

Mrs Saunders confirms the importance of a collaborative approach in the following:



It's all about working together as a team within the school, understanding between each other, if there are no interpersonal skills then that too (relationship with stakeholders) falls apart.

Mrs Peters displays the challenge and value of collaboration:

You have to reach out over and above your expertise; you are challenged in a bigger way to extend your boundaries. Get help from neighbouring people in a similar situation to compare notes and find that which works and why does it work better.

Echoing Mrs Peters' sentiment, Mrs Saunders displays a strong desire for stakeholder involvement in assisting her school with the challenge presented by the HIV/AIDS pandemic which has ravaged many families in the area:

I specifically want us to embark on programmes where we can engage with community leaders. We need to stretch out to the Garden City (hospital in the area) and companies, universities.

These female school leaders endorse the importance of a collaborative approach in the management of schools. The need for teamwork and networking is highlighted

and highly recommended. The theme of collaboration with stakeholders has also been echoed by Van Deventer and Kruger (2003: 26) who assert that community involvement in schools has become a catch phrase in our time. It is essential that the community should become involved in the activities of the school.

If education is to succeed, all role players need to accept their responsibilities. The present South African government seems to recognize this as well. It is important to note that parents, members of the local community, and school authorities in these disadvantaged communities enter into a strategic partnership in order to ascertain the needs of their schools as well as identify and solve problems together. This notion is shown by Mrs John and Mrs Martha:

Mrs John:

I made arrangements with sponsors for them (impoverished families) to get hampers. Poverty is a challenge and I have taken it head on, interacted with social services. In the school there are psychologists in partnership with the University of Johannesburg. From next year I have 6 speech therapists twice a week.

Mrs Martha:

I have had to look for support from the universities. We have the social worker, optometrist, speech therapists working with us.

In this regard, the importance of SGBs which represent educators, parents, and learners should very much be emphasized. They are expected to make decisions that are of benefit to the schools besides ensuring that the school is properly administered. This can only be achieved if there is collaboration between all stakeholders (Prinsloo in Van Deventer & Kruger, 2003: 203).

In a show of support to these concepts, the South African government passed the South African schools Act, (SASSA of 1996), which regulates the establishment of SGBs because stakeholder participation and involvement is crucial in addressing the needs of the school (MGSLG, 2010: 6 & 11).

3. 2. 3. Liaison with stakeholders

A crucial aspect of collaboration is stakeholder liaison. Stakeholder liaison is about effective communication. All the participants who took part in this research emphasized the need for effective communication as an integral part for the success of any organization. Byars and Rue (1994: 15) have defined communication as a process by which meanings are exchanged between people through a common system of symbols. However, they also stipulate that no one style of communication is appropriate in all situations (Byars & Rue, 1994: 15). The situation often defines the appropriate way to communicate. School meetings are designed to facilitate communication between stakeholders as stated by Mrs Martha:

Meetings are a time to share information and views.

There are various ways to communicate effectively and successfully. Therefore, a competent communicator should try to be sensitive to the situation they find themselves in by determining the appropriate communication strategy. The communication strategy used is what will determine and ensure the extent of participation by the receiver. Purkey and Schmidt (1996: 10) state that if the strategy is of an inviting nature that recognizes the person's worth and is not intended to demean, degrade, dissuade or humiliate, the receiver will probably feel encouraged to participate. The school leader must evaluate the situation and determine the appropriate strategy to ensure the full participation of the receiver. Often, consultation is a communication strategy that is effective as explained by Mrs Saunders:

Communication is important and with leadership you cannot take out the need to consult. If you don't consult things are going to fall apart, so communicate effectively.

In the above excerpts, both Mrs Martha and Mrs Saunders stress the value of communication in leadership. Mrs Martha emphasizes that it is through the holding of meetings that female school managers can communicate with their subordinates effectively. Mrs Saunders warns that if there is no consultation things could fall apart and therefore have a negative bearing on the leadership.

Van der Westhuizen (1997: 214) supports the above assertion when he says: “the ultimate aim of communication is to extract a certain behavioural response from the recipient”. This response leads to task delivery which is crucial for the communication process. One can add here that effective communication is a prerequisite for management functions of the school. However, there are other characteristics associated with effective management such as leadership competence, uniqueness and openness in communication. In this regard, it calls for the school leader to be transparent, positive, sincere, supportive and ready to plan and take the lead on various professional suggestions that come from staff members during meetings. Besides being free to voice their feelings and perceptions, the educator should also be able to offer constructive criticism if need be.

3. 2. 4. Leadership style

The female leaders in disadvantaged schools who were interviewed stated that they have employed many leadership styles. However, it is the situation that they found themselves in which dictated the leadership style that was used. Van Deventer and Kruger (2003: 145) also state that there is no one particular correct leadership style. In this regard if a school leader decided on a specific leadership style to use, she would then have to take into consideration the people and the circumstances they find themselves in at a given time. Shakeshaft (1989: 166) contends that there is either a subtle or an obvious leadership style that women may employ in their routine, which may be different to that of men. Mrs Peters concurs with this sentiment:

There's various leadership styles used but in order for me to complete an important task I needed to exert a type of style so that educators will complete tasks and submit according to deadlines. At some stage one has to say things without negotiating and communication. That's where autocratic leadership style comes in, you know strengths of people and you insist that person can achieve and overcome weakness.

Mrs Saunders also reflected that leadership style has to be adjusted to the circumstances:

Consultation is very important for me and I think the leadership of consulting, communicating and reaching a consensus works best for me but at times you have to be assertive and make critical decisions.

The females in school leadership acknowledge and accept the establishment of school management teams (SMTs) and SGBs thus representing a significant change in decision making styles.

All of the participants that took part in this research agreed to adopt a shared kind of leadership style.

Mrs Saunders avers:

If we're not going to work together as a team and understanding between each other, if there are no interpersonal skills then that too falls apart.

However, Mrs John is of the opinion that democracy is the way to go.

It's getting cooperation through consensus and discussion with staff.

Mrs Saunders and Mrs John both emphasize the importance of consultation, team work, and communication in their leadership styles, but differ with Mrs Peters who seems to agitate for an autocratic type of leadership in order to get things done when necessary. It has been stated that influencing the behaviour of people is vital in leadership. A leader's style of leading will dictate whether the followers will function happily and are willing to co-operate in attaining the objectives set. In this regard, participants displayed a remarkable understanding of the importance of dynamic communication between all stakeholders. They acknowledge that there was need to possess excellent communication skills, which allows them to give clear guidance and to be decisive when necessary (Bennett, et al, 1994, Riches & Morgan, 1994).

3. 2. 5. The social stigma associated with schools in disadvantaged communities

Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (2000: 21) state that people see themselves as disadvantaged when they are refused access to autonomy, incentive, responsibility, health, community support, education, employment and information. Because they have been denied access to resources, disadvantaged communities are stigmatized by society as problem communities which in turn are manifested in their schools. To find out about this phenomenon, the following question was posed to the participants: What is the socio-economic and political context of the school?

In response, Mrs John said that:

The poorest of the poor kids attend the school. It's known for social ills, child abuse, drug abuse, unemployment and poverty. This presents challenges in terms of language and also financial resources. They don't pay school fees and it does present challenges.

Mrs Saunders confided:

We get pupils coming from poor social backgrounds and lots of learners whose parents have died of HIV/AIDS. A lot of them attending are parented by young siblings. That poses problems at schools.

Christie (2008: 101) contends that disadvantaged schools are least supported because poverty is rife and in turn poor people are rendered powerless to voice their opinions because they do not have the resources to situate them in positions of strength. The reality on the ground in schools located in disadvantaged communities is that they have to contend with issues relating to a challenging external environment. Some of the challenges experienced at these schools were unemployment, child abuse, child headed families, unemployment, drug abuse, and poverty.



One of the characteristics of a disadvantaged community is that the children suffer from poor nutrition which affects their performance in school which in turn affects their self-concept. Bottery (2004: 12) asserts that there is need for balance between the school, home and broader society in order to encourage the moral growth of a child. The school must commit to a higher purpose in addition to promoting academic grades. In disadvantaged areas, nutrition is often a luxury and in South Africa, a school nutrition programme has been introduced by the government to counter the high levels of impoverishment facing many disadvantaged learners.

All the school leaders interviewed in these disadvantaged communities agreed that the school nutrition programme was generally a very good programme. Brown, Irby and Jackson (2012: 7) state that women are more compassionate towards the less fortunate and are attentive to moral problems. This argument was affirmed by the women interviewed who said that that they tried to liaise with stakeholders and professionals to ensure that the learners received food daily, even during school holidays.

This is conveyed by Mrs John:

I involve stakeholders when it comes to poverty. It's a big problem in the community. I clothe and feed learners and their families on a day-to-day basis. There's a soup kitchen in Vrededorp and Soweto which also ensures kids are fed over the holidays.

Thus, the female leaders of disadvantaged schools have successfully liaised with stakeholders in their area to navigate the challenge of nutrition among their learners.

3. 2. 6. Cultural beliefs of women

Cultural beliefs and practices play a major role in the acceptance of females in school leadership. Hess, Markson and Stein (1990) suggest that culture is defined as the blueprint for living in a group whose members share a given territory and language, feel responsible for one another and call themselves by the same name. Cultural beliefs and practices play a major role in the acceptance of females in school leadership and pose huge challenges as well.

Mrs John reflects:

I have found out that based on culture, it does not matter if you're white, black, coloured or Indian, and males are the dominant species. I had been to a funeral where a child had passed on. As a principal I was given the chance to speak at the funeral. It was black culture and only males speak at funerals so it is predominantly male. I found it strange in South Africa today that this discrimination is still happening. And you experience it at school e.g. when I say it's the principal speaking, I get the response "it's a female". The perceptions have not changed.

Similarly, Mrs Martha concurs:

In traditional homes, like the black culture, men are not going to recognize females as equals. In the African culture women take on matriarchal roles because they are forced to be caregivers who shape the way we think, that's because of lack of commitment coming from male members in society. Women are taking on matriarchal roles.

Regarding gender-based conflict among educators, Mrs Saunders expressed that:

There was a male appointed from a different cultural background, with him there was a problem where he did not want to hand in his work on time and did not want to listen to a female.

All of the above participating school heads seem to point out the role culture plays in the shaping of community perspectives. Mrs Martha for example, laments the fact

that in most traditional homes, men do not recognize women as equals, which has in turn impacted on women who are tasked with bringing up children in such surroundings. Both Mrs John and Mrs Saunders showed how cultural views of gender can be a source of conflict in the school environment as women's leadership is contested.

3. 2. 7. Women and emotional intelligence

Winstanley and Woodal (2000: 144) describe emotional intelligence as "the intelligent use of emotions in different situations". People display emotional intelligence when they make their emotions work for them in different situations. Thus, emotional intelligence can also be used as a tool to manipulate and compel others into conformity.

Female school leaders, working in a diverse environment, are under great pressure to deliver. Weare (2000: 83) expresses that leaders in schools need the ability to relate sensitively to people whose assumptions are different to theirs. The evidence emanating from the interviews of females in school leadership discloses that they do the best they can to accommodate diversity and sensitivity towards situational factors. This is what the participants had to say:

Mrs John:

You've got to be in touch with the person. This is where I differ from a male principal who might want to overpower a person. I would want to understand the person.

Mrs Saunders shares that:

In dealing with domestic violence I have become more sensitive towards women's needs and I have a need now to empower women more in leadership.

Mrs Martha philosophises:

We must always introspect if something fails and critically analyse it. All the while we're building character in ourselves. As a principal it becomes your own character building.

From the above assertions, all the participants seem to echo the same sentiments that women are more compassionate and able to listen to the views of others.

3. 2. 8. Women and conflict resolution

A principal's ability to manage conflict in schools is one of the key aspects in measuring his/her success in managing a school. Conflict arises when there are differences within an individual or between two or more individuals which often leads to opposition. According to Goleman (1998: 178) people who are skilled in conflict management competence have the ability to handle people and tense situations with tact and diplomacy as expressed by participants in this research:

Mrs Martha explains:

Conflict can be quite confrontational and one needs to use a systems approach. I apply the policy. I think chatting and motivating each other is the way forward.

Above all though, leaders must not shy away from dealing with conflict decisively as

Mrs John indicated:

I am unafraid of conflict. I will call people in for example if I hear teacher's fight amongst each other then I have an open discussion.

Perhaps equally important to taking decisive action is diplomacy as both Mrs Saunders and Mrs Peter's state:

I feel discussion needs to take place. We need to listen to them and find out why there is conflict taking place and then from their act as an arbitrator to ensure both parties speak out. Communication is important.

Mrs Peters indicated:

One has to be totally neutral and not take sides between the parties facing conflict. Tact and diplomacy must be used when dealing with people. There should be a platform and equal forum to explain the conflict and negotiating.

All these participants emphasized the importance of communication in resolving conflict. The fact that school leaders find themselves in positions of trust with respect to their colleagues, communication with the conflicting parties needs to be carefully negotiated. Special interpersonal skills, the inspiring of confidence, listening skills, problem solving and knowledge of staff are required from a school leader. From the analysis, it appears that females in leadership in primary schools do not hesitate to confront conflict head on. Communication thus plays a very important role in solving their problems with staff. They also seem to make good use of different strategies to combat challenging situations.

3. 3. STRATEGIES FOR FEMALE LEADERS NAVIGATING BARRIERS

3. 3. 1. Balancing between family and school

A challenge that many female leaders face is that of balancing work and family commitments. Mrs John pointed out that:

Family wise it's difficult. Already it was a challenge in the time I spend at school. My husband spends more time with the kids. I felt jealous because of him spending more time with them. I always try to finish my work at school and at home give them the attention. I work around that.

This affirms the statement made by Sullivan and Glanz (2006: 103) that attaining a balance between family lives and leadership roles becomes controversial when women ascend to higher positions. In some instances though, the support of family members strengthens women in leadership positions as expressed by Mrs Peters:

My family is a support mechanism. Serving is what you find yourself in making the world a better place. Extend yourself and your family understands it. Then half the battle is won then you can share and maybe go and cry on their shoulder. They give you the kind of support and recognition you deserve.

Mrs Martha enjoys a similar relationship:

My family supports me. My husband gives advice because he is in corporate leadership so we share ideas and things.

Despite the huge challenges facing these females in leadership in disadvantaged schools they were able to maintain a strong internal motivation that was bolstered by their family relationships. They also believed that they have what it takes to make good leaders:

Mrs Martha:

I have been invited to run workshops of other principals of underperforming schools and I ran one workshop it was so successful. It was on school governance and leadership. They were impressed they met someone with practical experience. Leadership is about inspiring people and not instructing them.

Mrs John:

I have had teachers who talk in Afrikaans and have to teach in English. I have had to restore confidence in them so I had to build and empower them. If you come into the staffroom and see how many teachers interact, the love and care that they have then I certainly must have done something right. Act; don't be afraid to take

risks. You can only learn from your mistakes. I have taken a lot of risks and most have ended positive.

Sullivan and Glanz (2006: 24) support this assertion when they state: “that an understanding of one’s inner strength and weaknesses enables one to overcome and address one’s limitations and instils self-belief.”

3. 3. 2. Opposing gender discrimination

According to the Gender Equity Task Team (GETT), a body established by the government of South Africa, there is a need to completely eradicate gender discrimination in all sectors of society in the country (1997: 40). This can be done by ensuring that equal opportunities for both men and women are promoted and that their needs are achieved without being discriminated against.

True transformation can only exist when there is proportional representation of gender in management positions in schools. Greyvenstein (2000: 30) is of the idea that linking gender equity to management involves amongst other things, fairness towards women in the management hierarchies of education. Female leaders should develop strategies that will enable them to overcome gender discrimination.

Mrs Peters states that:

Few countries can speak of gender equality. I believe you start small but it’s going to have impact very heavily with persons. Society has to evolve and grow. Empower the person, also showing your trust; believe in the person who is able to execute tasks.

Mrs Saunders expressed the following:

I think for us a lot of training, teambuilding, empowerment and understanding the policies and the constitution with regards to Gender equity. Acknowledge females and trust is important and believe in them.

Both females in leadership quoted here agree with each other that empowerment of females in leadership plays a crucial role in overcoming gender discrimination. They also agree that women are discriminated against by their male counterparts.

3. 3. 3. Networking

Females in school leadership expressed that they have an understanding that they needed a coalition with the relevant stakeholder in order to make a success of the management processes of the institution. They stressed the importance of networking and effective communication between and with all parties. Networking stimulates discussion, dialogue and the sharing of knowledge, expertise, thoughts, aspirations, visions and difficulties. The participants emphasized networking with stakeholders:

Mrs Saunders remarked:

I think networking helps a lot, working with institutions like the universities helps. I think seeking legal representation and advice from the Gauteng Department of Education. I think to overcome for example the HIV/AIDS programme, I specifically want us to embark on programmes where we can engage with community leaders and we can speak about these things openly.

Mrs Peters indicated that when:

Networking comes in, you are challenged in a bigger way to extend your boundaries and reach out and your challenges are far greater; get help from neighbouring people in a similar situation to compare notes. Its social, welfare and health that have to interrelate with one another and able to start and improve living conditions and lifestyles for the majority left.

Mrs John conveys that:

I involve all stakeholders when it comes to poverty; it's a big problem in the community. I have several sponsors. School kids are clothed and fed. There has to be ongoing support.

Networking and the involvement of all stakeholders in the management of schools is here listed by all the above participants as a very important component in their leadership styles. There seem to be no differences in all their assertions which concur with the findings of Witten (2009: 18) who states that there has to be a connection between the school and its community and other stakeholders in order to improve teaching and learning.

3. 3. 4. Overcoming stereotypes

According to Mathipa and Tsoka (2000), attitudes towards women are based on stereotypical views about women, and may include the following: poor self-image of women, lack of assertiveness, lack of self-confidence and dependence, less career

orientation as a sign of less interest in women as leaders. Changing stereotypical attitudes towards women has to be a task of society as a whole. As Mrs Saunders declares:

Society has to change. We need parental education workshops, making our parents, change our attitude because it does impact on education. Once negative dynamics are happening in families, education is affected and the performance of the learner is also affected.

Mrs Peters indicated:

It's a worldwide phenomenon. For me the little girl child that left grade seven and comes back as a girl child says I am in the first year of my studies and I aim to be a self-sufficient woman is a way forward. Society has to grow and evolve and this is through empowerment of females.

In seeking to overcome stereotypes, Mrs Martha echoes the need for empowerment of females for society to grow and evolve. There are views among some men that women are not good leaders (Hendricks, 2003: 18). Research indicates that women are capable as men in managing and leading schools (Al-Khalifa in Bennet, Crawford & Riches, 1992: 99). Tsoka (1999: 23) contends that the absences of women in power positions are being measured against ideals that have historically served men best. Society has to change if we are to move forward but it's going to be a long journey.

3. 4. Conclusion

This chapter dealt with the data analysis and the interpretation of the individual interviews undertaken with female school leaders. The aim was to explore and describe their challenges as female managers leading in disadvantaged schools and the strategies that they utilize to navigate these challenges. Although a lot has been done from 1994 by the government of South Africa as evidenced by the passing of laws which are gender friendly, the fact is that many barriers which hinder women in the teaching profession from achieving true parity in relation to them leading in a disadvantaged community still remain in place. For the future to be bright, women will have to chisel a pathway and navigate these barriers.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEADING TRANSFORMATION THROUGH THE VOICES OF THESE FEMALE LEADERS

4. 1. FINDINGS

The findings of this study were that female school leaders in disadvantaged communities face similar challenges. These female school leaders in disadvantaged communities seemed to be reliant on certain values in the dispensing of their leadership. The study also revealed how important stakeholder participation was at all levels in ensuring the success of an organization. However, this did not manifest itself in a tangible manner as measuring stakeholder participation was not an objective of this study. Though the primary target of this research was on female leaders navigating in disadvantaged communities, this research did not endeavour to highlight the socio-economic background of these female leaders. Another issue that came out of this study was that in disadvantaged communities, people seem not to be aware of the roles they could play in schools in order to make them better places for their children.

The study also highlighted the fact that quite often; female leaders in disadvantaged communities make personal sacrifices which occasionally impact on their family life. In spite of this, many of the women leaders interviewed in this study seemed determined to achieve a balance between school work and family. It was discovered that family support plays a very important role in the lives of these women leaders. Looking at the evidence arising from the data analysis, it is abundantly clear that these female leaders used ethical and interactive leadership styles in going about their day-to-day responsibilities as school leaders. Female leaders were uniquely better at building collaborative relationships with stakeholders than their male counterparts because they as mothers are used to multi-tasking in their homes

4. 2. CONCLUSION

The participants in this research seem to be navigating their challenges well and all agree that if afforded a better chance, they can rise to the occasion and do much

better. They also see it as room for improvement which indicates self confidence because they believe they “can do it”. However, even though women are climbing the ladder and entering leadership positions, the progress has been rather slow and more needs to be done to balance gender scales in school leadership in South Africa.

Stereotypes of society need to change. Women should be judged on their performance and not on gender. Women have proved they can multi-task and should not have to choose between home and school. This study reveals that female school leaders will continue to experience challenges within school, the community outside school and in their personal lives as long as society continues to engender stereotypical attitudes on gender roles. Negative connotations such as sexist approaches to leadership positions, gender disparity and inequality in relation to females being appointed to leadership and management positions, have not been successfully eradicated. What is important however, are the strategies these females utilize to overcome challenges experienced in disadvantaged contexts.



4. 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Having looked at the literature review and the themes that emanated out of the interviews, the following are recommended:

- Further research is conducted on enhancing stakeholder involvement in the management of schools.
- Women in school leadership should be granted a platform to engage in regular discourse in the public sphere to sensitize the public on the challenges they face.
- Women leaders need mentors and role models. There is need to form networking groups which could work as support groups so that women leaders can assist each other by sharing their experiences and navigating the challenges they face as women.
- The Department of Education should review policies to recruit women and ensure equity in the allocation of jobs to redress the imbalance. It should also combat stereotyping by instituting rigorous and unambiguous evaluation

processes, as well as educating SGB members and male managers about stereotyping.

- Educational training and projects should be planned effectively to compensate for the female school leader's lack of skills and to encourage them to obtain skills necessary to compete in managing primary schools. Training allows them to gain insight, acquire new skills and have confidence in managing performances.
- Women leaders should display a strong character in dealing with their negativities which arise from the patriarchal tendencies of society by asserting their authority as leaders.



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LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A



Enquiries: Nomvula Ubisi (011)3550488

UMnyangoWezeMfundo

Department of Education

Lefapha la Thuto

Departement van Onderwys

Office of the Chief Director: Information and Knowledge Management

Room 501, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2000 P.O.Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000

Tel: (011) 355-0809 Fax: (011) 355-0734

Date: 10th March 2010

Name of Researcher: Perumal Juliet & Smit Brigitte

Address of Researcher: 92 Meadowfields

John Street

Buckleuch, Sandton 2090

Telephone Number: 0118044440/0834286355

Fax Number: 0118044440

Research Topic:

Women Leading in Disadvantaged

Education Contexts

Number and type of schools: 8 Primary & 12 Secondary Schools

District/s/HO All Districts

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for

the research to be conducted.

Permission has been granted to proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met, and may be withdrawn should any of these conditions be flouted:

- 1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned must be presented with a copy of this letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.**
- 2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.**
- 3. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.**
- 4. A letter / document that outlines the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.**
- 5. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.**
- 6. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.**
- 7. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year.**
- 8. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.**
- 9. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.**
- 10. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.**
- 11. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.**
- 12. On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and one Ring bound copy of the final, approved research report. The researcher would also provide the said manager with**

an electronic copy of the research abstract/summary and/or annotation.

13. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.

14. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

NomvulaUbisi

DEPUTY CHIEF EDUCATION SPECIALIST: RESEARCH

The contents of this letter has been read and understood by the researcher.

Signature of Researchers:

Date: 10.03 2011



APPENDIX B



The Principal/ Deputy Principal

Letter of invitation to participate In: Women leading in disadvantaged contexts

I am Feroza Mia, MED student at the University of Johannesburg (student number 200934947).

My topic is: Female leaders navigating challenges in selected disadvantaged schools in Johannesburg North District. Data for this study will be collected through 90 minute long individual semi structured interviews with each participant. The schools that will be part of this study are situated in Johannesburg North District.

I would be honoured if your school would consider participating in the following study that is funded by South African Netherlands Partnership for Alternative Development (SANPAD).

Aim of the study:

To investigate how female school leaders navigate challenges they encounter.

Main research question:

To investigate how female school leaders navigate challenges they encounter and the strategies employed in leading in disadvantaged contexts.

Motivation for the study:

The motivation to conduct this study stems from the researcher's observation that women are majority in the teaching fraternity but minority in upper management. They face gender discrimination and lack of support from their staff. These deep seated inequalities accompanied by stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes about women's competencies are barriers that impact on their performances (Gender Equity Task Team 1997:195). The Constitution of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 in

conjunction with the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 guarantees equity in the workplace through the elimination of unfair discrimination (Government gazette, No.17678). I would like to request your institution to play a part in raising the profile of female leaders in Johannesburg North district.

The fieldwork will include:

- A sensitizing session with participants
- One on one interview with the candidate
- Each interview will be audio recorded and transcribed.

Benefits:

You will be participating in generating knowledge that will highlight women's role in school leadership

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Every effort will be made to protect (guarantee) your confidentiality and privacy. I will not use your name or any information that would allow you to be identified. However, if information you have provided is requested by legal authorities then I may be required to reveal it. In addition, all data collected will be anonymous and only the researcher will have access to the collected data that will be securely stored for the duration of 2 years after the publication of the report.

Participation and Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent to participate in the project at any time during the project. If you decide to withdraw, there will be no consequences to you. Your decision whether or not to be part of the study will not affect your continuing access to any services that might be part of this study.

Future interest and feedback

You may contact me or my supervisor (see below) at any time for additional information, or if you have questions related to the findings of the study. See attachment for letter of approval granted by the Gauteng Department of Education.

Sincerely

Mrs Feroza Mia

082 874 2243 (mobile)

Mia.feroza@yahoo.com (email)

Supervisor

Prof Juliet Perumal

University of Johannesburg

083 428 6355 (mobile)



APPENDIX C



Faculty of Education

Interview Protocol

I am Feroza Mia, a MEd minor dissertation student in the Department of Education Leadership and Management Studies at the University of Johannesburg. My research topic is Female leaders navigating challenges in selected disadvantaged schools in Johannesburg North District.

I want to thank you for accepting my invitation on being interviewed today.

Background to the study

Females face gender discrimination and lack of support from their staff. These deep seated inequalities accompanied by stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes about women's competencies are barriers that impact on their performances (Gender Equity

Task Team 1997:195). The Constitution of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 in conjunction with the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 guarantees equity in the workplace through the elimination of unfair discrimination (Government gazette, No.17678) however a patriarchal culture which is dominant in schools has placed constraints on the advancement of women to senior management levels. South African women still suffer discrimination and there is a disparity of power between males and females in education.

Intentions of the research

This research attempts to:

- Identify the challenges facing women in leadership positions in disadvantaged schools in Johannesburg North District.

- Investigate how the challenges affect females in leadership positions.
- To investigate how they think these challenges can be overcome.

Potential Risks

It is unlikely that there will be any harm or discomfort associated with participant's participation in this study. The research will be conducted with the approval of all relevant authorities. The research will also be conducted within the principles of honesty and ethics of respect for the knowledge and democratic values and quality of educational research. I will seek for voluntary consent and also for the understanding of the research from participants.

Potential Benefits

It will be enriching the participant's knowledge in women's role in leadership.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to guarantee your confidentiality and privacy. I will not use your name or information that would allow you to be identified. However, we are often identifiable through the stories we tell. Furthermore, if information you have provided is requested by legal authorities, then I may be required to reveal it. In addition, all data collected will be anonymous and only the researchers will have access to the collected data that will be securely stored for no longer than 2 years after publication of research reports, or papers. Thereafter, all collected data will be destroyed.

Participation and withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent to participate in the project at any time during the project. If you decide to withdraw there will be no consequences for you. Your decision whether or not to participate in the study will not affect your continuing access to any services that might be part of the study.

Future interest and feedback

You may contact me on 0828742243 or by email: mia.feroza@yahoo.com at anytime for additional information, or if you have any questions related to the findings of the study.

Demographic data

1. Name
2. School
3. Gender
4. Time of interview
5. Date of interview
6. Location of interview
7. Post of interviewee

Semi-structured interview with Principals/Deputy Principals

I want to thank you sincerely for agreeing to be interviewed in spite of your tight schedule. The purpose of this interview is to find out your views, ideas, opinion and perception on females in leadership. It is essential that you share your experience, expertise with a particular reference to how you gain, maintain and exercise leadership in your school. I hope this interview and study will be useful to you in your leadership and learning processes.

1. Describe what your usual day entails
2. Provide a brief biographical overview:
 - 2.1 Qualifications
 - 2.2 Professional experiences
 - 2.3 Position in school
 - 2.4 Areas of professional specialization

3 What is the gender grid of the school management team?

4 what is the socio-economic and political context of the school?

5 What is your understanding by the term leadership?

6 Did other females play a significant role in your choice of career?

- 7 Describe your experience as a female leader in a school?
- 8 Why did you apply for the leadership post?
- 9 How long have you been in the current position?
- 10 What leadership styles do you employ and is considered to be most effective?
- 11 Which leadership styles do you think can sustain women in leadership?
- 12 Do you think men's leadership is different to that of women?
- 13 What kind of support has been offered to assist you in your management task?
- 14 Women in leadership (management) especially as principals in primary schools appear to be less represented as compared to their male counterparts? Do you agree with this statement?
- 15 Do you think men are more privileged than women when selections for promotions in schools are made? Why?
- 16 Do you think men recognize women as equals?
- 17 In your opinion do women teachers who still occupy lower levels/ranks with appropriate teaching experience have the capacity to take up leadership positions? How?
- 18 Please comment on the type of attitude which the following have towards leadership as a female in this school?
- 18.1 Female colleagues
- 18.2 male colleagues
- 18.3 other school leaders in the education district
- 18.4 The community
- 19 In your opinion would you say that educators should receive formal leadership qualifications prior to being promoted to serve on the school management team (SMT)?
- 20 Were you ever in a situation where your competence as a manager has been questioned?
- 21 How do you manage conflict at school?
- 22 In your opinion why do women take up teaching as a profession but at the same time there are constraints that ensure women remain at the very bottom of the school leadership pyramid?
- 23 If I said there is a perception that male principals make better leaders than females what would your response be to this statement?
- 24 What challenges do you face as a female leader serving on the SMT?

25 What do female leaders consider the main challenges of working in disadvantaged community?

26 How has it affected you as a female in leadership?

27 How have you managed these challenges?

28 What would you consider the main strategies of leading and overcoming these barriers in disadvantaged community?

29 In your experience, what are some concrete ways to assist female leaders?

30 What other suggestions would you offer females in school leadership?

31 Indicate what are your professional development goals in relation to your conception of your leadership roles?

I want to thank you all for your insightful comments on school leadership and for taking the time out of your hectic schedule to be part of this interview. Your comments and suggestions will go a long way in enriching my data and in my MEd journey.

Thanking you once again



APPENDIX D

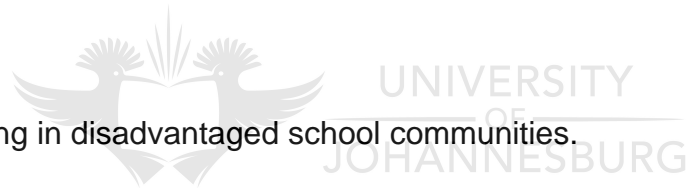


ETHICS CLEARANCE

Dear Professors Brigitte Smit and Juliet Perumal

Ethical Clearance Number: 2010-025

Re: Women leading in disadvantaged school communities.



The FAEC has decided to

- Approve the proposal
- Provisionally approve the proposal with recommended changes
- Recommend revision and resubmission of the proposal

Sincerely,

Professor Alan Amory

Chair: FACULTY ACADEMIC ETHICS COMMITTEE

12 August 2010