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**WHAT ARE THE PERSONAL AND PUBLIC CHALLENGES FACING
BLACK WOMEN IN THEIR QUEST FOR LEADERSHIP ROLES IN
SCHOOLS?**

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ABSTRACT

WHAT ARE THE PERSONAL AND PUBLIC CHALLENGES FACING BLACK WOMEN IN THE QUEST FOR LEADERSHIP ROLES IN SCHOOLS?

by

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This mini dissertation examines the personal and public challenges facing Black women in their quest for leadership in schools. Secondary school leadership remains a male-dominated arena in many schools even after a decade of democracy in the country. This is contrary to the democratic ideals of the country, which include participation in governance, social justice and gender equity in particular.

This study seeks to identify the root causes of gender imbalances and to work out strategies to redefine leadership roles in schools. This study was conducted from a critical feminist perspective. It is a qualitative case study and has used individual-based interviews, focus groups and observation in collecting data. It should be mentioned that this study involved male participants as well. They are regarded as the “significant others” who have to play a critical role in re-visioning redefining leadership within their schools.

A total of six women and four male participants were included in the study. Participants were purposefully selected. A consent form was sent to all the participants, covering all ethical issues of voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity.

The major themes that emerged in the study were:

- tension between the personal and the public realms
- lack of institutional support
- non-adherence to policy

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ABBREVIATIONS

SMT	Senior Management Team
SGB	School Governing Body
RSQV	Relative Education Qualification Value
GAD	Gender And Development
GETT	Gender Task Team
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
GPF	Gender Focal Person
OSW	Office Of The Status Of Women
AA	Affirmative Action
PGP	Personal Growth Plan
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
DAS	Developmental Appraisal
HOD	Head Of Department
SASA	South African Schools Act
HRD	Human Resource Management
GMS	Gender Management System
SDT	Staff Development Team
DSG	Development Support Group
EMDG	Educational Management Governance Development
EEA	Employment Equity Act
HRM	Human Resource Management
CEDAW	Convention On The Elimination Of Discrimination Against Women

CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The history of women has been one of oppression, subordination, marginalisation and exclusion from meaningful participation in social, cultural, economic and political leadership roles.

The Black woman's plight extended beyond discrimination on the basis of gender to discrimination on the basis of race, class, ethnicity, geographic locality and even linguistic orientation. Although the advent of democracy in South Africa laid the foundation for transformation, the majority of schools still reflect male-dominated leadership. Secondary schools, which are the focus of this study, are no exception. This study seeks to investigate what keeps women out of leadership roles. Could it be issues hidden in their private worlds or external barriers constituted by the public realm in which they exist and function?

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Leadership in secondary schools is male-dominated. The political change, with the broad legal framework encompassing women's rights in the South African Constitution, has not been accompanied by much change in most educational institutions. Legislation and government policies to ensure equal access to employment opportunities, such as the Employment Equity Act, Gender Equity Act and Affirmative Action are not translated into practical decisions that can be implemented in schools.

Although human rights (encompassing women's rights) are enshrined in the Constitution, it is up to institutions and individuals as a collective to enact gender-related policies, procedures and practices within their work context. It is the role of institutions to encourage the elimination of institutional gender stereotype. Institutions need to remove all barriers that exclude and marginalise women from

leadership. The unchanging leadership patterns in schools suggest that no one is taking a proactive stance in redefining power patterns within schools and reconceptualising the power relations within schools.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to question gender imbalances in leadership within secondary schools. It seeks to trigger change so that schools become institutions of social justice and gender equity. Gender justice is one of the ideals of our democracy in South Africa as a country. By examining the experiences of women aspiring to leadership in secondary schools, this study will enable managers of these schools to gauge how they are advancing in terms of this ideal.

This study also attempts to underline the tension between leadership for transformation and organisational structures, arising from the fact that schools have conventionally been institutions based on transactional and autocratic leadership.

Furthermore, this study will enhance scholarly understanding of school leadership and add to the body of leadership practice for moral, ethical and social justice.

The findings of this study will be used to assist policy makers to ensure that policy to address issues of gender transformation is fully implemented and monitored.

1.4 EXPLORATORY QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study is to explore the personal and public challenges that Black women face in their quest for leadership positions in secondary schools. The main question is:

What are the personal and public challenges facing Black women in their quest for leadership roles?

The secondary questions are:

What are the private and public challenges that keep women away from leadership?

What institutional support is given to develop and nurture female leadership?

How is government policy implemented in practice?

1.5 ASSUMPTIONS

In her role as a Black woman, mother, wife and teacher for twelve years, working in various schools, the researcher observed that school leadership is a male domain. She also experienced the dilemmas that women face in entering this male-dominated arena of leadership. In the light of the researcher's experience, this study is based on the following broad assumptions:

- Secondary schools do not provide opportunities for women in leadership roles consequently gender issues are ignored in leadership appointments.
- Women have worked hard to improve their educational levels but this has not led to promotional posts.
- Nothing is done within schools to foster the transformation of individuals' attitudes, prejudices and stereotypes against women.
- Nothing is done within schools to build capacity into leadership, particularly for previously disadvantaged groups.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Core readings will be on leadership, feminism, institutional support, and the legal framework purporting gender equity in the workplace.

1.6.1 Leadership

South Africa as a country is in its second decade of democracy. Autocratic leadership has been made unpopular by the changing political system towards democracy in the country.

This study will focus on contemporary leadership theories, which are democratic and advocate co-governance and meaningful participation. (Fullan 2001; Sergiovanni 2000; Greenleaf cited in Norris, Barnett, Bason & Vertes 2002, and Grogan 1996) explain these as transformational leadership.

Norris et al (2002:87) list the following reasons why the change in leadership patterns is necessary:

- knowledge expansion
- expansion of cultural diversity, which calls upon leaders to question and correct unjust practices and foster deeper connections between various groups
- disengagement and alienation of members in institutions, which needs leaders to build networks of care, concern, mutual support and collegiality
- demands for greater accountability, which emphasises the need for shared vision and collaboration in shaping the future.

Wolpe, Ouinlan and Martinez (1997:203) report that “apart from this social justice agenda to which the Department of Education is constitutionally committed, manager diversity can help improve the quality of education service”. The implication for schools therefore is that everyone within the system matters.

1.6.2 Institutional support

Charlton (1992:18) states that leadership entails “growing people”. This is known as capacity building. Several strategies for “growing people” into leadership will be explored particularly with a view to bringing women on a par with their male counterparts who have been advantaged by the school system. The developmental strategies of mentoring, coaching, simulation and learning communities will be discussed (Norris et al 2002; Gardiner, Enomoto & Grogan 2000; Chowdhury 2000).

Grogan (1996:109) discusses how institutional arrangements in and outside the school context deter women from participating in leadership. The gendered nature of social roles poses challenges for women, which their male counterparts do not necessarily

have to face. This will be explored in the study with a view to redressing the situation.

1.6.3 Feminism

Thompson (2001:7) describes feminism as “a moral and political struggle of opposition to the social relations of male domination structured around the principle that only men count as human and a struggle for a genuine status of women outside male definition and control”. This study will discuss liberal, radical and Black feminist theories. The emphasis will be on feminism as emancipatory praxis, challenging and acting to change all injustice women suffer on the basis of being women.

1.6.4 Legal framework of gender equality in South Africa

Since 1994 the South African government has been committed to upholding human rights including women’s rights. This study will examine macro and micro policies and commitments the South African government has made to achieve gender justice. Women are regarded as one of the previously disadvantaged groups together with the youth and people living with disability. The legal framework of the country ensures the protection and mainstreaming of women through legislation. Since this study is concerned with what practices there are in secondary schools as workplace, the focus will be on the Employment Equity Act, 55 of (1998).

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Mouton and Marais (1992:193) describe the research design “as an exposition of the plan of how the researcher intends conducting the research”. A broad categorization is made between quantitative and qualitative research. This study will adopt a qualitative approach, as this is a case study. According to Phendla (1995:34), a case study can be adequately done using a qualitative approach.

Qualitative research studies social actions and processes in their natural setting. Qualitative studies attempt to describe and understand research participants’ actions from the “insider’s perspective, the emic perspective”, that is, in terms of the actors’

own beliefs, history and context (Mouton 2001:271).

Creswell (1994:145) explains that the reason for seeking an insider perspective is that it “is assumed that actors in social situations can tell the most about what they are doing and the reason thereof”. Consequently, a qualitative approach will be followed in this study to afford the researcher an opportunity to gain insight into the respondents’ action and facilitate the establishment of rapport between the researcher and the respondents. As the main data-collection instrument, the researcher is afforded the opportunity to acquire an understanding of issues.

1.7.1 Data collection

For the purpose of this study, Denzin’s (1978) (cited in Mouton 1996:156) “triangulation”, namely multiple sources of data and data-collection methods will be used. Data will be collected by means of semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observation. The respondents will be interviewed individually and in focus groups. Open-ended questions will afford the respondents latitude to give as much information as possible. Establishing rapport with the respondents will ensure reliability and validity of the data collected.

1.7.2.1 Individual interviews

Mouton and Marais (1992:289) define a qualitative interview as a “conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues topics raised by the respondent”. In this study, semi-structured interviews will be conducted. According to May (1993:93), the advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that “although the questions are normally specified, the interviewer is freer to ‘probe’ beyond the answers given by the interviewee”. The semi-structured interview enables the researcher to seek both clarification and elaboration from respondents. The disadvantage of interviews is subjectivity and the drifting of the conversation. The researcher will monitor the interviews closely, however, to prevent drifting. Interviews will be conducted face to face, once with each respondent.

1.7.2.2 Focus groups

Powell (cited in Gibbs 1997:2) defines focus groups as “a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment on, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of research”. In this study, the women will be assembled separately from the male principals. Focus groups are an advantage in that they can be used as a forum for change, an advantage highlighted by Race (cited in Gibbs 1997:3). According to Morgan (1997:3), focus groups can be used in a multi-method study to enrich the data gathered through other qualitative methods and once individuals are put together, researchers are confronted with a new set of data. Furthermore, Morgan (1997:10) states that focus groups have the advantage of providing

- an opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time
- direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants’ opinions and experiences as opposed to reaching conclusions from post hoc analyses of separate statements from each interviewee.

Powell (cited in Gibbs 1997:2) emphasises that focus groups are an advantage in that participants will share their experiences and move on to developing resolutions to problems identified.

1.7.2.3 Observation

Other data that will inform the study will be collected through observation. The advantage of using observation is that the researcher gains firsthand experience of the respondents. Creswell (1994:150) discusses the different stances that the researcher can take, namely

Complete participant - the researcher’s role is concealed

1.7.5 Limitations of the study

The limitation of this study is the subjectivity on the part of the researcher attributed to twelve years' experience as a teacher as well as her experiences as a Black woman, wife, and mother.

1.7.6 Site selection

This study will be conducted in the Ermelo School Circuit part of the Gert Sibande region in the Mpumalanga Province. This is a predominantly rural area and transformation in relation to the participation of women in leadership could possibly be delayed compared to urban areas.

1.7.7 Data analysis and interpretation

Data analysis is the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview scripts, field notes and all other material that the researcher has collected (Mouton 1996). Analysis will be done through coding and summarising the interview transcripts.

To ensure validity in this stage of the research member checks will be done. Member checks take place when the researcher takes transcripts and analysed texts back to the respondents to check whether what has been constructed from the data is a true reflection of what they said.

1.8 CONCLUSION

Transformation is long overdue, with our democracy already a decade old. The under-representation of women in leadership roles, as school principals, deputy principals and heads of departments within secondary schools remains a question for investigation. This chapter discussed the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research design and methodology.

Chapter 2 discusses the literature review conducted for the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the literature review undertaken by the researcher on feminism, leadership, institutional support and the legal framework for gender equity in the workplace. The discussion covers the development of feminism, leadership, especially transactional and transformational leadership theory, institutional support that can help build capacity into leadership roles in secondary schools, particularly for previously disadvantaged groups (in the case of this study, women), and South African legislation on gender justice. This study concentrated on transformational leadership theory because feminism supports and identifies with its models of leadership.

2.2 FEMINISM

There are various forms or schools of feminism. This study focused on liberal, radical and Black/Afro-centric feminism. According to Beasley (1999:28), all feminist theories express the idea that “women have had and continue to have a rough deal because of their sex”. Feminism is basically a political stance that challenges the injustices and discrimination women suffer. According to Wolpe et al (1997:198), discrimination is “when a person is treated less favourably than another would be because of a characteristic that is irrelevant to his or her capacity to do a job”.

Friedman, Matelerkamp and Posel (1986:3-6) state that liberal or first wave feminists advocated for equal rights with men and expressed concerns of access and entitlement to opportunities associated with men. They argued that women like men are endowed with reason, and that their capacity to choose therefore has the same worth as that of men. The liberation of women consists of their freedom to choose their lives. Women had to be able to compete with men on equal terms professionally, politically and in the labour market. The constraints in society that discriminate against women solely on the basis of their sex and so prevent the exercise of free choice had to be

eliminated. In their quest for leadership in secondary schools, women are confronted with all the above aspects as barriers to their advancement.

According to Friedman et al (1986:5) liberal feminism, strategies for change entailed the repeal of all laws that discriminated against women as well as various informal constraints. This should be accompanied by the provision of educative programmes to provide women with skills to equip them for competition in the job market and the building of institutions by the state to relieve women of their household duties, such as crèches attached either to the places of employment or within residential areas.

Friedman et al (1986:4-6) criticise liberal feminists first for, not rejecting the capitalist system but seeing it as an opportunity to realise choices as long as women make the necessary effort, although women have to try harder than men. Equality of opportunity, then, is up to individual effort. Secondly, liberal feminism is criticized for its failure to affirm women as women and therefore different from men. This led to second wave feminism, which advocated for radical transformation.

Thompson (2001:7) describes radical feminism as “a moral and political struggle of opposition to the social relations of male domination structured around the principle that only men count as human and a struggle for a genuine human status of women outside male definition and control”. He states further that it is an ethical stance in that it starts from the question of value, of good and evil, right and wrong, of what is significant and what is not. It is political in that it aims to put women’s interests on the public agenda. Radical feminism focuses on the politics of the private sphere particularly in sexuality, motherhood and body, these representing women’s differences from men and this needs to be affirmed and celebrated.

In South Africa, according to Liebenberg, Nel, Lortan & van der Westhuizen (1994:216) “ the participation of African women in resistance movement can be understood in the wider context of strong demands for political and social transformation within the country.” Radical feminism emphasises a collective effort by women to bring about revolutionary change. Women mobilised, networked, formed political structures and were vocal reflecting the feminist belief that the

personal is political. In South Africa, this was evidenced by the rise of the African National Congress Women's League (ANCWL). According to Thompson (2001: 6) all forms of oppression originate from male domination and these power relations need to be redressed and call for more than merely equal rights.

In schools as in all other work institutions, action was necessary to overcome the barriers that block the progression of women up the employment hierarchy and to create an environment that affirms women. The predominance of males in management levels in secondary schools has resulted in a culture in which male behaviour patterns such as control and competition are perceived to be the norm. Few, if any, concessions are made for matters that are primarily a female concern, like nurturing and provision of support. According to Thompson (2001:57) radical feminism challenges all systems that operate according to male-defined values and views this as a political matter that needs revolutionary change. Furthermore, radical feminism argues that there are crucial dimensions of the private sphere that ought to be matters of public debate and rectification. Blackmore and Kenway (1996:17) states, "In view of the different responsibilities of women and men, their experience of managing the private/public split and of the processes of the workplace remains dissimilar."

Strachan (1999:310) states that Black feminist thought is an emancipatory praxis and is therefore linked to Marxist feminism in that it calls for reflection and action on redressing issues of women subordination. According to Collins (1990:221), Black feminist thought demonstrates "women emerging as self-defined, self-reliant individuals confronting race, gender and class oppression which are interlocked forming a matrix of domination". Black feminist thought is a critical theory that acknowledges that gender is a social construct that needs to be deconstructed.

According to Collins (1990:221-238), Afro-centric feminism:

- seeks to reveal new ways of knowing that allow subordinate groups to define their own reality
- emphasises that there are subjective ways of knowing

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- allows women to bring women's standpoint to larger epistemological dialogues
- insists that thought is validated from a particular set of historical, material and epistemological conditions.

Banks (1996:7) uses the concept of positionality, which he defines as “the important aspects of our identity for example our race, gender, class, age, locality which are markers of relational positions of reference from which we present, understand and interpret reality”. Leadership in any working environment, including secondary schools, has to reflect a women's perspective. Macmanus (1997:1) asserts that “there is a political side to feminism, the side that says let's not just study and analyze these systems but change them”. Feminism advocates women's voices and their visibility in leadership, the presentation of the curriculum, inter-group relations and social identity within schools.

Besides presenting feminine ways of knowing, Collins (1990:224) emphasises the need for women to resist oppression at both individual and institutional level. By presenting feminine ways of knowing, they will ensure that this subjugated knowledge, that is, from the perspective of the oppressed, is not overshadowed by the dominant group's so-called specialised thought. In leadership circles this would mean challenging the male-tailored theories of leadership, which emphasise control, competition and compliance, replacing them with “the feminine concept of power as facilitative power, power used to support and build others up” (Dunlap & Schmuck 1995:350).

The researcher is of the opinion that there is a need to delve into institutionalised discrimination and detect, reject, and correct it. The male management in secondary schools has to be sensitive to the plight and needs of the women they lead. In the case of the present study, leaders should be sensitive to the needs of women, concerned with their absence in the leadership structures as well as their competencies or lack thereof. They should change the culture of the school in a way that supports and harnesses the leadership potential in women teachers and make institutions more humane and more responsive to gender issues. They should work towards changing

the prejudiced mind-sets of the wider school community, the learners, parents and fellow male teachers that stereotype them.

According to the *Provincial Employment Equity Plan*, an audit undertaken by Umnotho Development in 2003 for the Mpumalanga Department of Education, the majority of employees in the Department are women, particularly Black women. The Umnotho Development Report (2003:12) states “These statistics reflect an over-dominance of females in the Department, which arose out of historical practice, rather than affirmation, where it was thought that teachers should be female and principals male.” The report’s analysis further states that females occupy 4 out of 20 posts in top and senior management. In the researcher’s view, it is unjustifiable that women occupy an insignificant number of leadership positions. Figures 2.1 and 2.2 represent the demographic profile of the Mpumalanga Education Department according to gender and race.

Department of Education - Demographic Profile
Gender

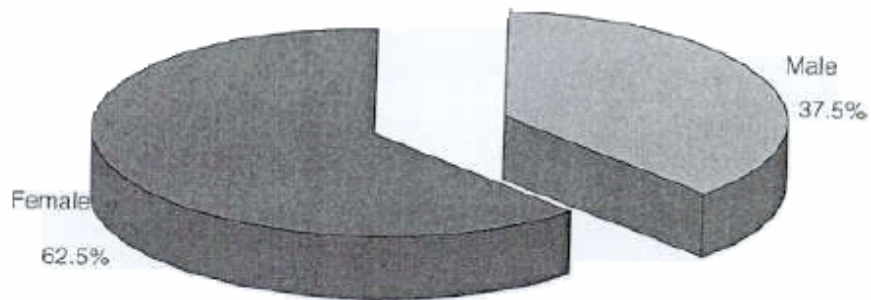
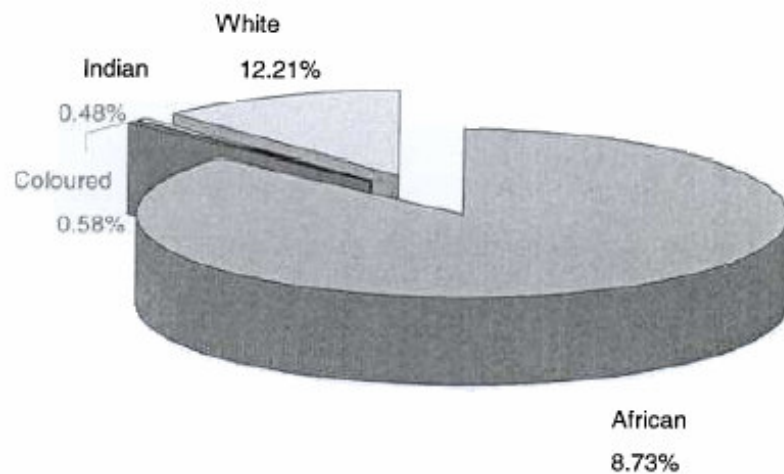


Figure 2.1 Demographic Profile – Gender

Source: Umnotho Development Report (2003:16)

Females in the Department



Mpumalanga Population- Race & Female

Figure 2.2 Female teachers in Mpumalanga according to race

Source: Umnotho Development Report (2003:16)

2.3 LEADERSHIP

The Republic of South Africa celebrated the tenth anniversary of democracy and transformation in 2004. It is one of those landmarks where as a country we look back, reflect, review, and assess our achievements and our failures with the aim of achieving our ideals of a non-discriminatory, non-sexist, non-racist South Africa for all, based on justice. It is a time to revisit all the transformation measures, processes, practices and policies to establish their impact. This is the lens through which leadership in our educational institutions will be studied. Has leadership been transformed enough to achieve the core aspect of gender justice?

In most spheres, including education, leadership has been regarded as a male domain. Blackmore and Kenway (1996:46) point out that “in school, as in business, traditional management emphasizes control, authority and decision making, requiring attributes traditionally perceived as masculine including analytical ability, rationality and toughness”. This notion of leadership has led to the exclusion of women from leadership and created a division of labour with teaching regarded as a feminine enterprise and administration a masculine enterprise. In South African schools, the Senior Management Teams (SMTs) are predominantly male. This notion of leadership has perpetuated the stereotype that women do not have what it takes to be leaders. Feminist leadership seeks to challenge this.

Most studies on leadership has been largely about the leader, who was seen as the main actor on whom the success of an institution hinges. This understanding has created a competitive spirit in leadership, leading to gate keeping and male leaders wielding power. To highlight the fact that women have been prevented from reaching promotional posts in this run for power. Dunlap and Schmuck (1995:313-323) use the term “glass ceiling” to refer to “an image representing obstacles that prevent women from advancing to the top of their careers. Although women have a full view of the top of the organization, they bump against an invisible shield of résistance and can rise no further.” Worrall (Dunlap & Schmuck 1995:165) uses the metaphor of the competitive board game of snakes and ladders to highlight how competition-laden the path to leadership is. Grogan (1996:80) uses concept the “old boy’s network” to highlight how men recruit each other into positions of leadership.

According to Barker (1997:343) for long leadership studies equated leadership with management and leaders focused on structures and systems within institutions and less on the people. Barker (1997:349) points out that “the fundamental difference between leadership and management lies in their respective functions. The function of management is to create stability and protect stabilized patterns. The function of leadership is to create new patterns of action and new systems and leadership creates change.” Too much emphasis on management has led to the maintenance of the subordinate role of women as the status quo.

In the researcher’s opinion, leadership should create opportunity for creative conflict where issues would be criticized and redressed and it would strengthen human resources through capacity building. According to Dunlap and Schmuck (1995:2), women have been silenced and made invisible right at the base of the leadership pyramid. Feminist theory is about questioning and redefining gender relations and gender stereotypes within schools as institutions. Feminism regards the subordination and oppression of women by their male counterparts as unethical, and epitomizes the need to challenge and change this perception.

2.3.1 Transactional leadership

Harris, Day, Hopkins, Hatfield, Hargreaves and Chapman (2003:18) list the following characteristics of transactional leadership:

- The leader is still perceived as someone at the top or at the front of everyone else.
- Leadership is equated with management.
- The leader-follower dichotomy, with the leader superior and the follower dependent on the leader, is crudely abstracted.
- Leadership consists of doing something for, to and on behalf of others.
- Tasks are delegated to followers for them to complete.
- Emphasis is on hard data to inform rational decision-making.
- Leadership is concerned largely with structures, and emphasis is on organizational purpose rather than on people.

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- .In approaching development and improvement emphasis is on structural rather than cultural changes.
- Transactional leadership is mainly about management of systems and processes rather than people and relationships.

Transactional theories of leadership present leadership from a positivistic-structuralist perspective, portraying leadership as apolitical and the leader as the essential expert, Blackmore and Kenway (1996:157). Such a top-down leadership approach has made women vulnerable to their male counterparts who are in positions of power to dictate, direct, demand and demean women as their subordinates. According to Fullan (2001:2), the concept of the glorified leader does a great disservice as “deep and sustained reform depends on many of us, not just on the very few who are destined to be extraordinary”. Women are a potential human resource that has not been tapped into; this has not deprived the women individuals but communities. In a school set-up, the inclusion of women would bring diversity in leadership thereby adding value and quality to the governance of education institutions.

Transactional leadership is bureaucratic and unethical. Feminism is against the oppression through exclusion and marginalisation of women by their male counterparts.

2.3.2 Transformational leadership

Schools, by their very nature, change because they exist in a context of changing information, changing politics, changing societies and societal values, and changing economics and attitudes. The ushering in of democracy in South Africa and its emphasis on co-governance, meaningful participation and ownership has necessitated a re-conceptualisation and re-visioning of leadership in schools. Transformational leadership theory is much in line with political change. Accordingly, moral, servant, visionary and feminist leadership will be discussed.

Transformational leadership is not about an individual who is at the top or even ahead of all the other or about control over, but is leadership with or along with others, or people-centred leadership. According to Barker (1997:382), leadership “is a democratic process where no one person does an inordinate amount of leading and everyone else an inordinate amount of following; instead, every group member performs some leadership function at some point in time”.

Harris et al (2003:18) point out that “at its basic level transformation means change, but in leadership literature, transformational leadership entails change in the leader-follower relationship for mutual benefit and good”. Norris et al (2002: 85) state that “leadership is a shifting influence that allows many followers to emerge as leaders, it is a domain of others as well, so that the designated leader is both leader and follower while the follower is both follower and leader”. Sergiovanni (2000:165) speaks of head-followership, stating that “when followership is combined with leadership there is no longer a bureaucratic hierarchy with the leader at the top, instead the organization is based on followership and is guided by ideas, values and commitments”.

The governance of schools has for long been about the principal and a few mainly male managers who took decisions that would then be communicated to all other stakeholders as policy to adhere to. Within schools, the implication of transformational leadership is the involvement of all persons or stakeholders in the governance of the school, including women. This means that female teachers as potential leaders should be drawn into leadership circles as principals, deputy principals, and heads of departments. This emphasises that the sexual division of labour in schools has to come to an end. This study wishes to emphasise that the struggle of women goes beyond just being provided with opportunity. Among other things, transformational leadership has to deal with re-conceptualising the male gendered version of leadership, re-conceptualising the gender relations perpetuating inequality, changing negative stereotypes, attitudes and practices against women, and tackle the issue of capacity building for leadership. Blackmore (1999:17) states that “the gender patterning of modern organizational forms is a more complex matter therefore than the proportions of each sex in particular positions”.

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Transformational leadership is about presenting alternative forms of leadership to the traditional, hierarchical, bureaucratic approaches. Hurty (cited in Dunlap and Shmuck 1995:350) emphasises that women present a different dimension of power, where power is used in facilitative ways not to exercise control, but providing others with support and feedback, a strength that would completely change the face of traditional leadership. Blackmore and Kenway (1996:172) state that educational leaders who seek to re-vision leadership have to ensure the following in their institutions:

- Participation in decision-making encompasses all those who are affected by the decision.
- Goals are negotiated and contestation is seen as a legitimate aspect of critical planning.
- Justice and equality is emphasized.
- Planning confronts the taken for granted.
- Action is a process of problem posing for future critical reflection.
- Action of the leader is more educational than management.
- Action is about support, not direction.
- The leader is seen as an enabler and supporter.

Such a platform will involve everyone and bring about change that has been engineered by all. Transformational leadership is about shared leadership. For Norris et al (2003:75), transformational leadership is “a moral act that considers the welfare of those under one’s care and fosters improved conditions for their human existence”. This simply requires of leadership to know what the needs of the members are, and take them from there to a better level, whether in skills or personal and professional competencies. Women teachers as a previously disadvantaged group need to be drawn into the leadership experience.

Fullan (2001: 3) maintains that “moral leadership means acting with the intention of making a positive difference on the lives of the employees, customers and society as a whole. Moral leadership evolves around the ethic of care.” Gilligan (1982) (cited in Norris et al 2002:75-79) describes care as “a practice as well as a disposition that causes individuals to act on the basis of the needs and concerns of others”. In educational institutions this therefore implies taking cognisance of women and their

positionality. Transformational leadership is also embodied in the idea of servant leadership. Servant leaders are dedicated to the growth and development of others. According to Harris et al (2003:18), servant leaders have the capacity to inspire people to grow and become more than they presently are. Principals should introduce programmes for staff development.

Visionary leadership is a transformational leadership theory. According to Robbins (1997:357), visionary leadership “is the ability to create and articulate a realistic, credible, attractive vision of the future for an organisation, which grows out of and improves upon the present. The key premise in visionary leadership is that all members of the organization have to find meaning in their work and members want to contribute and achieve.” In the researcher’s opinion, the best vision any school leader of this century could have is that of an institution based on justice for all.

Like transformational leadership, feminist leadership is based on four criteria, namely, critical, transformative, educative, and ethical Fennell (1999:262). Brady and Hammet (1999:162) state that “a critical feminist vision of leadership does not seek to invert traditional hierarchic of power by suggesting that women are better leaders, rather such a vision necessitates a challenge to fixed, hierarchal structures and unidirectional flow of power that issues from them”. This stance indicates that feminist leadership does not advocate an overthrow or replacement of men by women, but gender justice. Women, whose leadership has a feminist agenda, are categorized as activists they work to correct the imbalance in education administration Strachan (1999:177).

The feminist movement is a powerful example of critical theory. Critical theory seeks to unmask hidden injustices. Blackmore (1989) cited in Fennell (1999:262) states that “a feminist reconstruction of leadership would not involve a value-neutral (value-free) stance of administration but a morality of administration.”

2.4 INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

For the purposes of this study, institutional support entails creating a positive culture by eliminating all barriers against and stereotypes of women and creating an enabling environment.

The school system and the wider society have deprived women of participation in leadership in secondary schools. The concept that women are disadvantaged emphasises that they are no less able than the rest but the system has denied them opportunity and an enabling environment for them to achieve their potential as far as leadership is concerned. “Disadvantaged”, again, presupposes that there is an advantaged group, which raises the question of how to bridge the gap.

Various strategies can be used to help women acquire the necessary competence for leadership. Spady and Scwahn (1998:23) describe competence as “a sum of skills, attitude and knowledge”. It is in these areas that women have to be enabled. Heckman (1996:146) recommends learning *in situ* where teacher administrator programmes are organised “where teachers will emerge as both followers and leaders, and administrators will emerge as both leaders and followers”. He warns that critical inquiry and reflective practice should be embedded in these programmes. Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2000:9) refer to a mentoring programme, where mentoring is synonymous with coaching, teaching sponsoring, advising, directing, training and guiding.

In all this, the superordinate/subordinate dichotomy should be completely eliminated. Norris et al (2002:9) advocate the formation of learning communities. These are formal and informal alliances or networks formed amongst teachers, and provide opportunities to obtain dispositions, knowledge and performance skills to become leaders. Although men and women view leadership from different perspectives, diversity can be enhanced and nurtured in these community learning structures. Chowdhury (2000:179) recommends the strategy of simulation, namely programmes of leadership that emphasise action rather than knowledge. “In preparing leaders to make critical decisions the people being prepared for leadership have to be given the reins so that they can have a feel of what it takes to run an institution, some kind of hands-on experiential learning, instead of just theoretical knowledge” (Chowdhury 2000:179).

In 1994, Nelson Mandela, then President of South Africa, set a precedent in this by appointing women to senior political positions as Ministers and Members of

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Executive Councils. Thabo Mbeki, the current President of South Africa, did the same and even left a woman, Ms Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, the Minister of Minerals and Energy, as Acting President in his and the Deputy President's absence. This may be seen as the highest commitment to women's leadership. According to Wolpe et al (1997:200) institutional support concerns the need to reorganize the nature of environments, which were previously the exclusive preserve of men, ensuring that they support the development of both men and women.

The launch of the programme "Women in and into Leadership", a national initiative in Mpumalanga at beginning of 2004 indicates that attempts by the Department of Education to ensure that women are nurtured into leadership are still at the inception stage. This programme is still in its infancy and its impact over a few years could be an aspect for investigation. According to the National Department of Education (2004), the aims of this programme are to

- Provide professional development opportunities for women leaders in education.
- Provide women leaders with skills to manage and lead effectively and improve service delivery within the aims of the education system.
- Develop a network of ongoing support for women aspiring to and those in management positions.
- Encourage all managers to engage in innovative interventions aimed at supporting women managers and leaders.
- Develop and understand trends in gender issues in education management practice.

Although not gender specific, the programme, "Integrated Quality Management System" (IMQS) (Labour Relations Council 2003) could directly enhance the development of women and ensure they are capacitated enough to venture into promotional posts. It should be noted that this policy has not been fully implemented in the schools investigated. The (IQMS) consists of three programmes, namely

(1) Development appraisal

The purpose of development appraisal is to appraise individual educators in a transparent manner with a view to determining areas of strength and weakness, and to draw up programmes for individual development. If this programme is implemented in good faith and commitment, women could be helped into areas of leadership, a terrain to which they have been deprived access.

(2) Performance measurement

The purpose of performance measurement is to evaluate individual educators for salary progression, affirmation of appointments and rewards and incentives. Attaining such acknowledgements of efficiency could lay the foundation from which women could market themselves for leadership positions or use these to declare disputes in selection for appointments

(3) Whole school evaluation (WSE)

The purpose of the WSE is to evaluate the overall effectiveness of a school as well as the quality of teaching and learning. It should be noted that the implementation of the first two policies of the IQMS was unsuccessful. As a teacher, the researcher knows that these policies were refuted by labour unions and did not take root in most schools. The WSE is in place, but according to all four principals interviewed, the emphasis is on the structural rather than cultural changes within the schools

The purposes of the IQMS (2003:1) include

- To identify specific training needs of educators, schools and district offices for support and development.
- To provide support for continued growth.

The IQMS would ensure that women are developed according to their needs. This policy makes provision for educators to work out a personal growth plan (PGP) and set up staff development teams (SDTs)

2.5 STATUTORY FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The constitutional commitment of South Africa to gender justice, in particular, is evident in the legislation of policies, processes, programmes and practices to address gender inequality. South Africa also entered into international commitments “In September 1995, South Africa participated for the first time in the UN series of World Conferences on Women at the Fourth World Conference held in Beijing and committed itself to the Beijing Platform of Action and Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.” (The Beijing Platform of Action Report 2000:1)

Article II of CEDAW deals with employment issues for women. It details the right to the same employment opportunities, same selection criteria and rights to a free choice of profession, promotion, job security, benefits and conditions of service, training, equal remuneration and equal treatment. Legislation has been passed setting the context for gender transformation, protecting and promoting human rights for all, particularly for the previously disadvantaged. The Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998, and the Affirmative Action policy (1998) are some efforts by government to improve the lives of women.

The researcher is of the opinion that the Employment Equity Act, 55 of (1998) clearly serves as a framework for the implementation of affirmative action. In terms of Section 19 of the Act (1998), an employment policy analysis and workforce profile must be conducted. A designated employer must collect information and conduct an analysis, as prescribed, of its employment policies, practices, procedures, and the working environment, in order to identify employment barriers that adversely affect people from designated groups.

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Section 20 of the Act stipulates the key factors in an employment equity plan:

- Annual objectives (equity objectives to be achieved for each year of the plan)
- Affirmative action measures to be implemented.
- Numerical goals to achieve equitable representation of suitably qualified people from designated groups in each occupational category and level in the workforce (where under-representation has been identified in the compilation of the workforce profile).
- Timetable for goals and objectives.
- Duration of the plan (1-5 years).
- Procedures that will be used to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the plan and whether reasonable progress is being made.
- Internal procedures to resolve disputes about the interpretation or implementation of the plan.
- The persons in the workforce, including senior managers, who are or will be responsible for monitoring and implementing the plan.

The White Paper on Affirmative Action in the Public Service (1998:4) defines affirmative action as “the additional corrective steps which must be taken in order that those who have been historically disadvantaged by unfair discrimination are able to derive full benefit from an equitable employment environment”. To ensure the implementation of these Acts as far as gender-related issues are concerned, the National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality was developed by the Office of the Status of Women (OSW) which was established in the office of the President in 1997 (The Beijing Platform of Action 2000: 11). The above Acts together with the National Policy Framework set the basis and direction for transformation. The framework (undated: 20) outlines the vision and mission, guiding principles for gender transformation, structures, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and key performance indicators. Figure 2.3 depicts the gender management system and the national machinery to enhance the process of gender transformation.

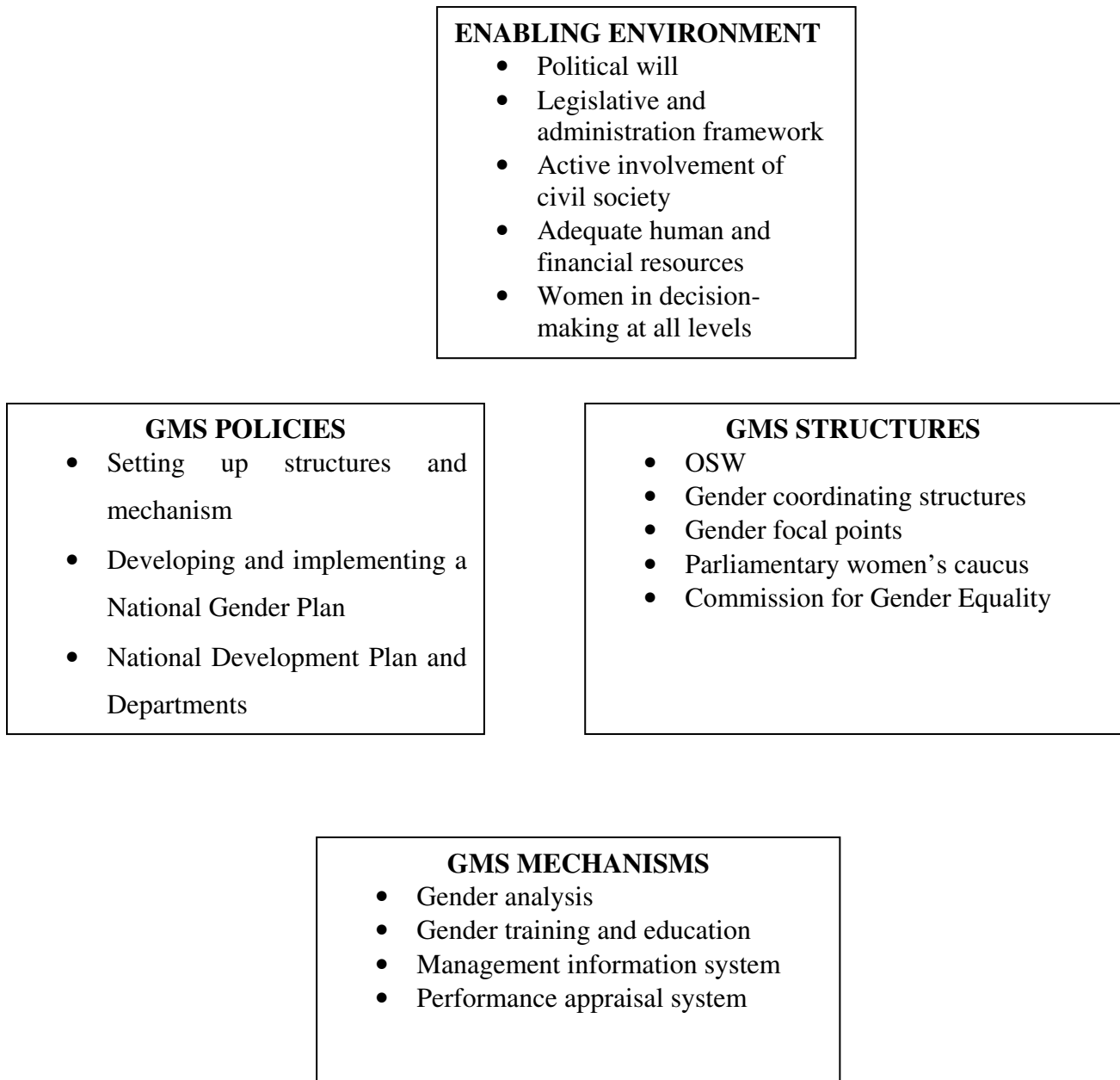


Figure 2.3 The Gender Management System

Source: National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (20001: 44)

These national policy measures had to be cascaded down to Provincial Departments and be operationalised at the micro unit of the education system, which is the school.

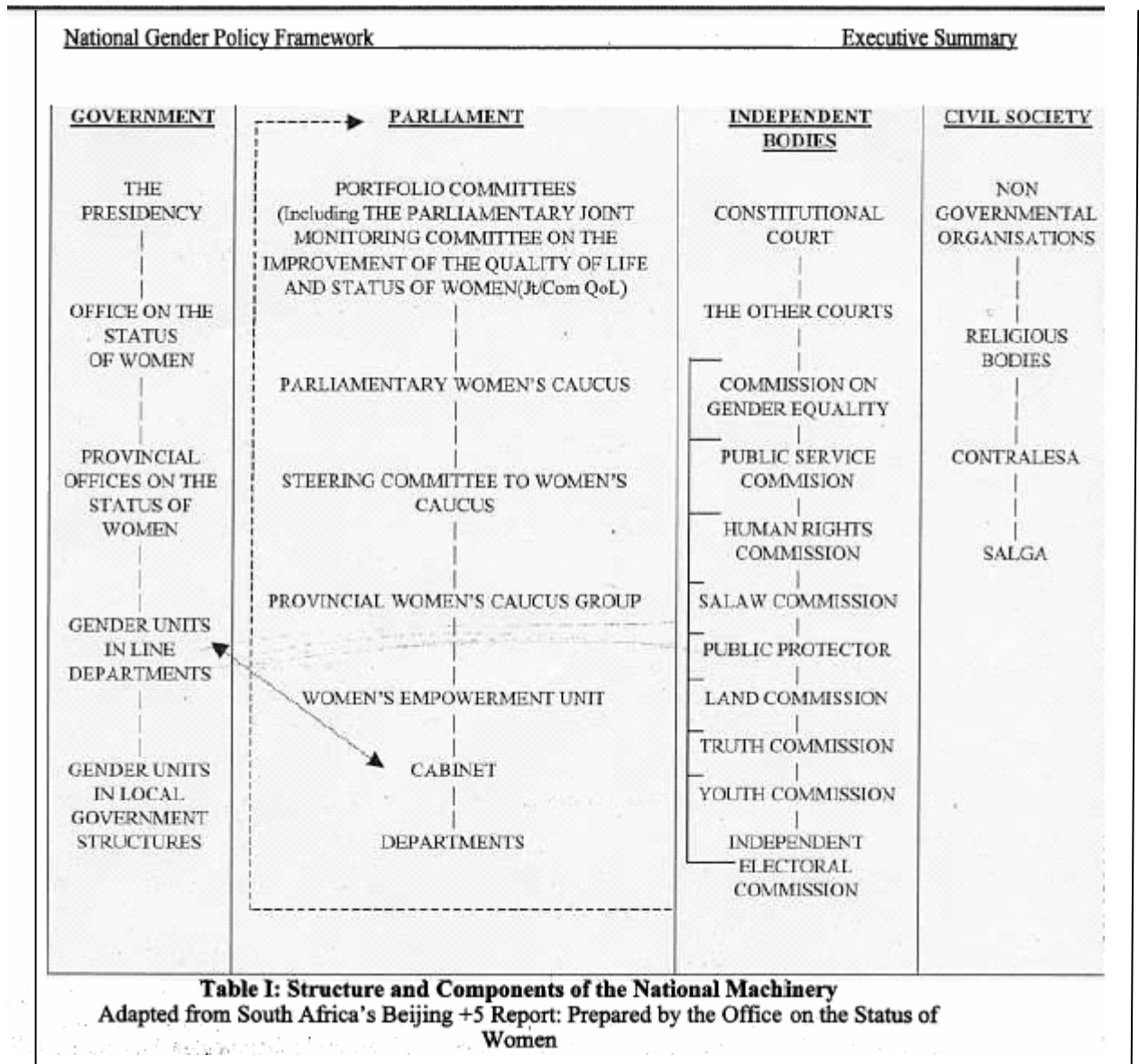


Figure 2.4 National machinery for gender transformation

Source: National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (2000: vii)

The commitment of the Mpumalanga Department to the call for gender justice evident in the Umnotho Development Report (2003), which outlines the employment equity plan of the province, affirmative action measures, benchmarks and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. At the school level, the policy has not become a reality. This prompted the researcher to conduct this study.

Another policy document found in the schools investigated was “The Policy Handbook for Educators” (2003). Teachers have individual copies of this policy document. This policy discusses details of school governance. The possession of copies by individual teachers was vital for this study, as it implied that information was available to all. In the researcher’s experience, only the principals used to have such documents. This deprived all women followers’ access to information. It is a positive aspect on the part of the Mpumalanga Department of Education that accessibility to information is a prerogative for all and not just a chosen few. In the past, deprivation of information and other resources was a powerful weapon used to discriminate against women

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the literature review on feminism, transformational leadership and democratic governance. The existing policies that government has instituted are well documented but not effectively implemented at school level yet. Despite the presence of these documents in schools not many of the affected are taking a proactive stance to bring about change. The absence of staff buy-in has lessened the impact of well-intentioned policies such as the Integrated Quality Management System.

Chapter 3 describes the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the rationale of using a qualitative research approach and a case study design to answer the research question of what keeps women out of leadership roles, whether personal or public challenges. According to Babbie and Mouton (2002:270), qualitative research distinguishes itself from quantitative research in terms of the following key features, which make it suitable for this study. Research is conducted in the natural setting of social actors. The actor's perspective (the insider or emic view) is emphasized. The primary aim is in-depth ("thick") description and understanding of actions and events. The main concern is to understand social action in terms of its specific context (idiographic motive) rather than attempt to generalise to some theoretical population. The qualitative researcher is the main instrument in the research process.

3.2 THE CASE STUDY METHOD

3.2.1 What is a case study?

According to Huysamen (1994:168), "the term case study pertains to the fact that a limited number of the units of analysis such as an individual, group or institutions are studied intensively. Case studies are directed at the understanding of the uniqueness and the idiosyncrasy of a particular case in all its complexity."

Yin (cited in Phendla 1995:34) defines a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident and in which multiple sources of evidence are used". Yin states further that a case study is used because:

- i) It gives explanations to the causal links in real life.
- ii) It gives meaning to contemporary phenomenon researches that are too complex for a survey or experimental strategies.

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- iii) It is able to describe or even predict the contemporary phenomenon in the real-life context in which an intervention has occurred
- iv) It illustrates the intervention itself.
- v) It is used to explore the situations and outcomes.

Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004:32) state that in a case study “the main assumption is that a phenomenon is investigated as a bounded system”.

3.2.2 Advantages of the case study method

Cohen and Manson (cited in Blaxter, Hughes & Tight 2001:73) outline the following advantages of case studies:

- i) Case study data are drawn from people’s experiences and practices and so are seen to be strong in reality.
- ii) Case studies allow for generalizations from a specific instance to a more general issue.
- iii) Case studies allow the researcher to show the complexity of social life. Good case studies build on this to explore alternative meanings and interpretations.
- iv) Case studies can provide a data source from which further analysis can be made. They can, therefore, be used for further research work.
- v) Because case studies build on actual practices and experiences, they can be linked to action and their insight contributes to changing practice. Indeed, a case study may be a subset of a broader action research project.
- vi) Because the data contained in case studies are close to people’s experiences, they can be more persuasive and more accessible.

3.2.3 Disadvantages of the case study method

Yin (1989:21) (cited in Phendla 1995:35) discusses the following disadvantages of case studies:

- i) Case studies lack rigour. They are sloppy and allow equivocal

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evidence or biased views to influence the direction of findings and conclusions.

- ii) They provide very little basis for scientific generalisation. For example, from a single case to a larger population or universe, but they are generalisable and too theoretical propositions.
- iii) Case studies are time consuming and result in immense, unreadable documents.
- iv) Good case studies are very difficult to do. Skills for doing good case studies have not been defined yet.

Denscombe (1998:40) highlights the following disadvantages of case studies:

- i) The point at which the case study approach is most vulnerable is in relation to the credibility of generalisation made from its finding. The case study researcher needs to be particularly careful to allay suspicions and to demonstrate the extent to which his case is similar to, or contrasts with, others of its type.
- ii) On the technical side, the boundaries of the case study can prove difficult to define in an absolute and clear-cut fashion. This poses difficulties in terms of deciding what sources of data to incorporate in the case study and which to exclude.
- iii) Negotiating access to case studies settings can be a demanding part of the research process. Research can flounder if permission is withdrawn.
- iv) It is hard for case study researchers to achieve their aim of investigating situations as naturally as they occur without any effect from their presence. Because case study research tends to involve protracted involvement over a period of time, there is a possibility that the presence of the research can lead to the observer effect.
- v) Unwarranted though it may be, case studies are often perceived as producing “soft” data. The approach is accused of lacking the degree of vigour expected of social research.

3.3 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The study targeted four secondary schools in the area. These were referred as A to D. The schools were of particular interest because of the male-dominated profile of their senior management teams. The researcher was well acquainted with the Ermelo circuit as she had worked in various schools during her twelve years of teaching in the area.

The initial step was meeting the principals of the schools identified as part of the study, to brief them on the study and its purpose and to ask for consent to conduct the study in their schools. In addition, the researcher left a copy of the proposal with each principal. It was decided to involve the principals as participants in this study even though they were male and the study is about women and leadership. The reasons for doing so were to assure them that this was not about “seizure of power” and that they had a role to play in redefining leadership within their schools, as well as to conscientise the principals to the “untapped” human resource in their schools, which, if unleashed and harnessed, could be of benefit to the whole school community. The 2004 elections in the country, and President Mbeki’s initiative of bringing more women into the Cabinet helped set the tone and support for the study. Engaging the principals enhanced rapport between the principals and the researcher. Mouton (2001:295) emphasizes the importance of building rapport as a factor that improves the reliability of the data.

The women participants were identified through personal contact. The respondents were all teachers who

- had been in the teaching profession for more than ten years
- had a postgraduate degree or equivalent qualification
- were not in a promotional post.

Spradely’s (1979) (cited in Babbie & Mouton 2002:288) three criteria, namely,

enculturation, current involvement and adequate time, were used in selecting research participants. Enculturation means the participants have been around quite a while to be able to provide information. With regard to current involvement, the second criterion the participants were still in the profession as teachers, and adequate time pertains to availability. The selection was therefore a purposeful one (Mouton 1996). A total of six female teachers and four male school principals agreed to participate in the study. Consent forms were given to the participants, emphasising that participation was voluntary, and that their anonymity as well as their confidentiality was guaranteed and that the study would not harm them in any way. The women were named woman A, B, C, D, E and F.

3.4 DATA-COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS

The researcher used basic individual interviews, focus group interviews and participant observation as data-collection instruments.

3.4.1 Basic individual interviews

Babbie and Mouton (2002:289) define a qualitative interview as “an interaction between an interviewer and a respondent in which the interview has a general plan of inquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in particular words and in a particular order. A qualitative interview is essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and peruses specific topics raised by the respondents. Ideally the respondent does most of the talking, these interviews are semi-structured and open-ended, allowing the informant to speak for him or herself instead of responding to a set of predetermined hypothesis-based questions.”

The researcher was in control of the interview but offered the interviewee more space. The interviews were face to face and were conducted once with all the female participants and the male participants due to time constraints. Henning et al (2004:74) state that face-to-face interviews are an advantage in that they help build “the kind of intimacy that is common for mutual self-disclosure”. Interviews with the school principals were conducted at the schools. The school context helped the researcher

gather contextual data on aspects that might not be conveyed verbally. The interviews with the female participants were conducted outside the school context to ensure that their anonymity was maintained. The interviews opened with the “scene-setting phase” (Henning et al 2004:75). The research topic, the aim as well as the role of every interviewee in the study were clarified. The researcher also explained how the interview information would be used and the duration of the interviews. In this study, the interviews lasted for between 30 and 45 minutes with each participant.

The researcher asked questions on issues of gender discrimination in relation to leadership in secondary schools and the implementation of the existing national and departmental policies on gender transformation. Probing questions were asked to ensure the respondents clarified their responses. The respondents were given an opportunity to ask questions for clarity as the interview progressed. This allowed for rich data as it provided a glimpse of what ideas, meaning and feelings the interviewee had. Off the record responses were allowed, and at the end of each interview session the researcher summarised the whole conversation to the respondent in order to check whether the researcher’s understanding tallied with the respondent’s and was a true reflection. All the information was gathered through writing notes and using a tape recorder.

3.4.2 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews were conducted separately with the principals and the female teachers to avoid confrontation or feelings of intimidation. Morgan (1997:3) states that focus groups can be used in multi-method research to enrich the data gathered through other qualitative methods and maintains that once individuals are put together researchers are confronted with a new set of data. Morgan (1997:10) lists the following advantages of focus groups:

- They provide opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction on a topic in a limited period of time.
- They provide direct evidence about similarities and differences in the participants’ opinions and experiences as opposed to reaching conclusions

from post hoc analyses of separate statements from each interviewee.

According to Powell et al & Single (cited in Gibbs 1997: 2), focus groups are an advantage in that participants will share their experiences, and move on to coming up with resolutions to problematic issues identified. Focus groups are an advantage in that they can be seen as a forum for change.

For this study, the focus groups sessions lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were held once with each group. The sessions of interaction were captured in detailed notes.

3.4.3 Observation

Other data that informed the study was collected through participatory observation. The advantage is the researcher gains firsthand experience of the subjects of the research (Creswell 1994:150). Creswell (1994:81) contends that the purpose of observation is to “debunk the myth that interviews tell it all”. Issues of interest were mostly the school environment itself and the responses of individuals to the questions. The observation sessions were overt sessions for ethical reasons, although the presence of the researcher might have influenced the behaviour of the research subjects. Babbie and Mouton (2002: 295) maintain that the “obtrusive presence of the researcher wears off with time”.

Henning et al (2004: 84) state that observation is associated with participation in the everyday lives of the participants who exemplify the research topic-in-action. They emphasise that participatory observation “helps the researcher to have some insider’s experiential knowledge and not only the knowledge of the inside of the group. One has to participate experientially in the daily activities of the group in order to come to some interpretive understanding of the meaning of the activities and repertoires in the context.” Participatory observation enables the researcher to find a thick description of the everyday events, feelings and meanings within the lives of the subjects of the research. Henning et al (2004:85) state that this description “does not contain empirical information per se, a thick description comes from an integration of these and a thorough analytical discussion and argument”. The use of participatory

observation helped the researcher to capture data that could not be captured through verbal accounts.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Creswell (1994:153) emphasises that data analysis should not be left for last, therefore data analysis was in-built and continuous throughout the study.

Henning et al (2004: 104) describe data analysis as “content analysis through open coding”. Tesch’s (1990) (cited in Creswell 1994:155) method of data analysis was adopted. This was executed as follows:

- a) Transcribing all the tape-recorded interviews verbatim.
- b) Reading and re-reading the transcribed interviews and notes to make meaning of the data.
- c) Coding the units of meaning identified.
- d) Grouping related codes into categories.
- e) Grouping the categories into themes.

The findings were then recorded.

3.6 VALIDATION OF THE STUDY

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) (cited in Babbie & Mouton 2002:274-278), the following aspects ensure the validity of qualitative research:

- Credibility – The respondents agree that the researcher has adequately represented their construction of reality.
- Transferability – The readers of the research agree that the conclusions reached related usefully to the settings, which they themselves were immersed in.
- Dependability - The researcher was able to identify his or her effects during fieldwork and discount them.

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- Conformability - The analysis is grounded on the data and inferences based on the data are logical and of high utility.

For this study to meet the above criteria, the following aspects were built into the research:

- Member checks were done. This means going back to the source of information and checking both the data and the interpretation. This was done immediately after each interview by reading back and summarising key information to the participants.
- Biases were acknowledged. The researcher acknowledged that her biases as a woman, teacher, wife and mother might impact on the study.
- Triangulation. This means the use of multiple methods to collect data and multiple sources of data.

3.7 CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed the research design and methodology followed to ensure that the data gathered was reliable. The methods allowed and facilitated systematic data collection, recording and analysis. Rapport was established between the researcher and the respondents thus enhancing the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 4 presents the research findings.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the findings of the individual interviews, focus group discussions and observation, done in investigating the personal and public challenges facing Black women in their quest for leadership that have resulted in gender imbalance and male-dominated leadership echelons in the secondary schools that formed part of this study. A male-dominated leadership is contrary to South Africa's political ideals of gender justice and social justice in general. This study involved six women educators and four male principals from the various schools.

The study asked the following critical questions:

- What are the personal and public challenges that keep women away from leadership?
- What institutional support is given to develop and nurture women leadership?
- How is government policy on gender translated into implementable practice?

Verbatim excerpts from the interviews are included to capture highlights of the interviews. This chapter further presents the strategies for redress suggested in the focus group discussions matched to the identified barriers.

A tabular presentation of the SMT's profiles on the basis of gender for the different participating schools is shown followed by the reasons given for this state of affairs. Table 4.1 below illustrates the slow transformation of gender profiles in the schools under investigation even after the ten years of democracy in South Africa.

Table 4.1 Gender profile of the SMT in the various school

Name	Principal	Deputy Principal	Head of department	Total male/ female
School A	1 male	2 male	4 male/1 female	7/1
School B	1 male	1 female	5 male /1 acting female	6/2
School C	1 male	2 male	5 male	8/0
School D	1 male	1 male	4 male/1 female	6/1
TOTAL				27/4

4.2 FEMALE EDUCATORS' RESPONSES ON PERSONAL AND PUBLIC CHALLENGES

4.2.1 Personal barriers

The respondents reported the following barriers:

- fear
- a feeling of inadequacy
- tension between personal and professional life

4.2.1.1 Fear

It should be noted that only two of the six women focused on personal barriers; the other four downplayed these and appeared ready and determined to venture into leadership. The two women had never applied for a promotional post in their career life. They cited improving their knowledge as the reason for studying further.

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Their fear was merely that of facing the challenges of being in a promotional post. One respondent stated, *“Even the male principals have it tough. Teachers do not want to go to class coaxed or coerced. My fear is, as a woman, that things might be worse. Teachers are very demoralised.”*

This response highlighted the tendency by women to set men as the yardstick against which they judge themselves. The notion that if men cannot do it, women will definitely not, is a known stereotyped thinking in the African culture. With regard to the problems created by patriarchy in Africa, Mikell (1997:33) points out that all the autocracy, the military regimes and the coups are troubles mainly embedded in the male-dominated governments of most African States. This suggests that the inclusion of women could improve matters. The inclusion of women in school leadership has the potential to improve the condition in schools, considering the fact that leadership is not about power.

4.2.1.2 Feeling of inadequacy

All six women reported a feeling of inadequacy, which they attributed to the fact that they had not been exposed to any position of leadership. The theoretical knowledge acquired in degrees or documents on school governance still requires practical implementation. According to one respondent, leadership *“requires the right attitude, maturity to handle being misunderstood, being sabotaged, being criticised and being damned in cases where you have taken an unpopular decision. It’s a whole lot of maturity that you do not learn in books, but you develop through exposure to situations and through experience. Leadership is not quite in books, it is out there. The test is out there.”* Chowudhury’s (2002:179) simulation strategy indicates that people have to have experiential learning in leadership, which means giving an individual opportunity to do things practically. Such practice would help women in this case to build their self-confidence.

4.2.1.3 Tension between personal and professional life

Wolpe et al (1997:275) state that the concept of triple roles (reproduction, production and community) and double shift for women is not about to disappear. The six women

expressed the need to take care of their families as their other priority. Running a school could interfere with their personal lives, bringing unhappiness, stress and interfering with time for family and other social roles. The issue of promotional posts resulting in strained relationships was emphasised because promotional posts require time to attend to matters of the day-to-day activities of the school. Some of the women felt ready to tackle the challenge head-on, even though trouble might ensue. The women emphasised the need for change in the gendered nature of social roles.

4.2.2 Public barriers

The public barriers raised in the individual interviews related mostly to human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) and were therefore closely allied to institutional support:

- the stagnant nature of the education system
- lack of management-related capacity-building programmes
- lack of a culture of teaching and learning in the schools that formed part of this study.

4.2.2.1 Stagnant nature of the education system

According to five of the women, the education system has very little, if any, chance for upward mobility and this is the reason for gate keeping by their male counterpart. For example, two respondents stated, “*Within the education system it takes twelve or more years to get to the next promotional level.*” “*People wish each other away so they can get an opportunity for a higher position. The issue is, once you are a teacher you will die a teacher unless one has to leave the system.*”

Table 4.2 indicates the qualifications of the interviewed women.

Table4 .2 Qualifications profile for the women participants

	Qualifications
Woman A	B.A. (Unizul) B.Ed. (UDW) Diploma in educational management (RAU). Diploma in human resource management
Woman B	B.Paed. (Unizul) B.Ed. (Unisa) Project management (Wits)
Woman C	BA (Vista) HEd (Vista) BA Honours (Unisa)
Woman D	STD (TCE College) BA (Unisa) B.Ed. (Unisa) MPA (Pta)
Woman E	BSc (Natal) (Further Education Diploma) University of Durban-Westville Project management (Wits)
Woman F	B.A. (RAU) B.Ed (Unisa)

Table 4.2 indicates the diplomas and degrees, which four of the women consider could help them leave the education system. The qualifications profile shows that the women had attained Relative Education Qualification Value (RSQV) 16, which is supposed to be a bonus on their part. Four of these women had applied for promotional posts several occasions without success and they felt *delayed, frustrated, cheated*, and even *alienated* to use their own words about their experience of the school situation.

It should be noted that the researcher did not profile the principals' qualifications because the minimum requirement for a promotional post is the basic RSQV13, which is an approved first degree plus seven years of teaching experience

4.2.2.2 Lack of management-related capacity-building programmes

All six female respondents attested to being sent to workshops but the focus of most workshops was classroom oriented. Since the inception of the new curriculum, all training focuses on its implementation. The government's Skills Development Program for teachers offers mostly classroom-related subjects. Training is also focused on the challenge of HIV and AIDS. Only those in management positions go to workshops that relate to management and leadership. This further advantages men. Opportunities for capacitating women into leadership are non-existent. The respondents indicated that gender equity was not given priority. Sexual division of labour persists in schools with the women doing the teaching and the men, the leading.

4.2.2.3 Lack of a culture of teaching and learning

According to all six women, schools are a big challenge to manage these days and restoring a culture of learning and teaching in township schools is a big challenge that frightens women off leadership particularly because "*the problem is bigger than the schools*".

The environment in all four schools showed a reluctance to work by both learners and teachers. The tendency was for the principals to literally drive learners into the classrooms and monitor whether teachers honoured their periods. The women highlighted that they were aware that the children and their male colleagues would treat them with disrespect just because they were women. One respondent stated that "*leading a school can be made a nightmare by people's attitudes. If these were to change things would be different, but transformation still has to happen in people's minds.*"

4.2.3 Responses on policy/legal framework

The issues raised on this aspect related to non-adherence to government policy on

- appointments to vacant posts
- appointments of staff to acting posts

4.2.3.1 Appointment to vacant posts

Of the six women, the four who may be described as aspirants to leadership, had applied and been short-listed and interviewed. Their problem was that main interview and selection procedures were corrupt.

The South African Schools Act, 64 of 1996, the Employment of Educators Act (EEA), 76 of 1998 and the Labour Relations Act, 66 of 1995 cited in the Policy Handbook for Teachers (2003), are the core policy documents, outlining procedures for the filling of posts, including advertising, short-listing, interviews and appointments. All appointments have to be based on the following criteria:

- the ability of the candidate
- the principle of equity
- the need to redress past injustices
- the need for representivity.

The main aspect on this process is that the school governing body (SGB) is given the mandate to recommend the suitable candidate.

According to the four respondents, in most instances the SGB members are not literate enough to understand the questions they ask in the interviews, let alone make sense of the answers. One of the respondents stated that *“these SGB members cannot even rephrase a question when asked to do so by a candidate”*. Another interviewee stated that the candidate earmarked for a post was most often already known and scored before the interviews to ensure that SGB members did not make a mistake in their scoring and some candidates were given the questions prior to interviews *“so going to interviews is just a process of ensuring that the formalities of interviewing are done”*. The four female teachers maintained that the role of the labour unions was also not that of observations as required by the above-mentioned policies, and instead of advancing fair labour practice pushed their male members into positions. One interviewee stated, *“It is so discouraging to apply for a promotional post because you*

know already the principal will appoint a friend from outside the school or a well-known South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) activist.”

4.2.3.2 Appointment of staff to acting posts

One of the women complained about the appointment of staff members to acting posts: *“Appointment to acting posts is another area that is not well articulated. In some instances the SGB members do the recommendation; in others, the staff are requested to vote for a candidate, and in other instances, principals use their own discretion.”* She further raised concern that once in an acting capacity that candidate was already earmarked for the post so even if the post were to be advertised and candidates called for interviews, the candidate for the post was “already known”. According to this woman, the participant school principals did not adhere to policy in this matter.

4.3 RESPONSES TO FOCUS GROUP QUESTION

In the focus group, the interactive discussion was mainly on finding ways to turn things around to ensure that women overcome both personal and professional barriers to leadership. As an introduction to the discussion, all the factors raised as barriers in the individual interviews were tabled to acquaint everyone with the experiences of the others. Table 4.3 below indicates a match between the identified barriers and strategies suggested by the women to overcome the barriers.

Table 4.3 Matching barriers to strategies

BARRIERS	STRATEGY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear • A feeling of inadequacy. • Tension between the personal and professional life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create support forums for women where they could share ideas, build each other up
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interview procedures and selection clouded with corruption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The level of literacy for SGB members to be an important criterion in their selection

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A neutral statutory body to conduct interviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-adherence to policy on the appointment of staff to acting posts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rigorous monitoring mechanisms by both the National and Provincial Departments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The slow pace of promotions in the education system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures to enhance promotion of staff be implemented
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of school-based management-related capacity building programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management-related workshops, staff development programmes within the school to provide opportunity for everyone in the context of the school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a culture of teaching and learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Minister to give decent salaries to teachers and more effort by government to better the quality of life for all the people in the community

4.4 MALE PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The study found many of the stereotypes that men still hold about women with the male principals. The principals were asked to account for the dearth of women in their SMT structures in order to elicit responses on the challenges to gender transformation. It should be noted that not one of the principals paused to think or admit they did not understand what challenges the women face. All the principals pointed a finger at the women for various reasons.

4.4.1 Reasons for the dearth of women in SMTs

According to the principals, women

- are passive
- do not make themselves visible
- do not avail themselves
- are their own enemies
- fail to market themselves

The general view of the principals was that women, no matter how highly qualified they were, did not want to engage themselves in the day-to-day activities of managing the school. One of the principals commented: *“If I were to announce that female teacher so-and-so (no name specified) was principal, it would be the joke of the year, as she would not even be known to some of the children in the school, whilst male teachers are very engaged even though they are not SMT members.”*

Women were regarded as their own enemies in that they did not even want to be elected to committees where they could participate as decision makers for the running of the school. In one school the principal mentioned that one particular year there was a fight between two female teachers because one’s name had been put forward for appointment to the Finance Committee of the school. Basically, according to the principals, women resisted committing themselves to most activities of the school.

One principal strongly blamed *“the failure of women to market themselves in interviews. The interview panel usually look for more than the good certificates that most of the women have. Women do not even know the very policies that school governance is based on. Their attitude at interviews is like they are begging for a favour.”* Another principal maintained that *“women are so disgruntled about most interview results. They always assume there is some reward to male teachers, but service delivery in teaching goes beyond going to the classroom. One has to be*

involved with community structures, parents, and the business sector, something which women do not want to do.”

4.4.2 Responses on policy

Asked about their plans for gender transformation, it should be noted that none of the male principals had any plan for gender transformation. Policy documents on Employment Equity from the Provincial Department were there, but nothing was done to implement them. All four schools did not have an Employment Equity Plan of their own, in line with the provincial one. On the question of adherence to policy filling posts, all the principals said the procedures followed in their schools were fair.

4.4.3 Responses on institutional support

The question of capacity building as far as leadership is concerned was totally non-existent. All the schools had no structures or programmes for staff development. The government's development appraisal system had met with resistance from labour unions. The principals were still attending workshops on the revised version, the Integrated Quality Management System. One principal stated, “*It is difficult to coach or mentor all the women, although some show potential for growth into leadership. There can be need to choose a few, which could bring accusations of nepotism.*”

4.4.4 Responses on leadership

Asked to explain their leadership style, all the principals regarded themselves as democratic and transformational leaders on the basis that they negotiated decisions they took with all the stakeholders. One of the principals argued that transformational leadership is about involvement of others. The researcher is of the opinion that transformational leadership goes further than that, to addressing equality in the participation, an element the principals did not mention at all.

4.5 MALE PRINCIPALS' RESPONSES TO THE FOCUS GROUP QUESTION

At the focus group, as with the female participants, the male participants interacted mostly on what needed to be done to turn things around, particularly ensuring that they did not appoint women who were not capable of participating meaningfully in leadership. Table 4.4 depicts the broad strategies proposed by the male principals to overcome the barriers identified.

Table 4.4 Barriers and broad strategies

BARRIERS	STRATEGIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of Employment Equity Plans for the schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each principal had to work out an Employment Equity Plan for their school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No platform, formal or informal meetings to enhance sharing of ideas among staff members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create forums for dialogue, formal and informal, to enhance understanding between male and female teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Absence of school-based staff development structures and programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify training needs and set up training programmes and structures within the schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to the implementation of some policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lobby for the implementation of the policies that would enhance teacher development, like the resisted development appraisal and IQMS policy, as these would benefit all staff members

4.6 CONCLUSION

Most of the information gathered during the case study indicated that much still needed to be done to ensure gender justice in schools. The women participants highlighted a number of barriers, which need to be challenged and changed now that they had been identified. The male principals admitted to having no plans for gender

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transformation. It was evident though that the schools needed support from their circuit offices and provincial offices to ensure the implementation and monitoring of policy.

The interviewees attested at the end of the interviews that it had been a time for self-confrontation on issues that they had either shunned or taken for granted.

Chapter 5 concludes the study and makes recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to examine the personal and public challenges that women, especially Black women, face in their quest for leadership in secondary schools. The research was conducted with a view to identify the barriers and develop strategies that would redress the situation. This chapter presents the conclusions of the study and makes recommendations based on the evidence reflected in the data collected and the core readings. The themes that emerged from the data analysis were:

- tension between the personal and public realms
- lack of institutional support
- non-adherence to policy

5.2 RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS

5.2.1 What are the personal and public challenges that keep women away from leadership?

The study found that there is a lack of assertiveness by the women to change their circumstances. The fact that two among the participants had not even applied for a promotional post and that all of them attested to a feeling of inadequacy and fear despite the good qualifications they had is indicative thereof. This lack of assertiveness emanates from the historical marginalisation and exclusion of women from leadership, as well as the gendered nature of social roles burdening women with other responsibilities that men are “exempted” from. This is what feminism challenges.

According to Thompson (2001:17), feminism is a moral and political struggle of opposition to male domination. According to Beasley (1999:28), all feminist theories

express the idea that women have had and continue to have a rough deal because of their sex. Domination of females by males is unacceptable and needs to be challenged and changed. Collins (1990:224) stresses that women need to resist oppression at both individual and institutional level.

Blackmore & Kenway (1996:17) attests to the tension that women experience because of the other social roles they have to play as expected by their communities. The very argument by their male counterparts that women are invisible and not available for the day-to-day running of the school suggests the entrenched stereotypes that the men have against women.

5.2.2 What institutional support is given to nurture and develop women's leadership?

Institutional support entails removing all institutional barriers and ensuring the growth and development of those disadvantaged by the school system, among other things. Four of the women highlighted how the governing body members and union members serve as gatekeepers in interviews perpetuating exclusion, indirect discrimination. The absence of plans for gender transformation at all four schools raises a question about the claims by the principals that their leadership was democratic. Democracy advocates transformational leadership. The key features of transformational leadership (Brady & Hammet 1999:162) are being

- critical
- educative
- ethical
- transformational

Brady and Hammet (1999:162) state further that transformational leadership is about presenting alternative forms of leadership to the traditional, hierarchical, bureaucratic approaches.

The principals did not reflect any of the above attitude in their leadership. Democracy may then be regarded as not fully operational. This was evident in the absence of

gender transformation in these institutions. The sexual division of labour was still prevalent, with the women doing the teaching and men, the leading yet the principals regarded themselves as democratic. There was a gap between their claim to democracy and what was happening in practice in their schools. Harris et al (2003:18) maintain that transformational leadership has the capacity to inspire others to grow. Fullan (2001:3) asserts that moral leadership means acting with the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of those you are leading. This was totally not so in the schools investigated. The women were disgruntled to the extent of feeling alienated from their work.

The importance of capacity building cannot be overemphasised. The absence of structures and strategies for the development of women leadership is an unacceptable situation. Capacity building ensures the sustainability of any institution. Capacity building also ensures diversity in leadership in that not only a few are involved but a wide spectrum of people can participate meaningfully in the leadership relationship. The absence of leadership-related development programmes within these schools is a sure way of maintaining the status quo. Fullan (2001:2) states that “deep and sustained reform depends on many of us and not just a few”. The schools did not have any programmes for staff development or even structures dealing with staff development. Capacity building could be achieved through strategies of mentoring, coaching, learning communities and simulation (see chapter 2).

5.2.3 How is government policy translated into practice?

The South African government’s commitment to gender equity was discussed in chapter 2. This is evident in the development of all the relevant policies and the setting up of all the necessary machinery for the implementation of those policies. The Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998 is the legislative framework from which institutions can develop their plans for transformation of the workplace so that it is inclusive of all the previously disadvantaged groups: women, the youth and people with disability. At a macro level, the Mpumalanga Department of Education has committed itself to employment equity (see chapter 2 of the Umnotho Development Report 2003).

At micro level, the school level, it was disheartening to find that nothing was done to implement those government policies. The schools investigated did not have employment equity plans in place in spite of the warning by the OSW that gender issues should not be treated as “something at the end of the day” (National Policy Framework for women Empowerment and Gender Equality). This process of gender transformation was literally left at the policy-making level, and the subsequent process of implementation was “left to chance”. There were no monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in place and there was therefore no accountability by anyone to anyone. Non-adherence to policy on appointments simply served to perpetuate inequality and the status quo. All this is clearly regarded as indirect discrimination (Wolpe et al 1997).

5.3 CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

This study found that women face an array of conflicting decisions when they think of moving into leadership. The contributory factors were articulated by the women themselves (see chapter 4). Lessons learnt from this study are discussed below.

5.3.1 Need for networking structures

There is an urgent need for women to organise themselves into associations of support for each other. In these networks women can identify other women who can mentor them on issues that affect women. Any mentoring that male principals can do will not be accompanied by much understanding of what women deal with in their everyday lives. In these associations women can unlearn some of the negatives, like fear and a feeling of inadequacy. These would be replaced by positive attributes like positive self-esteem, assertiveness and skills on how to strike a balance between their personal and professional life.

5.3.2 Programmes for capacity building

Secondary schools in the area of study do not have programmes for capacity building, particularly in aspects of leadership. Capacity building is important for an institution as it ensures meaningful participation by all. The productivity of individuals is always

enhanced because as individuals acquire new skills their self-esteem is enhanced. This could eliminate some of the concerns raised by the principals on the women being passive and invisible. It would be a positive aspect if women were involved in the development of the programmes, so that the programmes encompass the needs of women. Such programmes could be the initiative of the school instead of schools awaiting instructions from their provincial or circuit offices. Transformational leadership is educational.

5.3.3 Monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation

The education system has advanced a lot in the formulation of policy on school governance. The missing link is in the aspect of implementation. The absence of implementation is partly due to non-adherence to the existing policies. Principals and educators are acquainted with what should happen on issues like appointment of staff, but they are able to “cheat” the system because there is no monitoring and evaluation of the progress of the school in, for example, redressing gender imbalances. Schools need not only be checked on whether they do implement, but should be supported and assisted in the process of implementing policy.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations.

- (1) Schools must not just be inundated with policies, with very minimal training in the implementation, so that the implementation process is left to chance. Provincial, regional and circuit offices should provide support that not only initiates change but also sustains the change process.
- (2) Monitoring systems should be put in place, not with a policing attitude, but with a willingness to help.
- (3) The school should set up a transformational unit or forum where gender issues are discussed openly and all the negative attitudes, misunderstandings and

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biases are talked to. This would be a platform for creating creative tension, because gender transformation can lead to heated discussion. These discussions can lead to a changed culture within the schools. The principals should not only concern themselves with changing the system, but the culture within the system.

- (4) An independent body should be set up to help run interviews in schools to minimise the chances of the system of appointments being manipulated or compromised by the inefficiency of those involved.
- (5) The National Department should think of strategies to open the system for upward mobility.
- (6) Capacity building and the existing skills development programmes should extend to leadership-related training and these should be inclusive, bringing on board the previously disadvantaged groups.

5.5 CONCLUSION

It is evident that gender transformation in these schools is not imminent. The schools did not have any plans or the machinery to bring about change in place. Neither the male principals nor the disgruntled women were making an effort to bring about change. Apparently schools require a lot more support in policy implementation than calling principals to a workshop. Schools should be assisted in developing their plans for change, setting up structures, programmes and monitoring mechanisms. The inclusion of women in leadership should be viewed not only on the basis of gender transformation but also as a means of improving the quality of education through leadership diversity. It should be borne in mind also that this is about more than just increasing the number of women leaders, it is about creating a culture for women's growth and development. It is about creating an enabling environment for women filled with respect. It is about the elimination of prejudice and stereotypes against women.

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