



Policy and practice: enabling or disabling women's aspirations for secondary school principalship

by

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DECLARATION

I, Charity Sharon Phakathi (Student no. 12310931) declare that the study “**Policy and practice: enabling or disabling women’s aspirations for secondary school principalship**”, which I hereby submit for the degree of MEd at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.

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Policy and practice: enabling or disabling women's aspirations for secondary school principalship

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to understand how policy and practice enables or disables women's aspirations for secondary school leadership. The study focuses on women deputy principals and woman principal who have applied for principalship and details their accounts of the resonances and dissonances of policy and practice. This qualitative study uses a narrative design. The data collected from three female deputy principals, one of whom was acting as a principal and one a newly appointed principal at the time of the interviews. The main form of data collection was a series of interviews with each participant. The findings confirm that the policy environment is favourable for women, but in its implementation, there are factors that constrain the aspirations of women for secondary school leadership. Gender stereotypical perceptions of women by the school governing bodies and a patriarchal social context are seen as significant constraints for women seeking leadership positions. It was also evident that prevailing school leadership frequently works with school governing bodies to undermine and thwart the ambitions of female deputy principals and those unions rarely play a supportive role to potential women leaders.

Data is analysed using the Capabilities Approach. In this study, the Capabilities Approach suggests that environmental and social conversion factors seem to be obstacles affecting women's agency to achieve the desired outcome of becoming a principal.

Key words: women; leadership; secondary schools; gender; education policy; women principals; Capabilities Approach.

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List of abbreviations

BA	Baccalaureus Artium degree
Bed	Baccalaureus Educationis degree
CA	Capabilities Approach
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DWCPD	Department for Women, Children and Persons with Disability
EEA	Employment of Equity Act
EEA	Employment of Educators Act
EMIS	Education Management Information System
HOD	Head of department
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School governing body
SMT	School management teams
STD	Secondary Teacher's Diploma
PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
REQV	Relative Education Qualification Value
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers Union
NAPTOSA	National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
IIEP	International Institute for Educational Planning



Table of contents

DECLARATION.....	i
CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE.....	ii
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
List of abbreviations	v
Table of contents.....	vi
List of figures	viii
List of tables	viii
CHAPTER 1	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Introduction and background	1
1.2. Rationale.....	5
1.3. Problem statement.....	8
1.4. Research aim and questions	9
1.4.1. Main research question	9
1.4.2. Research sub-questions	9
1.5. Conclusion	9
CHAPTER 2.....	10
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
2.1. Introduction	10
2.2. Women and leadership.....	10
2.3. Leadership styles of women	12
2.4. The policy environment in South Africa	14
2.4.1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)	14
2.4.2. The National Educational Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996)	15
2.4.3. The Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998).....	16
2.4.4. The South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996).....	18
2.4.5. The Employment of Educators Act (No. 76 of 1998)	19
2.5. Cultural and social factors that constrain and/or enable women’s aspirations towards principalship?.....	22
2.5.1. Socialisation and sex-role stereotyping	22
2.5.2. The limited networks, role models, mentoring and sponsorship for women aspiring to principalship.....	25
2.6. Theoretical framework	27
2.7. Conclusion	28
Chapter 3.....	30
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	30
3.1. Introduction	30
3.2. Research design.....	30
3.3. Sampling.....	31
3.4. Data collection	33
3.5. Data analysis	36
3.6. Trustworthiness	37
3.7. Limitations of the study.....	37
3.8. Ethical considerations.....	38
3.9. Conclusion	38



CHAPTER 4	40
WOMEN TELL THEIR STORIES: PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS	40
4.1. Introduction	40
4.2. Stories of the women	42
4.2.1. Nokuthula (deputy principal)	42
4.2.2. Thembekile (deputy principal)	46
4.2.3. Fundisa (deputy principal)	49
4.2.4. Nqobile (Principal)	53
4.3. The school environment	56
4.3.1. Lack of support from principals	56
4.3.2. Lack of mentoring, poor networking and limited sponsors	58
4.3.3. Poor collegial relations and lack of support from staff	59
4.3.4. Lack of support from district officials	60
4.4. Conclusion	61
CHAPTER 5	64
WOMEN TELL THEIR STORIES: SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS	64
5.1. Introduction	64
5.1.1. Gender stereotypes	64
5.1.2. Women's perceptions of their leadership and social expectations of female leaders	68
5.1.3. Family responsibilities.....	71
5.1.4. Violence as a deterrent for women aspiring to principalship	72
5.1.5. Poor representation of women in political and decision-making structures.	73
5.2. Conclusion	76
CHAPTER 6	77
ANALYSIS: APPLYING A CAPABILITIES APPROACH	77
6.1. Introduction	77
6.2. The external policy environment versus an unsupportive institutional environment	78
6.3. The socio-cultural environment.....	80
6.4. The absence of external support	83
6.5. Conclusion	85
References	87
Annexures	
APPENDIX A: Assent letters for the participants	98
APPENDIX B: Letter to the Mpumalanga DBE requesting permission to conduct interviews	101
APPENDIX C: Core research questions answered by the participants	104
APPENDIX D: Application to conduct research	105
APPENDIX E: Language editing statement	106

List of figures

Figure 1.1: Percentage of female principals compared to the percentage of female teachers	2
Figure 2.1: Capabilities theory	27

List of tables

Table 1.1: National statistics on representation of males and females in secondary school leadership and management	6
Table 1.2: Statistics of the district under study (Mpumalanga)	6
Table 2.1: Workforce profile population distribution by business type	18
Table 4.1: Composition of schools' management teams in participants' schools	41

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1. Introduction and background

It is widely accepted that women all over the world have had to face discrimination because of their gender, ethnicity and class, as well as racial discrimination. Discrimination against women is perpetuated mainly by religious and cultural beliefs (Maposa & Mugabe, 2013). In South Africa, it was the apartheid policy, which discriminated against black people; black women suffered the most as they suffered gender, race and class discrimination. Black people and other groups like non-whites and people with disabilities were denied opportunities to equal and quality education in South Africa. Instead, they received Bantu education, which was neither free, compulsory nor useful. Bantu education ensured that black people were kept at the lowest level of the labour market, doing menial jobs. A lack of education and necessary qualifications led to underrepresentation of women in leadership and management positions in both the public and private sector. According to the South African Board for People Practices (2011), 14, 4% of black women are employed in agriculture, 9, 3% in clerical work and only 26, 2% in management.

Moorosi (2007) has identified access to schools as a key factor in the lower education attainment among girls. In developing countries such as Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, young girls were denied access to secondary education. Traditionally, girls attended only primary school and were then expected to become good wives and mothers (Sperandio, 2011). In many developing countries, the situation has not changed. The International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) points out that globally, 39 million girls of lower secondary school age are currently not enrolled (IIEP, 2011). According to Grant Thornton (2012), the number of women in senior management positions in the private sector was still at 21% globally. South Africa was at 28%, with Russia leading with 46%. In education, research has shown that it is also a challenge for women to access senior management and leadership positions, particularly secondary school principalship. Hungi's report (2011) on gender equity in school managerial positions confirms that there is still a lot of bias in favour of males in the allocation of managerial positions at schools. The IIEP

Outcome Report (2011) concurs that males still dominate senior management and leadership positions. Despite many policy interventions aiming at the promotion of female principals, only at schools in Lesotho, Botswana and the Seychelles does the percentage of female principals match the percentage of female teachers (Figure 1.1).

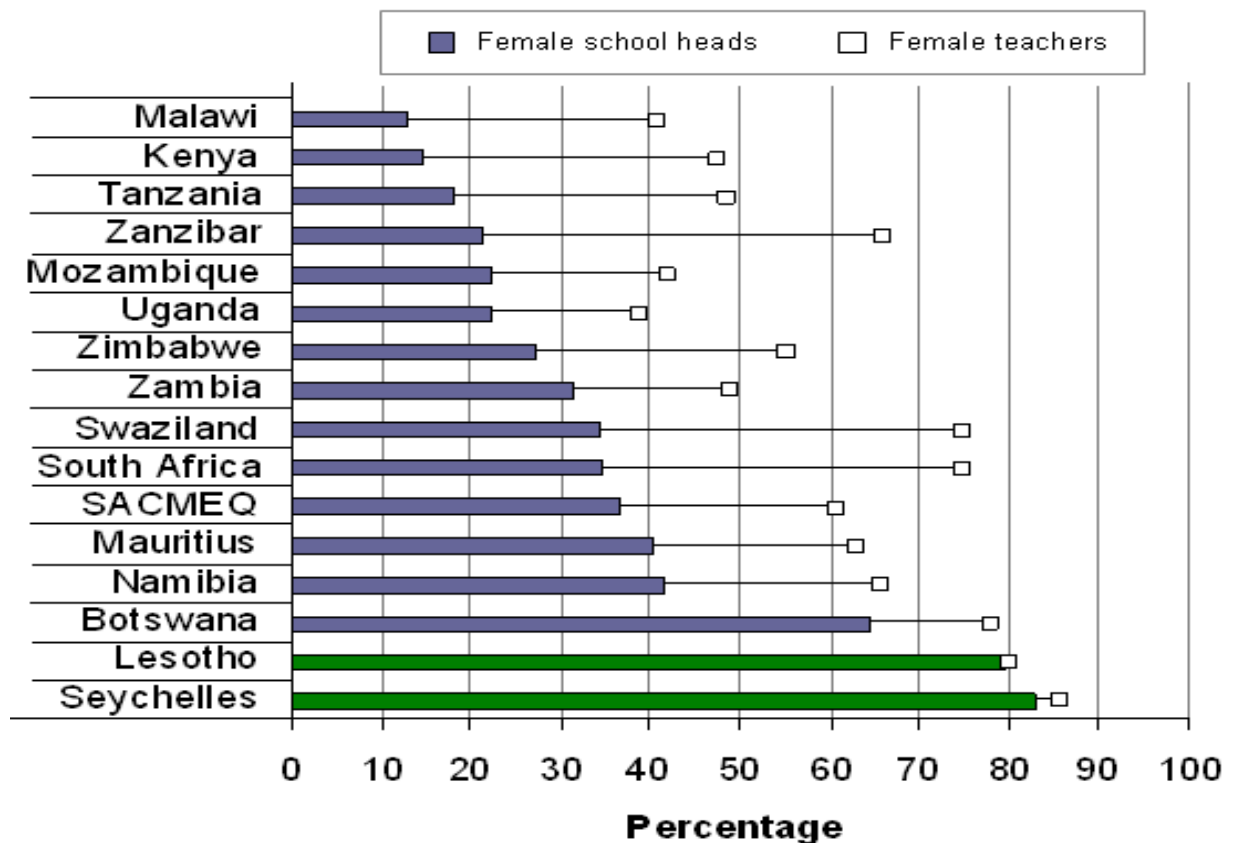


Figure 1.1: Percentage of female principals compared to the percentage of female teachers
Source: Extracted from the South African Human Rights Commission Equality Report (2012)

In Uganda the constitution and affirmative action measures are there to ensure equal opportunities for women and prohibit unfair discrimination against women. Sperandio and Kagoda (2009), in their study on advancing women into educational leadership in Uganda, found that despite legislation and policies that affirm them, women still experience numerous hidden barriers. This seems to be the trend in most African countries. For example, in Tanzania, Figure 1.1 indicates that female teachers comprise 50% of the teacher corps, but fewer than 20% are principals. The same report shows that in 2010 only 0, 8% of girls completed a full secondary school education. A study conducted by Nzeli (2013) in the Kangudo district in Kenya on

challenges faced by female head teachers indicated that out of 45 secondary schools in that district, females headed only 10. This supports the analysis in Fig.1.1, where in Kenya less than 20% of the head teachers and less than 50% of teachers are women. Eighty per cent of the participants in Nzeli (2013) study cited social factors as interfering with the management of school affairs and the promotion of women to leadership positions.

Internationally, the scenario is similar. In England, studies conducted on the barriers keeping women out of senior leadership positions found work–life balance, the inability to move and structural barriers to constrain the aspirations of women towards secondary school principalship in England (Moreau, Osgood & Halsall, 2005). Equal opportunity policies are in place with the Equal Opportunities Commission, but in practice, this often does not happen. In Greece, the constitution is clear on the equality of all Greeks before the law; at policy level, equal opportunity policies were adopted. The study by Kaparou and Bush (2007) on the career progress of female principals in secondary schools in Greece still indicates underrepresentation of women in secondary school principalship. It is evident that across Africa and globally, access to educational leadership is constrained by numerous social and contextual factors.

To show its commitment to the liberation of women, South Africa became a signatory to many international agreements. In 1995 at the 4th World Conference on women held in Beijing, South Africa ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) where the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action was adopted. The report by the Commission for Gender Equality (2012) shows that South Africa still experiences challenges ranging from lack of resources and underfunding, constraining the implementation of gender mainstreaming programmes with regard to compliance with requirements of CEDAW and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. In 1994, South Africa held its first democratic elections and thereafter a number of legislations were enacted. A new Constitution was adopted in 1996, with the Bill of Rights that affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom confirmed (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2008). Section 9(3) of the Constitution makes illegal unfair discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sex, religion, and marital status, ethnic or social origin. Section 9 of the Constitution also expands the right to basic education for all South Africans. The

National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996), Section 4c, makes provision for “achieving equitable education opportunities and the redress of past inequality in education provision including the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of the status of women”. In 1998, the Employment Equity Act (No. 55 of 1998) (EEA) was enacted. Chapter II Section (5) prohibits unfair discrimination and encourages employers to take steps to promote equal opportunities in the workplace. The Act also allows affirmative action measures to be taken to redress the imbalances of the past, when women, black people and people with disabilities were discriminated against.

The Employment of Educators Act (1998), Chapter 3(6), makes provision for the Director-General in the Department of Basic Education or head of department (HOD) to appoint, promote or transfer educators in public and further education and training institutions in provincial departments. Appointments will be based on the recommendation of the school governing body (SGB). Section 7(1) of the Act clearly states that in making those appointments, the ability of the candidate and the need to redress the imbalances of the past in order to achieve broad representation should be given consideration. In 2009, the Department for Women, Children and Persons with Disability (DWCPD) was established to ensure equity and access to development opportunities for vulnerable groups. This Ministry strives to ensure the creation of an enabling environment for translating policy mandates into empowerment and advancement. Despite all the legislation aiming to provide women with opportunities, the statistics of women in managerial positions in the private and public sector tell a different story. There seems to be a disjuncture between policy and its implementation. Clearly, other contextual factors militate against the appointment of women to positions of leadership.

It is evident that the South African legislative environment strongly supports gender equality and the promotion of women to leadership in education as well as all other public and private sectors. While it is arguable that personal, organisational and cultural barriers may constrain and sometimes prevent women from becoming leaders, this study seeks to understand why women who are already on the pathway to leadership, that is deputy principals, are rarely able to take the final step to becoming principals. The society is expecting them to observe traditional women’s role. In my experience, female deputy principals at South African secondary

frequently manage schools in the absence of principals who are attending meetings with departments and other stakeholders. It is not clear why, when vacancies open up, those female deputy principals are not considered for the principalship, even in schools where they are serving. It is possible that South Africa is not doing enough in terms of succession preparation to empower women to aspire to senior positions of leadership. Presently, there is a programme to equip female principals on how to deal with challenges they are facing however, the programme does not extend to female deputy principals or education specialists to equip them and inspire them to apply for senior positions. Their main pathway to leadership is to improve their formal educational qualifications.

This study therefore aims to understand why women still experience difficulties accessing secondary school principalship despite a supportive legislative environment.

1.2. Rationale

Twenty years into democracy in South Africa, underrepresentation of women as leaders, especially in secondary school principalship still persist, despite the fact that they are in the majority (Lumby & Azaola, 2014). In the area where I work, there are three circuits with 26 secondary schools. Only women head two of those secondary schools and seven have female deputy principals. The Mpumalanga provincial statistics show that in secondary schools, 29, 3% of principals are women, while female deputy principals comprise 42, 36%. In a speech in Pretoria, the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga (2013) raised a concern, saying that "There are only 8 210 female principals and 14 337 male principals appointed to permanent posts (in South Africa)". There is a disparity of 26, 7% when comparing the percentage of male versus female principals where the number of female teachers in the education workforce was 123 131 in 2013. Table 1.1 shows the statics of women versus males in secondary school leadership. It is clear that irrespective of the fact that women are in the majority as teachers, few of them are in leadership positions.

Table 1.1: National statistics on representation of males and females in secondary school leadership and management

Year	In the country	Female educators	Male educators	<u>Number of secondary schools</u>							
				<u>Female deputy principals</u>		<u>Male deputy principals</u>		<u>Female principals</u>		<u>Male principals</u>	
				N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2011	10 489	126 834	82 251	2 540	24,1	4 065	38,7	2 677	25,5	6 753	64,3
2012	10 552	130 622	81 938	2 174	20,6	2 448	23,1	2 468	23,3	5 890	55,8
2013	10 108	123 131	78 175	4 648	45,9	4 048	40,0	2 249	22,2	7 002	69,2

Source: EMIS (2015)

The situation is not different provincially; women are underrepresented in secondary school principalship. The following table gives the provincial picture.

Table 1.2: Statistics of the district under study (Mpumalanga)

Year	District	Female educators	Male educators	<u>Number of secondary schools</u>							
				<u>Female deputy principals</u>		<u>Male deputy principals</u>		<u>Female principals</u>		<u>Male principals</u>	
				N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2011	728	10 039	7 521	75	10.3	189	25.9	114	15.6	331	45.4
2012	729	10 123	7 563	221	30.2	399	54.7	170	23,3	567	77.7
2013	707	9 820	7109	200	28.2	356	50.3	147	20.7	521	73.6

Source: EMIS, 2015 DBE

According to a snap survey of (2012) there is a difference of 50% when comparing the number of male principals, namely 3 594 (75%), and female principals, namely 1 227 (25%) in secondary schools in the country. Table 1.1 shows that the number of female principals nationally in 2012 is lower than that of 2011. This is cause for concern given that women remain the largest number of educators in the country. As a deputy principal myself, I had conversations with a number of my female colleagues who were aspiring to become principals, yet still remained in the role of deputy principal. A question that kept cropping up was why female deputies were failing to achieve principalship in secondary schools.

Legislation prohibiting discrimination, such as the Constitution and the EEA, meant to give women and members of other designated groups opportunities to climb the ladder into senior leadership positions, is in place. It is therefore important to evaluate whether these policies serve mainly to challenge but leaving the structures

perpetuating male hegemony of leadership intact. It is evident that legislation cannot change people's perceptions and attitudes. However, when women engage in debates in their own and academic communities, they are given a voice so that people know who they are, how they want to be treated and that they have a lot to offer if only the playing field could be levelled.

The purpose of this study is to understand from the point of view of female deputy principals as to why they have not progressed to a principalship. It will give a voice to women who are frustrated in their deputy role while aspiring to be principals. It will encourage women who are aspiring to a principalship. The study will furthermore highlight the barriers and may help decision-makers recognise why policy does not always translate into practice. On 6 June 2014, the Minister of Basic Education appointed a task team headed by Prof. John Volmink to investigate allegations of 'jobs for cash' corruption involving SGBs and unions allegedly selling promotional posts. The Ministerial Task Team report (2016) confirmed the allegations of promotional posts sold to educators. SGBs, office-based officials and teacher unions were found to be working as a network that 'sold' senior positions. This practice worsens the situation of women aspiring to leadership positions who are already disadvantaged by their gender. Underrepresentation of women in many structures, e.g. SGBs and unions means that they cannot fight this network. It is important that after the forensic investigation concludes its work the Department of Basic Education should take action against the perpetrators. I hope that this may clear some space for women to be motivated to apply for leadership positions. Other studies on the barriers to progression facing women in South Africa were conducted. In a study conducted in Soshanguve in Pretoria, Chabalala (2006) found that women still faced discrimination based on their sex, and that SGBs still clung to the stereotype on that men make better managers than women. What is surprising is that in many cultures, women have been entrusted with leadership in their families when their husbands work far from home. Hence, the question is why qualified women are not being entrusted with leadership positions in schools. According to Chabalala (2006), there is a great need for all the stakeholders in education to assist the school community to "unlearn" the stereotypes that have kept women away from top leadership and management positions. The findings of the study by Chabalala (2006) confirm that there have been some changes in the progress of women into leadership positions,

but that they are taking place very slowly and the country has not reached gender equality in educational leadership. This study examined the policy environment, socio-cultural factors and the school environment in South Africa in an effort to understand what barred female deputy principals from becoming principals. It sought to give feedback as to what is actually happening on the ground versus what is envisaged by the legislation and different promotion policies. It added to the body of research on women's leadership, as literature on African women in educational leadership is very limited (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Not much has been written on female deputy principals' experiences, what motivates them to aspire for principalship, what inhibits or prevents them from aspiring for principalship. This study has highlighted the importance for our country to take the preparation and professional development of deputy principals seriously.

The study has created awareness among women aspiring for secondary school principalship about the challenges that lie ahead of them. It is envisaged that the findings may help them to develop strategies to deal with such challenges and learn from those that succeeded. The stories of the women in this study may offer healing and assurance to those who have tried but not succeeded. Kaparou and Bush (2007) have called for more research in secondary school leadership to explain what they call "invisible barriers" on the career progress of women in secondary school principalship. The IIEP Outcome Report (2011) has called for more qualitative research that listens to the life histories and voices of those we claim to represent.

1.3. Problem statement

In high schools, females are underrepresented as school principals although they are in the majority as teachers. Although affirmative action policies in South Africa favour them, the reality is that policy does not seem to translate into practice. The number of women that are gaining management positions has increased, but promotion to a principalship remains difficult. Statistics on EMIS (2015) reflected in tables 1.1 and 1.2 indicate that there are significantly fewer women in higher-level managerial positions.

1.4. Research aim and questions

This study aimed to understand from the point of view of women who are deputy principals in secondary schools, why they have not progressed to principalship. The following are research questions that guided the study

1.4.1. Main research question

How does policy and practice enable or disable female deputy principals aspiring to secondary school principalship?

1.4.2. Research sub-questions

- What is the policy environment in basic education in South Africa?
- How does the school environment enable or constrain the aspirations of women who are deputy principals towards secondary school principalship?
- How do cultural and social factors affect female deputy principals' aspirations to secondary school principalship

1.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explained the background and rationale for this study. Chapter 2 outlines the literature review and includes a response to sub-research question 1. In Chapter 3, I explain the methodology I have used to carry out the study. Chapters 4 and 5 focus on each of the research sub-questions. In Chapter 6, I conclude the study by analysing the data using the Capabilities Approach (CA).

CHAPTER 2

Literature review

2.1. Introduction

This literature review begins by briefly looking at leadership and the leadership style of women, as this study is on women who are leaders in their schools. I will then address the first research question by offering insight into the South African policy environment with a view to understanding how it enables or disables the aspirations of female deputy principals to secondary school principalship. The following legislations will be examined: The Constitution (1996), EEA (No. 55 of 1998), South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996) (SASA), National Education Policy Act (No. 27 of 1996) and Employment of Educators Act (No. 76 of 1998).

In response to the second research question, my literature review will focus on how cultural and social factors affect female deputy principals' aspirations to a principalship. From the literature review, it became evident that few studies have been done on policy on promotion in South Africa.

2.2. Women and leadership

Gonos and Gallo (2013) define leadership as a "dynamic process of influencing people who, in certain organisational conditions, can have an effect on other members, with the aim of meeting the objectives of the group". Bush (2008) sees leadership as having three main characteristics, namely leadership as influence, values and vision. Leadership should be more about a leader's influence on subordinates than on exerting authority and it is directly linked to values. The issue of whose vision should be enacted is a much-debated topic and does not form part of the study. The leader should have a shared vision for the school, taking into account curriculum aims and content as envisaged by the government. Leithwood and Rhiehl (2003) have identified three broad categories of practices important for progressive leadership. Leaders are expected to set directions through a shared vision, develop people by communicating and creating high performance expectations, and develop the organisation, amongst other things by managing the environment.

There are different theories to leadership. Leadership theories have been criticised for being androcentric, depicting only the masculine perception of leadership. The fact is that males have always been in leadership, and that it has been seen in the light of what men are doing. Much literature on leadership has been written by men, with their own point of view of what leadership should be or is. This narrow view has disadvantaged women in terms of opportunities to be entrusted with leadership, particularly positions in senior management.

Management of Public schools in South Africa according to SASA 16(3) is the responsibility of the principal representing the HOD, with the help of the deputy principal and the members of HODs. On the side of governance, SASA 16(1) gives the SGB, which is made up of the principal ex officio, parents, teachers and learners from the representative council of learners (RCL) powers to govern the school. Their duties are described in the Employment of Educators Act and SASA respectively. In many countries, such as the USA and Canada, there are special training programmes for principalship, where certificates are awarded to those training to become a principal. A new qualification in South African universities, the Advanced Certificate in Education (Management) has been introduced to help principals manage their schools better.

The position of a principal holds too much power. The principal is seen as the heart of the school and is therefore under pressure to perform. The principal as a leader is expected to perform management tasks and take on leadership responsibilities.

There are certain qualities associated with being a good principal. Due to the prevailing gender stereotypes, some of those qualities are not associated with women. Women find themselves in what Eagly (2007) calls a double bind, society expects women to portray communal qualities such as kindness, warmth, gentleness and concern for others, together with the agentic characteristics such as being assertive, directive and confident expected of leaders. Mestry and Schmidt (2012) in their study in Johannesburg high schools on the experiences of female principals found that stakeholders viewed female principals as weak, submissive, highly emotional and unfit to be leaders. These perceptions are disabling for women who aspire to be principals one day.

The role of a principal has changed over the years. South Africa's legacy of apartheid policies has also infiltrated the schools. Schools had a top-down management. That had to change after 1994 when the new democratic legislation was enacted. Top-down management was associated with authoritarian leadership, where principals had instructed teachers and learners without their having a say (Logan, 1998). Principals as instructional leaders were expected to manage the curriculum and instruction, supervising teaching and promoting an instructional climate (Botha, 2004). According to Steyn (2002), from 1994 principals had to start providing leadership, empowering their subordinates instead of just giving instructions. Hence, principals are no longer expected to be experts of learning, but rather be learning experts (Botha, 2004). They must keep abreast of current research and knowledge on learning and teaching, and create conditions for teaching and learning.

Principals now have to involve many stakeholders in decision-making as required by SASA. Parents, learners and teachers now have to be part of the decision-making process. The cultural, racial, gender, class and age diversity requires skilled principals who can respond to diversity. Principals are nowadays faced with many societal problems that also affect schools, like violence, the high rate of unemployment, poverty and use of drugs.

Certainly, these issues require SGBs to think seriously about whom they place in leadership. People need certain qualities and leadership styles to be able to respond to these societal problems.

2.3. Leadership styles of women

Women experience leadership differently from their male counterparts. Often they start on a back foot due to a long-standing lack of exposure to leadership. Moorosi (2010) indicated that exposure to middle management experience for female participants strongly boosted their confidence to apply for principalship.

The fact that leadership was defined by male standards of leadership has disadvantaged women. In a study conducted in Kenya by Matheri, Cheloti & Mulwa (2015) on principals' gender and management effectiveness in secondary schools,

they found that male principals rated high on discipline, while female principals rated slightly higher on the financial management side.

A number of studies have been conducted on leadership styles of women locally and abroad. Studies comparing male and female leadership styles have found men to be more autocratic than women. Certain leadership styles have come to be associated with women. Women have been found to be more transformational, collaborative and democratic in their leadership (Bass, 1999; Eagly, 2007 & Paulsen, 2009)

Bass (1999) suggests that transformational leadership serves to inspire or influence its followers to do or perform beyond all limitations. Transformational leaders distinguish themselves by mentoring and empowering their subordinates. This supportive role is compatible with gender expectations for women. It makes women more acceptable to society as leaders. Transformational leaders treat each individual differently, provide vision and instil pride in their employees. As a result, they gain respect and trust (Eagly, 2007; Bass, 1990).

Women are collaborative and democratic in their leadership by allowing teachers to participate in decision-making. Democratic leaders enquire about the feelings and opinions of group members, encouraging everyone to participate freely. A democratic leadership style increases job satisfaction and enhances people's skills (Bhatti, Shaikh, Hashmi & Shaikh, 2012). A study by Rosette and Tost (2010) found that the democratic leadership style puts female leaders at an advantage. When people have a say in decision-making, they develop ownership of that organisation and run with its vision. Women can also be autocratic and transactional leaders; these leadership styles make them unpopular.

As organisations change and women begin taking bigger strides into management, these differences between male and female leadership are becoming smaller every day with men increasingly adopting female styles of leadership. Coleman (2003) presented a paper at UNITEC on the gender and school leadership experience of female and male secondary school principals. The findings were that leadership styles were changing and that more males were embracing feminine characteristics in their leadership style. There are now few differences between men and women overall. Effective leadership should help create and enforce organisational policies

and practices that create a positive organisational environment that promotes employee empowerment.

2.4. The policy environment in South Africa

The year 1994 marked the beginning of a new era in South Africa with the swooning in when the new democratic government. The years following 1994 have seen several laws and policies enacted in attempts to redress the imbalances of the apartheid policy. A number of policies were developed specifically to address gender equity and inequality. Research has proven that established organisational policies and procedures are working against the advancement of women, although they are seemingly gender-neutral (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). Historically, education had been used as a tool to deny black women opportunities to exercise their choices. The new policies had to address the issue of access to quality education for young girls and black people, ensuring the participation of women and black people in positions of decision-making where they were previously excluded. The CA evaluates those policies on how they expand opportunities for the designated groups, in this case woman, to live up to their values and perform their functions. A number of laws and policies were developed to address the barriers encountered by women and people of colour because of the apartheid system in South Africa. They are discussed in detail.

2.4.1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996)

Chapter 1(2) of the Constitution declares the supremacy of the Constitution. It lays the foundation for all the policies and legislation developed in South Africa. Any law that contradicts or is inconsistent with the Constitution is invalid. It upholds values such as dignity, equality, non-racialism and non-sexism.

Section 9(3) states: “The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth.” Discrimination against women is clearly prohibited by the Bill of Rights. However, this clause in the Constitution has not prevented discrimination against women in society and different organisations. The Constitution further allows for affirmative action for people that

were disadvantaged or unfairly discriminated against. Phendla (2004) has noted a contradiction in two clauses in the Constitution. Although it promotes equality, it still allows for traditional and customary law, which according to research disadvantages women and limits their freedom to perform their functions.

2.4.2. The National Educational Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996)

The National Educational Policy Act addresses the fundamental right of all South Africans to be educated. It aims to improve and protect the fundamental rights of all people, including the right of educators to be protected against unfair discrimination.

Section 4(c) states that the policy is directed toward “achieving equitable education opportunities and the redress of past inequality in education provision, including the promotion of gender equality and the advancement of the status of women” (Commission for Gender Equality, 2007). In South Africa, as in many countries, education was used as a tool to disadvantage certain groups, women included. In many cultures, parents did not want to spend money on educating girls. Those who were fortunate enough to go to school would drop out at primary school level, because they were socialised to accept that they had to be good wives and mothers, for which education was not necessary. Because education was used as a tool for disadvantaging other groups, South Africa ended up with different education systems for different races through the apartheid system. For instance, black people received Bantu education, which limited them to certain professions.

Chapter 7(18) of the White Paper on Education and Training (1995) addressed equal access to educational institutions and freedom of choice of subjects, as apartheid created different education systems according to race. Moorosi (2006) posits that education and training are very important tools for the development and empowerment of people. It is important for women to get access to quality education and to choose subjects that will enable them to access leadership positions. The White Paper called for affirmative action strategies to improve women’s opportunities to participate in numbers in leadership and managerial positions.

The goal of the White Paper was to give clear guidelines on development of affirmative action programmes and ensure accountability. One of its objectives was to speed up the achievement of the numeric targets. Chapter 2(iii) outlines important

principles that should guide the development and implementation of affirmative action programmes. The affirmative action programmes should aim at eradicating barriers to employment and advancement in the physical and organisational environment and to provide support for the designated group.

Such policies are good on paper, but what is envisaged by these policies has not been achieved yet. The Employment Equity Bill, which gave rise to the EEA, followed the white paper.

2.4.3. The Employment Equity Act (Act 55 of 1998)

Although the EEA is not education-specific, it is critical that educationists understand the Act if there is to be any hope of the Department of Basic Education achieving proportionate representation of women in senior management positions. EEA chapters 1(2)a and 1(2)b respectively outline the purpose of EEA as the promotion of equal opportunities for every person and elimination of discrimination. It allows for implementation of affirmative action so that the groups that were disadvantaged can be represented in all categories and levels at their workplace.

EEA Chapter 3 (20)1 requires employers to submit annual employment equity plans and to give a progress report to the Director-General on the implementation of their employment equity plans. The Commission on Gender Equity was appointed to monitor the implementation of the EEA. Reports show that equity plans are not adequately implemented. Promoting equal opportunities is very important, according to the CA. It is also important for women to be equipped with the necessary skills so that they can participate in the opportunities available to them. This will ensure that affirmative measures put into place do not backfire through the appointment of people who cannot do the work. This has been one of the disadvantages of the EEA.

Moorosi (2006) posits that the EEA does not ensure that women have the required skills and experience for taking up positions in male-dominated positions. Affirmative action gives opportunities to qualified people from the designated groups. Hence, if women do not have the necessary qualifications, the Act will not be efficient. This lack of qualifications results in what is called token appointments.

The implementation of legislation promoting equity resulted in formal equality but in practice, little has changed. According to Van Deventer (2003), the traditional

inequity between men and women is deeply embedded in societies and emanates from predominant religious schools of thought. Educators should help by becoming change agents within the schools and societies in which they work. It is evident that legislation on paper does not change people's attitudes, beliefs and values. According to Hicks (2012), the Commission on Gender Equity reported that patriarchal attitudes are still rife. The Department of Women Children and People with Disabilities ministry is not achieving its goals, as there is inadequate funding for gender equality structures and Women's Ministry. Kithatu-Kiwekete (2011) highlighted the importance of continuous access to gendered data by the gender machinery so that this can inform gender-responsive budgets. Accessing information by gender remains difficult, even from the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

(Mathur-Helm, 2004) has identified that there is still discrimination South African organizations and many are not friendly towards women. The inclusion of women in management positions is seen as a legislative requirement rather than an opportunity for an organisation to capture a competitive advantage (April, Dreyer & Blass, 2007). There are programmes to develop principals, such as Women In and Into Management and Leadership Positions but this programme capacitates only principals, leaving behind all other women in lower levels who might be aspiring to senior leadership. There are fewer opportunities for women to attend management development programmes compared to those for males (Nkomo & Ngambi, 2009). In their overview of the current state of affairs of gender equity in the workplace in the Human Rights Commission's Equality Report, Rapoo and Napo (2011) found the key challenge to be the lack of effective implementation, monitoring and application of appropriate sanctions in cases of poor compliance. This means that the policies are there, but not adequately implemented, as women are still not well represented in policy-making structures and leadership roles.

The absence of women in these decision-making roles is pervasive. The picture we get from studies by Nieuwenhuizen (2011) and Isaac (2012) is that black people and women are still severely underrepresented in most decision-making structures. White males continue to dominate, with white females fairly represented. Table 2.1 shows clearly that the progress of women, more especially African women, towards senior positions in leadership is very slow. In educational institutions the gap

between African men at 14, 7% and white men 37, 5% is big. African women are at 6,8% which is disproportionate to their number in the education sector.

Table 2.1: Workforce profile population distribution by business type

BUSINESS TYPE	MALE				FEMALE				FOREIGN NATIONAL	
	A	C	I	W	A	C	I	W	MALE	FEMALE
ALL EMPLOYERS	8,8	3,2	5,7	59,8	3,6	1,5	1,6	12,8	2,7	0,4
ALL GOVERNMENT	46,6	6,2	4,9	11,5	24,5	1,5	1,7	2,9	0,2	0,1
NATIONAL GOVERNMENT	41,3	6,0	6,3	12,1	23,5	2,5	3,5	3,8	1,0	0,0
PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT	45,1	6,3	3,0	7,8	30,2	1,5	1,1	4,9	0,0	0,0
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	48,3	6,2	5,0	12,2	23,5	1,2	1,3	2,1	0,0	0,2
PRIVATE SECTOR	6,3	3,0	5,8	63,4	2,3	1,4	1,6	12,9	2,9	0,4
NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION	15,8	5,5	2,7	35,5	8,2	3,7	2,7	22,8	1,7	1,5
PARASTATAL	42,8	3,5	6,5	17,2	19,9	1,8	1,6	5,8	0,7	0,2
EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION	14,7	4,4	5,7	37,5	6,8	2,0	0,8	26,6	0,9	0,6

Note: Above figures are expressed as percentages

KEY: (A)frican, (C)oloured, (I)ndian, (W)hite

Source: Adapted from the Commission of Employment Equity report (2012-2013)

2.4.4. The South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996)

SASA aims to provide for an educational system that will redress past injustices in the provision of education for all South African learners. The Act regulates the functioning of the SGB. Section 20(1) of SASA states the functions of the governing body of a public school, which is to promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners at the school.

Section 20(1) e of SASA directs the SGB to play a supportive role to the principal and staff in performing their professional duties. The SGB is responsible for developing various policies, including admission language and financial policy. These policies shape the school environment. The SGB has an important role to play in this regard, as learning institutions need to develop policies and curricula that

promote and support gender equity. This is in line with the Constitution, which states that people should have equal opportunities. Through the policies, the SGB should ensure that everyone in the school environment, namely learners, teachers, non-teaching staff and other stakeholders, can exercise their agency without the school milieu being the inhibiting factor. The SGB plays a very important role; it must help the school management to create an equitable environment in the school where all those concerned can enjoy the same opportunities to realise their potential. It is important to note that the SGB is responsible for governance, while the principal and the school management team (SMT) ensure the smooth running of the curriculum. A study conducted by Bagarette (2011) found that some the SGBs do not know where to draw the line between their governance responsibility and principals' professional management role.

To fulfil its responsibility of ensuring quality education, the SGB has been given powers by SASA to recommend the appointment of educators in schools. Research points to many challenges with giving so much power to the SGB. Governing bodies are not gender-balanced, which puts women who apply for promotional positions at a disadvantage. Most of the SGBs are still male-dominated. The women who sit in the same SGBs have also been stereotyped by the patriarchal societies they live in. The belief persists that men make better managers than females (Chabalala, 2006). Hence, it is very likely that the SGB would recommend males, particularly for principalship. To close this loophole, women have recourse to the protection of the Employment of Educators Act. Section 20(i) states; that the SGB should recommend the appointment of educators to the HOD as guided by the Employment of Educators Act (Proclamation No.103 of 1994) and the Labour Relations Act (No. 66 of 1995).

2.4.5. The Employment of Educators Act (No. 76 of 1998)

The Employment of Educators Act, Chapter 3(7)1, directs the HOD and the SGB to consider the ability of the candidate and ensure that all groups of people that were previously disadvantaged are also represented.

The Employment of Educators Act also gives the HOD the right not to appoint a candidate if the selection or interview procedure was not properly followed. The HOD considers the ability of the candidate and the need to achieve broad representation.

This raises a very serious concern when looking at SGBs in black schools. Many SGB members are unable to speak or read English which is the language used in interviews. This exposes them to the influence by the principal or teacher representative, who is frequently male. Many black parents, especially in rural areas, do not find English easily accessible to them (Biyela, 2008).

In a study conducted by Chabalala (2006) on barriers to promotions for females, the SGB is cited as a barrier as the participants felt the SGB members were not conversant with the latest legislated developments. In a study that he conducted on principals who were registered for an Advanced Certificate in Education programme at the University of the Free State, Bagarette (2011) confirmed that there were still challenges with SGBs in black schools as they did not understand their role and were unable to participate fully in decision-making, due, in part, to their literacy level. In his study conducted on SGB members at five secondary schools in Soweto, Mafora's (2013) findings concurred with those of Bagarette (2011) and Chabalala (2006). Mafora found that principals as ex officio members of the SGB were stifling the democratisation process of schools under the pretext that it was policy. In summary, it seemed that SGB members were not adequately qualified or prepared for their roles and were at times under the influence of the school principal.

The use of interviews as sole means of selecting people for promotions is also a barrier in itself. Many factors that could be discriminatory play a role in the interview sessions. Biyela (2008), in a study that he conducted in KwaZulu-Natal on the perceptions of teachers on school-based promotions, found disturbing evidence of corruption related to such interviews. Political affiliations played a role, where people would use their network connections to sway the SGB's decision in their favour. This tendency serves to deter people, particularly women, from applying for promotional posts since they do not have strong networks that can work in their favour.

Furthermore, parents in the SGB often lack management knowledge but are expected to sit on interviewing panels and score on questions pertaining to management. Women are generally unwilling to be members of SGBs because they have many domestic responsibilities. The participation of women in SGBs is further limited by the fact that meetings are mostly held in the evening. Evenings are not a suitable time for married women with family responsibilities and some lack transport

to attend the meetings (Christie, 2010). The SGB members themselves have not overcome the deep-rooted belief that males make better managers than females, especially in secondary schools.

It is a condition of Chapter 2(1) of the Educators Employment Act that no educator should be appointed on a permanent, temporary or contract basis without evidence of the relevant experience and qualifications for that position. The minimum requirement for a promotion to principalship in South Africa as stated in the Personnel Administrative Measures (1999) (PAM) chapter (B). (3.2.1) is Relative Education Qualification Value (REQV) 13, which is equivalent to a college diploma and 5–7 years of teaching experience, depending on the capacity of the school. When posts are advertised, a large number of candidates apply, making the shortlisting a mammoth task because of the minimum requirements stated in the PAM, 1999 do not apply because there are more applicants with higher qualifications. The experience required for a management position during shortlisting is not more experience in teaching, but experience in management, and this disadvantages women. This seems to be neutral and fair on paper, but in fact, it does not provide for women, who according to research have not been given adequate opportunities to develop management experience. Certain forces seem to militate against the progress of women into leadership positions that even policy measures cannot address properly. Kabeer (2010) concurs with Moorosi, (2007) that there is a gap between policy and practice. Kabeer posits that unless provision is made for women to participate fully in making policy and monitoring its implementation and to hold policy-makers accountable for their actions, the equality promised by these policies will never be realised. The President of the Republic of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, in 2010 appointed a National Planning Commission to develop a strategy to address poverty and inequality and take South Africa forward. The National Planning Commission's Diagnostic Report (2011) confirms that South Africa still has challenges in implementation of policies; hence, challenges in education, employment opportunities, divisions based on gender and race persist. The National Planning Commission (2011) with the intention of building a fair, prosperous and equitable country developed the National Development Plan Vision for 2030. However, as the next section shows, the positive policy environment in South Africa is further hampered by cultural and social factors.

2.5. Cultural and social factors that constrain and/or enable women's aspirations towards principalship?

Literature on women and leadership points to the effect of internal and external barriers that constrain the advancement of women into leadership positions, especially in secondary schools. Most of these internal barriers are intrinsic, within the women themselves, whereas external barriers can be traced back to the cultural and religious beliefs of society that permeate organisational culture and the socio-cultural contexts in which the women live (Maposa & Mugabe, 2013).

The patriarchal society with its stereotypical attitudes towards women creates certain expectations about women's role based on their sex. Stepping outside the expected gendered roles as constructed by society can result in isolation or disapproval. The following aspects will be examined to try to understand the factors that constrain or enable women's aspirations and how the legislation addresses those barriers:

- Socialisation and sex-role stereotyping
- Lack of networks, role models, mentoring and sponsorship for women aspiring to principalship.

2.5.1. Socialisation and sex-role stereotyping

Many studies conducted worldwide have identified sex-role and gender stereotypes as a constraining factor for women aspiring for leadership. Duehr and Bono (2006) define gender stereotypes as "categorical beliefs regarding the traits and behavioural characteristics ascribed to individuals based on their gender". Some characteristics or traits are ascribed to women and others to men. A study conducted by Pirouznia (2013) in Ohio on women aspiring for leadership found sex-role stereotyping to be the main barrier for women aspiring to a secondary school principalship. Gender stereotypes and traditional beliefs that a woman's place is at home raising a family have prevented women from participating in public life and aspiring for senior leadership positions. Culture influences gender roles and expectations. Children learn their cultural roles in learning institutions (schools) and at home. These gender roles affect how they behave and form relationships with one another. Culturally sanctioned roles for men and women make it difficult for women to be assertive and protect themselves. Girls are taught to be submissive, while boys are taught to be

dominant. Such roles create power inequalities between men and women and allow men to be dominant over women and limit their agency and ability to stand up for themselves. The enforcement of traditional gender roles tends to keep women in inferior positions. They help to sustain male power and keep women under male subordination. Because traditional gender roles are so entrenched, one could argue that women have accepted them as normal. People develop certain attitudes that influence their perceptions and expectations about a particular group of people.

Cultural factors in our societies affect the participation of women in management in general (Kiamba, 2008). Gender role expectations and stereotypes are some of the challenges to the progression of women into leadership (Lumby & Azaola, 2014). Women's responsibilities of being a mother, wife and manager at work are constraining their aspirations for principalship. The need to strike a balance between work life and family life in itself becomes a challenge (Paulsen, 2009). Sperandio and Kagoda (2011) posit that the socialisation of young girls to play secondary roles in society give them few opportunities to experience leadership and creates low aspirations. A male-orientated culture is unsupportive of women moving into leadership positions. A cultural understanding of gender discourages women from aspiring to positions of leadership. Booyesen and Nkomo (2010) conducted a study in South Africa using the intersectional analyses of gender and race to test the “think male think manager” hypothesis. Their findings confirmed the hypothesis for black and white men but not for black and white women. According to Booyesen and Nkomo, there was a difference in the case of women, where black women scored higher on the intra-class coefficient characteristics of women and successful middle managers. This means that women’s perceptions of themselves as leaders and their leadership styles have greatly changed. These findings make this study worth doing, because the question remains what then are the factors that are still constraining women’s aspirations of achieving senior management positions. The findings of the study also show that South Africa is still a patriarchal society.

According to Growe (n.d), society’s attitude toward appropriate male and female roles portrays women as non-task orientated and too dependent on the feedback and evaluation of others. It is important to understand that societal culture permeates a school’s culture. Its impact will be felt through the SGB, which has a say in recommending who should be employed as teachers as well as their promotion to

senior positions. This does not only affect the SGB. Kabeer (2010) found that teachers in Africa have different attitudes towards male and female students. Again, these attitudes are caused by cultural stereotypes. African teachers believe that boys need careers and girls need husbands (Msila,2013) Hence, girls are not encouraged to succeed academically, but to pursue caring professions, which reinforces messages about the inferior status of women, creating low self-esteem in these young girls. Ultimately, girls are not encouraged to seek leadership positions.

Research by Wadesango, Rembe and Chabaya (2011) on the assessment of the implementation of gender policies in South African schools in the Fort Beaufort districts indicates that teachers still reinforce inequality between boys and girls. Female and male teachers still assign cleaning duties to boys and girls differently, with girls being expected to sweep while boys move furniture. This kind of behaviour still socialises the young girls to the sex-role stereotypes, which inhibit their progress and participation in decision-making positions. It encourages low self-esteem and hence young girls are not encouraged to be leaders but always see themselves as serving under boys' authority. Religion cements the cultural norms that oppress women. Bangladesh, as part of the Muslim society, has refused women opportunities to obtain higher education qualifications in government schools. Women there have had to seek their opportunities in private schools (Sperandio, 2011). Women in SGBs are poorly represented and holds less influential positions hence, their presence is not effecting any change in the application of policies. Their votes do not count in the recommendations made by the SGB. The same goes for girls in the representative councils of learners, where girls are given the position of secretary or deputy chairperson, but not that of chairperson. This later influences their perceptions of leadership. They learn that they have to be always under a male leader. Likewise, many African families rarely spend resources on educating girls to college level. All of this serves to preserve the status quo that believes men are better leaders than women are.

The lack of support by males to women has been identified as a deterrent for women applying for principalship by women (Chabaya, Rembe & Wadesango, 2009; Moorosi, 2010). Apart from the lack of support, women have had so little exposure to management that they to a certain extent have accepted that it is not for them. A

study by Moorosi (2010) indicated that exposure to middle management experience for women participants strongly boosted their confidence to apply for principalship.

Although principalship is perceived as a demanding and very stressful position, there are deputy principals who see it as an opportunity to climb the ladder. Often, the salary increase serves as an incentive to apply for a principalship (Biyela, 2008). Deputy principals who are keen on self-development are most likely to see themselves as leaders in the future. In a study conducted by Brotschul (2013) on factors influencing assistant principals to pursue a principalship, the participants were found to have high level of self-efficacy. They believed that they had the potential to influence educational organisations in a positive way. These women see principalship as a way of giving back to their society. Irrespective of their aspirations, it is important that the employment environment in our country should help women to achieve what they value. To achieve equity and equality in education will take a combined effort of both women and men. That is why it is important for equity and equality measures to be directed at both helping women to advance and men to understand and accept women as partners and not outsiders in management. Women who aspire to leadership are sometimes frustrated by the lack of role models, mentors or people who can sponsor them.

2.5.2. The limited networks, role models, mentoring and sponsorship for women aspiring to principalship

Mentoring, networking and support from peers are important forms for preparation for women aspiring for principalship. Kellar (2013) posits, "Leaders have to recognise you as a leader and think that you have that potential and then nurture it". Feedback from one's superiors can make a great difference on how one sees and thinks of oneself; this is where mentoring and modelling come in. The social interaction that people have with their peers and supervisors influence their social identification within an organisation. The abundance of studies on mentoring of late shows the importance of mentoring in development of leadership (Msila, 2013; Coombs, 2004; Kruse, 2012; Moorosi, 2010) The underrepresentation of women in principalship, especially in secondary schools, is adding to the frustrations of aspiring women. They have limited networks, role models, mentors and people to sponsor them for promotional positions. Principals are in a better position to act as sponsors because of their dual role in the school management and SGB (Coombs, 2004). Principals

that have a patriarchal attitude may nevertheless sponsor women for senior positions. If not, then the battle for equality and equity will not be over as expected.

Peters (2012) concurs that the lack of role models or mentors is a problem for women in his study of African-American women in leadership. Women have reported lack of formal mentoring and network (Paulsen, 2009). Women should take responsibility for the self-confidence and interpersonal concerns of other women through mentoring and modelling. A study conducted by Kruse (2012) in Oklahoma on factors influencing women's access to a high school principalship, found that all women who attained principalship had been encouraged by their principals and colleagues to apply. Moreover, schools that had previously had a female principal were more likely to appoint a female principal again, compared to schools who had never done so before. This clearly shows that it is important for women who have broken through the glass ceiling to mentor and sponsor other women and hence change the status quo. The queen bee syndrome militates against all measures to eradicate discrimination against women, hindering their advancement to senior leadership positions.

Lumby, Azaola, De Wet, Skervin, Walsh and Williamson (2010), through the Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Excellence, interviewed 54 female principals on their career path experiences. A strong view among the women interviewed was that exposure to mentoring gave them the opportunity to learn some management skills. Mentoring is important as it dispels the negative perception that women have of principalship. Msila (2013) conducted a study on cross-gender mentoring in the Eastern Cape. The participants were female school principals who were students in the Advanced Certificate in Education Management and Leadership. The study's findings showed that it is the professional effectiveness of the mentor, not gender, which makes the mentor acceptable to the mentees. The study has highlighted the importance of both women and men as mentors as female mentees proved that women could be empowering just like male mentees. Kellar (2013) concurs with Msila that cross-gender mentoring can be successful. The study by Kellar (2013) on female principals and deputy principals in Ontario found that not one of the vice-principals saw herself as a principal before she was mentored. Exposure of female principals to mentoring and networks formed integral forces that eased these women's entrance into principalship and gave them models of

expectations from them once appointed as principals. Mentoring relationships do have challenges, but if they are characterised by respect for each other's capabilities, a lot can be achieved. Time can also be a challenging factor when people are working; it is not easy for principals or their mentees to make time for each other for the mentorship while tasked with responsibilities at their schools.

2.6. Theoretical framework

This study uses the Capabilities Approach as developed by Amartya Sen (1979), followed by others such as Martha Nussbaum (Deneulin & McGregor, 2010). Sen developed the framework while campaigning against all forms of inequality (Walker & Unterhalter, 2010). The CA is used to evaluate and assess human wellbeing.

The CA is built up on five concepts: resources, capabilities, functionings, conversion factors and agency, as represented in Figure 2.1 (Goerne, 2010).

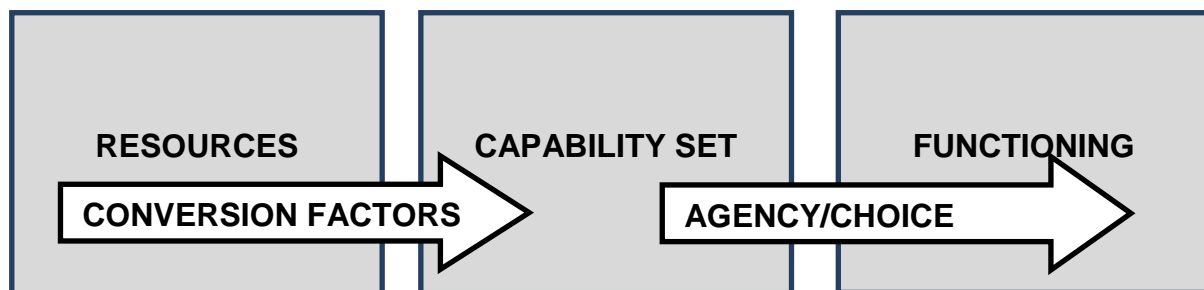


Figure 2.1: Capabilities theory

Source: Adapted from Goerne (2010)

The CA argues that institutions should facilitate the conditions whereby all individuals are able to develop their capabilities so that they can achieve their goals. Capabilities are real and actual freedoms (opportunities) people have to do and be what they value being and doing, called functionings. According to the CA, evaluations of wellbeing should focus on capabilities rather than resources. The ability to use the opportunities and resources available to them means they are using agency to achieve their goals and desired outcomes.

People differ in sex, age, class, race and physical and mental ability. Being exposed to the same resources might not result in the same outcome, as people have different abilities to convert the resources into a functioning (Nussbaum, 2003). Personal attributes might help women to achieve what they value, but they might likewise be hampered by some contextual factors in institutions, such as the school

environment where they want to be principals, or some gendered roles and responsibilities in their families as constructed by society. The environments in which they live are different. Hence, how they convert the resources available to them will differ, because the conversion is affected by specific conditions. There are norms, values and beliefs that shape the society people live in. Social arrangements and social relations based on norms, values and beliefs affect the way people convert the available opportunities to do or be what they value (Alkire, 2009). These social arrangements are guided by social policy. Policy therefore has to remove the obstacles that limit people's freedom and ability to choose and act on what they value (agency), without having to compromise other capabilities (Robeyns, 2005).

Sen (2004) differs from Nussbaum (2003) on what constitutes a capability set (basic capabilities). Nussbaum (2003) believes that there should be a universal list of basic capabilities used as measurement to determine the achievement of wellbeing. Sen (2004), on the other hand, believes that the local community should negotiate what wellbeing is to them and that it cannot be a unanimous decision, as individuals are all different (Walker & Unterhalter, 2010). For the purpose of this study, I do not refer to a universal set of capabilities, but guided only by the aspirations of the women in the study to become principals.

This study employs the CA to understand how legislation such as the EEA, SASA and the Employment of Educators Act offer opportunities for women to achieve secondary school principalship. In other words, is the policy environment a viable conversion factor that will enable translating capabilities into desirable functionings? This study seeks to understand how the structures implementing such policies, such as the SGBs, and environmental conversions such as the culture in schools affect female deputy principals' aspirations for leadership. Female deputy principals should have the freedom to decide to use whatever capability they want to without having to compromise other capabilities in their capability set.

2.7. Conclusion

In this chapter, I offered a literature review that examined the gender policy environment that guides the South African public service, the debates about women and leadership and the role of culture in gender stereotyping. I also described the

CA, which formed the theoretical framework of this study. In Chapter 3, I describe the methodology used to conduct the research.

Chapter 3

Research methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter will describe the research design, the sample selection, and the data collection and analysis. The chapter will also include a discussion of the ethical guidelines used and the measures adopted to ensure trustworthiness of the data.

3.2. Research design

The study was conducted qualitatively, using a narrative inquiry. One of the strengths of a qualitative study is its emphasis on the quality and depth of information, which is what this study wants to achieve. A qualitative study allows researchers to come to a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the situation (Maree, 2007).

Narrative inquiry focuses on the stories that people tell, which their experiences and relations in different social structures such as family, church and society shape. Narrative inquiry examines how the processes of social and cultural contexts shape the behavioural patterns of participants, in this instance female deputy principal. A narrative inquiry encourages researchers to obtain information that people do not consciously know, and to determine the impact of the experience itself on those individuals (Bell, 2002). In South Africa, the social and cultural context has shaped the behaviour of women in society and in their professions. As my aim is to understand from the deputy principals' point of view why they have not progressed to principalship in secondary school, using a qualitative study enabled me to reconstruct reality from the participant's perspective (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). An analysis of people's stories allows the researcher to bring the deeply hidden assumptions that people have on a certain phenomenon to the surface. The women narrating their stories highlighted the hurt and frustration they were experiencing, which was not visible when I first met them. They presented themselves as women who were easily managing their responsibilities and on the surface did not appear to have significant challenges at their workplaces. Their dress and demeanour suggested that they were emotionally well and enjoying their work.

However, once I began the interview process, it was evident that the participants were deeply stressed and frustrated. The narrative approach adopted in this study offered participants a chance to speak in depth of their experiences and to reveal the extent of the challenges they experienced.

The critical nature of narratives about cultural discourses, institutions, organisations and interactions that lead to social inequalities is another reason why it was chosen as a research design for this study (Silverman, 2004). The women's narratives were used to show how institutional culture and practices as well as the human relations there enabled or disabled their aspirations. Men are at an advantaged by culture and can access management positions more easily than women can. Using narratives provided opportunities for deep reflection on the complex issues revealed through the interviews. The weakness of the narrative approach is that participants may offer incorrect or misleading data. I was very fortunate that three of the participants had originally been at the same school before they moved to their current schools. The participants were not aware of each other and in effect, their stories offered a form of triangulation as the details of each participant were used to verify the others' narratives. I was satisfied that none of them related a story that confused or contradicted the others.

3.3. Sampling

The sampling for this study was limited to women who had been deputy principals for at least five years. This was done to ensure that participants had significant experience in the position and arguably, would be keen to move on to principalship. I took the view that someone who was newly appointed in the post would not have been seeking promotion. The sample was also limited to women who had applied for the post of principal but had not been successful.

In the main, I used purposive sampling and snowballing to identify the participants and research sites (Creswell, 2009). I knew one deputy principal as I worked at a school close to hers as a HOD and I was aware that she had applied for promotion and was unsuccessful. I had an informal conversation with her and asked if she would be willing to participate in the study. She agreed.

I then approached the circuit clerks and requested a list of female deputy principals in the district. They offered three names and I approached these three individuals to participate in the study. One of the deputy principals in the list did not have five years in that position. I did not interview her, as she did not fit the sampling requirements.

Although my intention was to interview three deputy principals, I eventually added a fourth person who had been appointed to a principal post in January 2016. The fourth participant was the principal at a school next to where one of the participants was a deputy principal. As she was a recent appointee to the post of principal, I felt it would be useful to speak with her about how she had managed to succeed.

Additionally, it was difficult to get the deputy principals to agree to be interviewed because of the timing. At the time that I was planning to collect data, posts had been advertised for which some of the deputy principals were shortlisted. Some of the women I approached were afraid they would be victimised if it became known that they were speaking out on this topic. I therefore felt that the newly appointed principal, who was not limited by fear of victimisation, would be a useful additional voice to this study. In any event, she had recently been a deputy. In our interview, I specifically asked her to focus on the period when she was a deputy principal and we did not talk about her brief experience as a principal. The research sites were determined by where the participants worked. Although I had intended to interview SGB members as a way of triangulating data and gaining stakeholder insights into the appointment process, I was not able to do so for a number of reasons. One reason was that the acting principals who were about to be interviewed for permanent principal positions were not willing to share the contact details of the SGB members, for fear of being seen to be influencing the appointment process. In a second school, the principal was under investigation for fraud and the SGB members were not willing to be interviewed, given the sensitivity of the fraud investigation. Given the lack of SGB members' availability to participate in the study and the delicate political climate in which I was working, I eventually decided not to interview SGB members.

In sum, three female deputy principals and one principal were eventually interviewed.

3.4. Data collection

Data collection and analysis was informed by the CA, which theoretically guided this study. The study sought to ascertain if female deputy principals were exposed to real opportunities (capabilities) to be what they valued to be and to do (functionings). The conversion factors (social structures) that enabled or constrained the women's aspirations from environmental as well social environment were looked into from the data collected. Lastly, determining how the social arrangements allowed the female deputy principals to use their agency, which is the freedom to act on what they value, was also important in the collection of data. It is very important to critically engage with all the social and cultural factors that shape preferences, expectations and perceptions and thus influence which choices are made from the freedoms that are available (Unterhalter, 2003).

The framework informed the interview questions and I specifically sought to obtain data that focused on the internal and external environmental factors that shaped their experiences as deputy principals. The CA and the aim of the study shaped the data analysis. I looked for factors that enabled or constrained women's aspirations, such as social structures like their family, the school environment, policies, and their relationships within those structures. I was looking at what opportunities presented real freedom for them to become or do what they valued.

Semi-structured interviews with participants were conducted, each taking up to 50 minutes per session. Interviewing was chosen as it has the advantage of allowing the researcher to probe, and as it is face to face, it allows the researcher to capture the emotions of the interviewees. A disadvantage of interviews is the availability and willingness of participants, which also posed a challenge in this study. I conducted two of the interviews at the participants' sites as one of them was a principal and the other acting principal, they felt comfortable in their offices. The other two were interviewed out of their schools to protect their identities. The interviews were recorded and notes taken to ensure that no important information was missed or in case of equipment failure (Creswell, 2009). In my opening statement during the interviews, I gave a brief outline of the questions I wanted to answer in my study. I explained to the participants that I was doing a narrative study and I would prefer their relating their career journey in a form of a story. I did not want to interrupt my

participants as they were talking or make them feel like I was interrogating them. It was clear when looking at their posture (relaxed), talking uninterrupted for a long time and relaxed faces, that the women felt more comfortable telling their stories than using the question and answer method. I allowed participants the space to simply tell their stories and at the end I asked specific questions where I felt details were missing. I used the interview protocol that I had compiled to guide me.

In choosing pseudonyms, I selected names that fitted their characters. I used pseudonyms (Nokuthula, Fundisa, Thembekile and Nqobile) for labelling the interview data, based on the participants' characters. I also used their names to differentiate between their stories in Chapter 4.

As the researcher, I personally transcribed the data, which was gathered over a period of three months.

The three research sub questions that guided the data collection are:

- What is the policy environment in basic education in South Africa?
- How does the school environment enable or constrain the aspirations of women who are deputy principals towards secondary school principalship?
- How do cultural and social factors affect female deputy principals' aspirations to secondary school principalship?

Seven core interview questions were used to guide the interviews.

- Tell me about your experience when you applied for the position of principal.
- How does the school environment help or support your desire to become a principal?
- What do you see as enabling or constraining the aspirations of female deputy principals to become principals?
- How does the policy regarding promotion support your goal to become a principal?
- What is your take on the local community's perception about female leadership?

- What are your experiences of the promotion processes towards principalship in your area?
- What support do you need and from whom to achieve your goal of becoming a principal one day?

On-site, I used notes from casual observations of the school environment to supplement the interviews. The following observations were added to the data collected:

- The response of the administrative staff to my request to see the deputy principal.
- The atmosphere in the school, especially the level of friendliness and collegiality in the school.

Although I had not planned this during the second set of interviews, I asked Nokuthula and Thembekile to write letters to any person they chose, telling the recipients about their experiences as women in leadership and describing exactly how they felt. Both had indicated they had used diaries to write about their experiences. I asked them to do this because I could not obtain access to their diaries, where their thoughts and feelings would have been presented, and did not want to pressure them. I was hoping that the letters would deal with the question of agency. Looking at the choices they made, did they have a choice? Would they do things differently if they could? I also hoped that the letters would be part of the healing process for the women, as I knew both were deeply affected by the interviews. As a researcher and woman, I felt I could not just leave them as they were after reopening their wounds.

Finally, I compared the letters with their narratives. I believed that this would yield more information as they were going to write it in their spare time, in a private space. I used these letters as additional data.

After transcribing all interviews, I sent the complete transcript to the participants to confirm that all that was written represented what they had shared with me. I asked them to edit parts where they feel misrepresented, and then return the transcript to me.

3.5. Data analysis

The data was collected through semi-structured interviews and incidental site observations where possible. I recorded and then transcribed all the interviews. I transcribed the interviews word for word, as I did not want to miss anything. The notes that I took during the interviews helped to capture the participants' emotions by looking at some of the gestures as well as their posture as they were talking. I made notes about whether the participants felt at ease, what appeared to be their emotional state of mind. Obviously, these observations were biased and subject to my perceptions.

After transcribing the interviews, the different data sets for each participant I kept separate and marked clearly, using the pseudonyms I had given the participants after listening to their narratives. The analysis started when I had to separate what is important from the less significant in all the data that collected. The literature review helped me to identify relevant themes. As I read, the texts, there were key phrases that caught my attention; which resonated with the themes evident in the literature review. I used these themes for my initial coding (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). Four lists of coded data were developed for each of the four participants to make the data manageable. I then moved to the next stage where I looked for similarities of the codes and grouped those together under a theme to eliminate duplication of codes (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

I used thematic coding to identify important data and used a system of colour coding to group data into specific themes. The data was therefore manually coded. I used the research questions to organise the data and grouped data that responded to each research sub question. (Bezuidenhout & Cronje, 2014).

I set aside data that was unique to each participant and used this to build the profile of each participant.

I identified some gaps in the data as I categorised it and made a point to fill in these gaps in the follow-up interviews. In the second interview, I reviewed the transcript from the first interview and explained the purpose of the second interview. After the second interview, I transcribed the data again. Again, I checked for new themes that

emerged from the data and sought to identify data that may have been different from or additional to the first interview.

3.6. Trustworthiness

Subjectivity in qualitative research cannot be avoided entirely, as the researcher is the instrument of data collection. Creswell (2009) posits that qualitative research is interpretative research; as a researcher who is also a female deputy principal, I was aware of the bias that I was bringing into the enquiry. It was very difficult to distance myself in any way as I had personally experienced some of the situations that the women were going through. Measures to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings included the use of audio tapes as they provided concrete reference to the original source. I made sure that I personally transcribed the data word for word immediately after the interviews, while referring to my notes. I wrote the women's stories and returned them to the participants for verification during the second interview. Member checking and multiple coding were used in an effort to achieve greater trustworthiness. I transcribed the first set of interviews and made these available to the participants before I proceeded with the second interview. I used both sets of transcribed interview data to look for consistencies and inconsistencies. This too contributed to the trustworthiness of the data. According to Maree (2007), qualitative research can be defended for trustworthiness if multiple coders are used for intra coder and inter coder reliability. According to Maree (2007), this process of verification enhances the trustworthiness of the data in qualitative research.

3.7. Limitations of the study

The study was conducted in Mpumalanga, in four secondary schools in the area. I do not mention the districts as I think it would make it easy for the participants to be identified. Hence, the findings cannot be generalised. The challenges I encountered as a researcher included the unwillingness of the SGB chairpersons to be interviewed. The fact that I as a researcher was a female deputy principal could have made them sceptical about speaking to me. Some of the participants had difficulty revealing information about their school environments, as they were incidents that were under legal investigation. This meant that some data had to be withheld. Another factor was the timing of the interviews, as some of the participants were

applicants in the interviews for promotional posts that were taking place and were therefore afraid to share information that they felt might compromise their eligibility for promotion.

3.8. Ethical considerations

After defending the proposal, I applied for ethical clearance from the ethics committee. Upon receiving ethical clearance, I applied for permission from the Department of Basic Education to conduct the study, which was granted. Furthermore, I wrote letters to the circuit managers requesting permission to conduct interviews with the participants. The circuit managers indicated that it was not necessary for them to give me permission to approach the schools when I had already been authorised by the HOD. As a researcher, I was aware that the study required participants to divulge sensitive and personal information as well as politically sensitive data about the workplace.

Participants signed a consent form stating that they participated in the study at their own free will and they had a right to withdraw at any time (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It was also very important for me to reassure the participants that their privacy would be respected. Participants would not be forced or tricked to divulging information against their wishes. Neuman (1997) warns against the importance of anonymity without confidentiality. It is therefore important for researchers to protect the participants' identities and the locations of the research.

I also assured the participants that the information shared during data collection in this study would be known by me only (Du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis & Bezuidenhout, 2014). The interviews were conducted individually outside and at the school immediately after their knock-off time to ensure the confidentiality of the information shared by participants. The interview scripts were kept confidential by labelling them with pseudonyms instead of participants' names. After the completion of the study, all the material is to be kept safe for 20 years at the University of Pretoria.

3.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter 4 looks at the narratives of the female deputy principals and principal. I answer

research sub-question 2: How does the school environment enable or constrain aspirations of women who are deputy principals towards secondary school principalship?

CHAPTER 4

Women tell their stories: personal and institutional contexts

4.1. Introduction

Chapter 4 responds to research sub-question 2: How does the environment enable or constrain female deputy principals' aspirations towards a secondary school principalship? It foregrounds the experiences of the women in the study, which served as a proxy or an understanding of the environment in which they worked. I use environment to refer to the social context, the school and the women's personal contexts.

I focused my data collection on female deputy principals and observed the external environment through their experiences. In addition, the fact that three of the women had been at the same school at some point in their careers meant that their experiences could offer some insight into the school environment as well as their own experiences at the school in question. I was interested in understanding how the same institutional environment (the school) had led to different career paths for the three women. I wanted to understand how, if at all, institutional policies enabled or disabled them to use their capabilities and convert them into functionings. Using the CA, my aim was to show how exposure to the same resources could still result in different outcomes. I further envisaged that the difference in outcomes might point to the importance of conversion factors within a CA framework.

This chapter shows that the environment in which the participants worked was, in the main, unsupportive. I found that those in authorities, for example the principals, SGBs, unions and district officials did not encourage them to apply for promotion nor did they support the work they did. Indeed, in some instances the participants' efforts to make positive changes in the school environment were met with resistance. Furthermore, the environment did not offer positive mentoring opportunities and left the women fending for themselves. Hence, I argue here that being women worked against the participants and it was central to their not being promoted to the position of principal.

The stories have the following themes:

- personal background information
- motivational factors
- Career paths
- How they overcame obstacles.

Finally, I examined their current positions and future aspirations. Table 4.1 gives an overview of management in the sites studied and shows that men remain dominant.

Table 4.1: Composition of schools' management teams in participants' schools

Participant	Number of		Gender of principal	Gender of deputy principal
	Males	Females		
Nokuthula (deputy principal)	3	3	Male	Female
Thembekile (acting principal)	5	4	Male principal suspended. (Thembekile) Female acting principal who is at home Another male appointed as acting principal.	
Fundisa (deputy principal)	5	3	Male	1 female/1 male
Nqobile (principal)	5	2	Female	2 males

After talking to them, I gave the participants the following pseudonyms based on their characters:

- Nokuthula – IsiZulu name, which means: She speaks less.
- Thembekile – IsiZulu name, which means: She is faithful; it is the truth or nothing with her.
- Fundisa – IsiZulu name, which means: To teach. Her main intention is to support the goal of teaching and learning, irrespective of circumstances.
- Nqobile- IsiZulu name, which means: To be victorious. She has conquered against all odds.

4.2. Stories of the women

4.2.1. Nokuthula (deputy principal)

Nokuthula is a deputy principal at a secondary school. She is in her late fifties. She has a Secondary Teacher Diploma, Higher Education Diploma and BEd Hons in Education Management.

She is soft-spoken but very confident. She is also very passionate about her work. She aspires to be a principal and even more. Her father, who was very outspoken about his opinions, inspired her. Her father encouraged his children to be outspoken. She started teaching as an unqualified educator and obtained her first teaching qualification, the Secondary Teacher's Diploma, in 1991. She relocated to a new area due to personal reasons. When she left home to start teaching at her new school, she had almost completed her Higher Education Diploma. In the new school, she did not study. She was the youngest among older people who were not studying. The school environment was very relaxed; staff did as they pleased. She felt that there was little to learn from that school.

When Nokuthula returned to her home on a visit, she met an old friend who was surprised that she was still not yet a principal, and who told her: "You are underperforming."

Her friend's remark made her realise that she was not utilising her potential maximally. Hence, she started applying for promotional posts. In her first application, she was not shortlisted. Worried and eager to know why she was not shortlisted, she went to find out from the principal. The reasons given that she did not attach to her application copy of her South African Council of Educators certificate as it was a requirement, did not make sense. She said she is sure that she did attach it and as she was not applying for the first time, she checked if all was in order before submitting her applications.

She applied again and this time, she said, "I was against the big names in SADTU", meaning people who were well known and occupying certain positions in the structures of the union were also applying for the same post. She did not expect to succeed against these odds. Then, when she least expected it, she was appointed as an HOD for mathematics and physical sciences. Nokuthula says she believes she

was appointed to this post because of policy been applied. The female principal was very strict, insisting that the best candidate should get the position. The principal asked Nokuthula to lead the commerce department although her appointment was for maths and Science as the school was waiting for the post establishment. She said, “I positioned myself as an HOD to work harder and to improve my punctuality.” She wanted to be exemplary as she was older than the other staff members were and had more experience.

As this was a new school, a lot had to be done in management. The female principal had been headhunted to start the school. The school was actually used as a dumping site by neighbouring secondary schools for underperforming and troublesome learners. Nokuthula said the principal worked very hard and was good at administration. When the deputy principal post was eventually advertised, Nokuthula’s principal had to fight hard to retain her on the list of applicants, as there was an attempt to remove her documents from the list of applicants. The policy states that if a person has acted in a post for two years, they should automatically be shortlisted. Fortunately, Nokuthula's principal knew people who warned her about the removal of her application, and the plot to block her progress. This goes to show that it is important to have networks that will expand one’s opportunities to achieve a breakthrough.

The school was new so there were few institutional policies in place, as the SGB was not yet been elected. In terms of SASA, the SGB was supposed to draw the policies in consultation with learners, teachers and parents. When Nokuthula asked, the principal indicated that the policies were not there. Some instruments needed for monitoring curriculum implementation were also not available. When asked, the principal would draft those documents the same afternoon or the next morning. The principal was doing almost everything herself, giving Nokuthula little exposure. Although she believed it was unintentional, given that she ensured that Nokuthula remained on the list of applicants for deputy principal, she later realised that the lack of exposure had disadvantaged her. To Nokuthula, the principal did not actively develop and capacitate staff. Because the principal was doing things without consulting or guiding the members of the SMT, it forced Nokuthula to look for a mentor outside the school. She specifically looked for a male mentor as she felt that a female mentor might view her as competition. Whenever she had a challenge in

performing her management tasks, she would consult her mentor. The mentor would advise her on how to execute such tasks. She also focused on learning most of the administrative tasks, which the principal performed exceptionally well. When the principal fell sick, Nokuthula had to act as a principal for three months. This gave her the opportunity to learn, hands on, the administrative and management tasks associated with being a principal.

All her hard work paid off in 2008, when appointed as deputy principal in that school. However, when the principal announced her appointment as the deputy principal, she it was met with hostility at the school. The members of staff were questioning each decision she was making .The SMT did not want to help her with management and when other staff members asked, why they were not helping they said she was not delegating but doing things on her own.

The school was well managed with excellent discipline under the leadership of the former principal. Many students were coming to the school because of its good management record. Parents were happy about the school. The teachers were working very hard, attending their classes as expected. There was a good relationship between the principal and the SGB. After Nokuthula had served for five years at that school, the principal retired in 2013. Nokuthula stepped into the principalship post in an acting capacity. According to the description of the duties of educators in the personnel administration management section of the Employment of Educators Act, the deputy principal must act as principal in the absence of the principal. In this period, the cracks started to show from within the SMT, during the SMT briefings the other members would be questioning everything she said. After the meetings, Nokuthula would find herself in opposition against other SMT members and staff members. It was evident at staff meetings that the educators already knew what was going to be discussed and had planned accordingly. The educators refused to agree with her suggestions and the other SMT members would not support her. The SMT members would accuse her of working alone, of not giving them any tasks. The staff had difficulty taking instructions from her in their meetings, because the principal who had left, had been the only one conducting meetings. The other SMT members would only speak when the principal asked them to respond.

Eventually, the principal's post was advertised and Nokuthula applied. She had already heard that the staff did not want another female principal, and specifically did not want her because she was as strict as the former principal had been. The interviews were conducted by the SGB that had served under the previous principal. Although they had seen Nokuthula working hard, they did not have much contact with her, because only the principal worked closely with the SGB as an ex officio member. Deputy principals are seldom chosen to represent the educator component in the SGB.

Nokuthula says she was disappointed about not being appointed. The SGB did not even come to her to explain why, possibly because they had to sign a confidentiality clause before sitting on the selection and interview panel. On the day of the interviews, three women and two males contested for the post. Although Nokuthula knew that a male would be appointed in the post, she nevertheless persevered. One male applicant told her not to worry about him, because he was not interested in the post; he only attended because he was shortlisted. He told Nokuthula that he had applied for a principalship post at his school where he was a deputy principal. The person indicated that he stood a very good chance of winning the post at his school.

Nokuthula did not win the post. A new male principal was appointed at the school. She nevertheless supported the principal when the staff thought she would work against him. "The principal did not take the school away from me," she said. The same staff members, who were against the appointment of another female principal, now accepted instructions from Nokuthula. She says most of the instructions for running the school come from her office. It should be noted that deputy principals are curriculum managers; hence, they have to issue many instructions with respect to curriculum implementation.

Nokuthula says she still needs to heal inside before she can apply for the same position at the same school should the post become vacant again. She has not given up and hopes that when the time comes, "God will speak" and she will have a chance. She feels very confident about the interview that she attended shortly before our interview – she believes she gave it her best.

The experiences of women in leadership, especially in secondary schools, can be frustrating. The passion that they have for the profession and for the children keeps

them going. Often their dilemma is that implementing the policies meant to protect them makes them unpopular with the staff, SGB and other senior officials.

4.2.2. Thembekile (deputy principal)

Thembekile is a deputy principal, currently acting as a principal. She is in her late fifties and married to a man who supports her dream of becoming a principal someday. She is very confident. She started teaching as an unqualified educator in 1988 and went back to study for three years at a college of education for a diploma. Thembekile now holds a BA degree specialising in languages and a BEd Honours degree in school management. She started teaching again in 1992 as a qualified teacher until 2005, when she was promoted.

When vacancies opened up, she applied for a promotion to be a HOD. She had to work very hard to convince the school, circuit manager and the SGB that as a woman she was capable of leadership. With the Employment of Educators Act requiring that candidates should have the relevant qualifications to be promoted, her BA degree put her at an advantage as many applicants still lacked a degree at the time. Being a woman also an added advantage for her because the EEA required SGBs to shortlist and recommend women. In 2006, she was appointed as HOD. It was difficult working at that school, because she had to prove herself and believe that she was in the right place. Because she was still learning, every mistake Thembekile made was attributed to the fact that she was a woman. The arguments between her and the staff frequently became personal. That motivated her to work even harder to prove that she had been rightfully appointed. However, over a long period, things did not change. She then decided to move because she realised that she was not going to be promoted to any other position at the same school. She therefore applied for the deputy principal's post at another school.

Thembekile believed that the infighting at the school where she applied to deputy principal helped her to be promoted. The school did not have a fully-fledged SMT; for almost two years, it consisted of the female principal only. Seven promotional posts were advertised at that school. When the posts were advertised, all staff members wanted to be appointed, even those who did not qualify. Infighting among the staff meant that as an outsider who was not involved in these battles was an attractive

candidate. The SGB recommended appointing outside people to resolve the conflicts.

Five of the teachers appointed to the SMT mentioned that they have been deployed by SADTU to deal with the principal who was not treating SADTU members well. A woman who was not respected by the staff especially the female educators managed the school. They would shout in the passages that the principal was a failure. When Thembekile took up the deputy principalship, she was also told how bad the principal was. She refused to listen to hearsay but asked to be given the opportunity to get to know the principal personally. While working in that school, she started to realise that the circuit officials were also not supportive towards the women who were leading the school. They were criticised, and even when their work yielded good results, there was no appreciation. The tension between Thembekile's principal and the staff was so great that staff members were holding meetings at night planning for her downfall.

The principal was eventually suspended for mismanagement of funds. In terms of policy, Thembekile as deputy principal was appointed to act as principal. The staff turned against her also. They expressed their dissatisfaction about being led by a woman. The educators deliberately boycotted classes to sabotage the positive results of the school. They went on to incite parents to rebel against her by telling lies, stating that the school was being managed unprofessionally. Once again, Thembekile could not handle the conflict. She resorted to moving to another school as a deputy principal in 2011.

At that school, she helped the principal manage the school to improve from a 36 pass rate in 2014 to a 92 pass rate in June 2015. At the same time, the principal in that school is suspended for mismanagement of funds. Thembekile, as the only deputy principal, was seconded by the circuit to act as principal. As the school was too big, she appointed a deputy principal to act in that position and help manage the school. Two months after the good results of 2015, the SGB called for her removal from that post. The "cat-and-dog fight", as she describes it, between her and the SGB chairperson was caused by Thembekile's refusal to stop the process of interviewing for the second deputy principal's position. According to policy, the principal should sit with the SMT to do post profiling, and look at the needs of the

school. They then have to submit the post profile so that the department of education can advertise the post on the departmental vacancy list. The SGB chairperson wanted his relative, who was a teacher at the school, to be given a chance to apply. When Thembekile as the acting principal refused to stop the interview process, the teacher concerned resigned. Thembekile stood her ground and refused to allow the nepotism that the SGB chairperson wanted to practice.

Staff members have repeatedly called the circuit manager and unions to complain that Thembekile was an oppressor. They did not want her to call them to account for poor performance. Ten teachers left the school. Most of them had financial constraints and wanted to get their pension money to solve their problems. In the light of this crisis of so many teachers, leaving Thembekile was granted permission to appointed new teachers without the necessary interview process. As per the department directive, educators who are Fundza Lushaka bursary holders should be given first preference, so that the government can recover the money used to fund those educators. When she appointed the bursary holders, she was accused of not hiring local people. The educators she hired were also victimised.

When I went for the second interview, the school had come to a halt. There was a strike where learners damaged the school and Thembekile's car. Teachers were looking on, refusing to help the principal manage the situation. The representatives of the unions refused to intervene and ask their members to calm the learners. The SGB chairperson did not answer Thembekile's call when she wanted to report the situation at the school. When the male deputy principal called the chairperson on his cell phone, the chairperson immediately answered. Thembekile had to call the police to rescue her, as the parents who were already at the school would not allow her to leave the school premises. She arranged a meeting with the circuit manager and other stakeholders to resolve the matter. There was no solution. In that meeting, Thembekile was told by the SADTU district chairperson: "I do not see you with your pride, your relevant education leading this school. I don't think the district director will be stupid enough to appoint you." When I asked if she was a SADTU member, she said no. She also did not know why her union representative was not there. When the matter was not resolved, she went to the district director for assistance.

The district director sympathised with her. He had been aware of the plan to remove her. The director at the labour section from the department also said to her: “Mam this is a big school; they are going to frustrate you until you resign. The reason is that with big schools there is lot of money paid to principals, only big names in SADTU get those positions.”

Thembekile said, “I am so discouraged, I don’t see myself leading that school. ... Maybe it is still that patriarchal attitude that men should earn high salaries.” When I left, Thembekile was still uncertain about her future.

4.2.3. Fundisa (deputy principal)

Fundisa is in her late sixties, a deputy principal who is about to exit the profession. Her father was also a school principal and devoted to his work. He inspired her to want to achieve great things as a teacher. Her mother too became a teacher late in her life. The family’s day started and ended in prayer. They would enquire from God about everything they did. Fundisa is soft-spoken but sounds confident and determined to uphold her integrity: “Women are warm, caring, loving and concerned.”

One is aware of all the qualities that she describes about women when speaking to her. Fundisa describes herself as a hands-on person who will stop at nothing to ensure that she accomplishes any project assigned to her. She is supportive, despite the unfavourable conditions at the school. She holds a University Education Diploma, BEd and Advanced Certificate in Education.

She started teaching in 1977 at a farm school. The school environment there made her develop a deep love for the profession. It was a warm environment with dedicated and cooperative teachers and parents. After five years in that school, a vacancy for an HOD opened up and she was requested to act in that post. She performed her duties with diligence. She was an Afrikaans, biology and guidance teacher. As a guidance teacher, she went the extra mile in helping learners apply to tertiary institutions as well as bursaries. She encouraged most of them to look beyond Std 8 (Grade 10) and Std 10 (Grade 12). Fundisa believes all the extra work and commitment got her exposure as an excellent leader. She was also a good administrator. All her work was typed, while others submitted handwritten reports.

One could say she was a trendsetter at that time. She always wanted to be a step ahead of the rest, even with her qualifications. Her commitment and hard work did not go unnoticed. Not long after she started acting as HOD, a new school was opened. She was asked by the department to open that new school, acting as principal. It was one of the best schools of that time, she said, her face glowing. She was in her mid-twenties when she started leadership. The school was writing its examinations under the Independent Examinations Board. She worked there for three years until she got married in 1983. Unfortunately, African culture requires the wife to relocate to the husband's family, so she had to relocate. Fundisa says she still communicates with the learners she taught at that school. One of them sent her a message the previous night to say "goodnight mam". She looked very happy when relating that experience. Fundisa was disadvantaged; she had to go back to be an educator and lost her position as a principal. The fact that the department took a long time to advertise posts was an added disadvantage to her.

Determined to succeed, she applied when vacancies opened up for an HOD post. She had an advantage with her qualifications as policy states that suitably qualified candidates should be appointed. At that time very few educators were qualified or had degrees. Things were different in the nineties because they were taken to courses and had to write tests to qualify to be a HOD. She passed those tests and qualified, and was appointed. She later applied at the same school for the deputy principal's post. Because the principal was a male, her chances of being appointed because of her gender were good and she was appointed as a deputy principal. As the school was too big, a second deputy principal was appointed, this time a man. Fundisa worked very well under her principal. When the principal retired, the DBE advertised the post and Fundisa applied as she was convinced that she was ready and capable of leading the school. Fundisa had been a deputy principal in that school for 15 years.

She applied and contested for the principalship post but did not succeed. Recommendations were made by the SGB, but the union lodged a dispute, claiming the person appointed was related to the district director. The post was re-advertised and Fundisa had another opportunity to apply. For the second time she was not shortlisted. There was competition between her and "the young man" as she calls him (taking a deep breath, with sadness written all over her face). The other deputy

was “more eager to be in power,” she said. The “young man” was not appointed to the post. “The young educator was encouraged by some staff members in his endeavours, which did not end well, most unfortunately,” she said (shaking her head and clenching her hands tightly). Subsequently, the young man, who was convicted, but never sentenced, killed a circuit manager – he escaped custody twice. When he was captured for the third time, he was very sick and died before he could be sentenced.

At that, time the situation at the school was very tense; there were two opposing groups. The one group of teachers were people from the local community and the other group consisted of teachers who were not from the local community. Fundisa found herself caught up in the middle. She could not belong to any group because of her age. Moreover, she was from outside and had become a local when she married. Although she had enjoyed good relations with the educators, things soured when she applied for the principalship.

The district director wrote a letter asking Fundisa to act as principal until an appointment was made. As allowed by SASA, the district director dissolved the SGB because he noticed that its members were fuelling all the disputes at the school. Concerned community members together with some retired principals came in to intervene and stabilise the situation. It was very difficult for Fundisa to act as a principal then, because the funds of the school were frozen while the murder case described above was on. The school functioned under difficult circumstances financially as they had no access to the school funds. In terms of SASA, funds are controlled by the SGB, whose members have signing powers. When the SGB was dissolved, funds were inaccessible. Fundisa was resourceful and managed to keep the school running from fundraising and donations they collected.

An interim SGB was elected. As the acting principal, Fundisa was continuously harassed by some staff members, who had regrouped and were constantly asking for an update of what was happening with the principalship position. Although they were informed in meetings, they would still send delegations to enquire about the status quo. The group would also go to the circuit and to the interim SGB, demanding to know what was happening, despite the fact that the SGB cannot appoint anyone, but only makes recommendations. When the post was advertised

for the third time, Fundisa did not apply as her family decided “it is enough; we cannot have you endangering your life again”. As was expected from her culturally, she abided by the family’s decision and did not apply. Fundisa says she had also lost interest in becoming principal. A new principal who was neutral was appointed and the situation improved because neither group won. Fundisa continued serving under the newly appointed principal. A second deputy principal was appointed. That situation was not so good for her. The newly appointed principal also controlled and dominated everything. He was not willing to listen to anyone, which was confirmed by the other participant, Nqobile. However, he would return later to say that he thought about what Fundisa said and had a point after all. The newly appointed principal did not want Fundisa to have a relationship with the SGB. This disadvantaged her later when applying for principalship, as she did not have good relations with the SGB as the recommending body. The principal later left the school, accepting a principalship at another high school.

When the principal left, the newly appointed male deputy principal became acting principal at the school. This person was asked to act despite the findings of the school audit that his qualifications were low. He had just been advised to improve by registering for the Advanced Certificate in Education. Although Fundisa was not appointed in an acting capacity, she believed that a certain female teacher who led a very progressive department could have been appointed. Fundisa feels women are still oppressed. Policies are overlooked at will, for instance in the case of the deputy who was asked to act despite the fact that his qualifications were not suitable as prescribed by policy. The principal who left the school still influences the decisions taken by the SGB. The chairperson has to consult him first before taking decisions. That has caused the school to lose many developmental opportunities. The new acting principal is finding it difficult to run the school and cites interference from the SGB as being instrumental. At some stage, the SGB refused to release funds to the acting principal and the SMT had to ask for donations to run the school. Fundisa had to come in and play the supportive role again just to make sure that the school ran smoothly. She says as long as everyone is happy and the school is at peace, she is happy.

Finally, I asked what she would like to be remembered for, what she was taking home after she had served so many years without achieving her goal of becoming a

principal. She took a deep breath: “hey... Mam” (a pause followed by another long, deep breath) and went on to say (in a low key, her tone changed and she looked serious): “teaching somehow built me; it has made me confident, it has helped me to gain respect and discipline”. Fundisa is happy to see that many of her students have attained managerial positions: “There is this one boy who occupies an office at a building at the corner on the way where I pass by every day on my way to work, and that makes me happy.” She is also happy that many of her colleagues who followed in her steps are now in leadership positions. One of them is the other participant in my study, who is now a principal. It is interesting that she also mentioned Fundisa in our interview. She is happy that she inspired many of her young colleagues to study further. She said, “I am happy; I am happy” (some sadness in her voice; very emotional). At the end it was not about her but about the many lives she touched, transformed, the pain she could ease in her counselling sessions. She is leaving the profession a happy person. Her final wish is to see women getting the positions they deserve without having to go through the struggles she had to endure. Despite serving the department for 39 years without achieving one of her goals, Fundisa is exiting the stage a happy person.

4.2.4. Nqobile (Principal)

Nqobile (**the eagle**) is a newly appointed principal, 53 years old. She comes from the same school as Fundisa and Nokuthula She is very confident, outspoken and strong. “I am born a Leo [astrology sign], I always lead.” She adds, “I am a pusher.”

This is how she describes herself, and it explains how she got to the top. She is honest and aware of her weakness: “One of my weaknesses is that I am loud. I wish I can be like my former female deputy principal.” Her former deputy was soft-spoken, but people listened to her. Nqobile was referring to Fundisa, whose story I presented earlier who was her deputy principal at the school where she was previously. She was eyeing the post occupied by Fundisa, hoping that Fundisa would be promoted. However, it did not happen. Fundisa is still a deputy principal at that school and is about to retire.

Nqobile accidentally fell in love with teaching after passing Grade 12, when she was asked to help at her school while one of the educators was on maternity leave. She helped for six months and when ultimately she received her acceptance call to train

for nursing she did not go. She decided to study instead for a teaching qualification after obtaining a bursary. As a teacher, she worked very hard. She was always taking a lead in the induction of the new teachers and new students. She had a good mentor, a male principal at the school. Her principal noticed and acknowledged her hard work. Her name came up at the top of the list of teachers nominated by the staff for the national teacher's award. This strengthened her aspiration towards leadership, as she says that she has always seen herself as a principal of that school. Not long after her nomination, Nqobile was asked to act as an HOD for mathematics, because she was teaching mathematics at the school. The principal used his powers in terms of the policy to second Nqobile to act as an HOD for mathematics. Some staff members refused her being seconded to the HOD post, because she had not specialised in mathematics. She had to stand down, because the Employment of Educators Act state only those candidates who are suitably qualified should be appointed into positions. She later applied for the science HOD post and was appointed. She refused to be dragged down by circumstances. Her passion and fighting spirit sent her back to study for a qualification in mathematics, as she was a life science and English teacher. This indicates how determined she was to break the glass ceiling and get to the top. After qualifying as a maths educator, the principal switched her post to mathematics HOD.

The principal retired and a new principal was appointed at the school. Nqobile learnt a lot from that principal, although he was young. The principal, having the final say as the head of the school, would not listen to her at times. Her strong and focused character enabled her to overcome that barrier and seek opportunities that would develop her. She boldly jumped at the opportunity of moving to a new school that was opening. When they were asked to volunteer to move to the new school, four women volunteered. However, to their surprise, a male colleague who had not volunteered was sent with them to act as a principal. They had no say in that because the department reserves the right to appoint people temporarily to act before the post is advertised. Nqobile appointed herself a deputy principal in that school, in that she took on the relevant responsibilities, and acted in the position for a year without payment. During that time, she worked very hard. She recruited most of the teachers at the school. The relationship with the acting principal was not healthy: "I was always shut down" in decision-making. When she brought up ideas,

the principal rejected them. Nqobile's eagle character allowed her to see through that situation: "If I could identify the wrong he was doing I was being mentored", meaning she could see the errors that the principal was making and it taught her not to repeat the same mistakes should she be appointed as a principal. The principal would come to school on the first day of school without a plan to receive new students but would turn down her plan. The teachers would be sitting there without direction, as there was no staff meeting called for them to be guided. As soon as the principal went out, she would seize the opportunity, call the staff meeting and give direction to staff members.

Five posts were advertised at the school. Nqobile sat down in an SMT meeting with the women acting as HODs to strategise for the vacancies. She was open about the fact that she was applying for both the principalship and deputy principalship. She said one of the reasons she wanted to be the principal at that school was the beautiful infrastructure of the school. Nqobile wanted to ensure that it was well utilised to the advantage of the learners and community. She encouraged the other women to apply for two posts each. She and the acting principal went back to their former principal who had served as her mentor to ask for help as they were preparing for the interviews. The school started with the interviews for the HOD posts, but this did not go well. It was suggested that the acting principal and some SGB members had tampered with the minutes of the interviews. The SGB members who were dissatisfied went to the circuit manager to complain that the results were tampered with, as they did not sign the final documents for recommendation. The district and provincial officials then took over from the SGB and conducted the interviews for the deputy principalship and the principalship. The interviews were conducted in a neutral venue.

The fair and impartial manner in which the panel conducted the interviews was an enabling factor for her. The district director was able to apply the policy that allows for dissolving the SGB if there was proof that they are not acting in the interest of the school. Nqobile won both posts, and accepted the principalship offer. Two male deputy principals have since been appointed at the school. One of them and some male teachers at the school were not happy about her appointment and were not supportive. She says, "I think they want me to fail". It did not end there; boys in classes started to bully girls, saying their behaviour has changed because the

principal is a female. However, Nqobile's open communication policy is gradually changing the situation. It helps her to clear away some of the misunderstandings caused by teachers' wrong perceptions. Day by day, Nqobile's management and leadership skills are improving. She is gaining confidence and is learning to manage conflict better with the help of the parents.

4.3. The school environment

After studying and analysing the narratives by the deputy principals and the principal, the following themes about the school environment emerged:

- Lack of support from principals
- Lack of mentoring, poor networking and sponsors
- Poor relations and lack of support from staff
- Lack of support from district officials

A detailed analysis of the themes follows.

4.3.1. Lack of support from principals

Female deputy principals in this study are unhappy about their role at their schools. The deputy principals feel limited by the opportunities given to them by their principals. When a new school was opened in the area, Nqobile and other women volunteered to move. To their surprise, a man who had not volunteered was sent with them from their school to be acting principal. This illustrates the belief that principalship as a senior management position is for men, as men are trusted to be better managers than women are. Nqobile as acting deputy principal was always "shut down" her principal would not accept her suggestions even if they were good. The principal would tell the staff how inefficient female HODs were. Hence, the acting female HODs stood little chance to be appointed under the incumbent male principal. It did not end there; when the posts were advertised, the principal interfered with the interview process. The SGB promptly took it up with the district; hence, the interview for the principal's position was handled by the district. Nqobile won the post. This shows another dimension to the problem women are facing in attaining principalship, namely that incumbent male principals tend to use their positions and the fact that they are male to sway SGB decisions towards other males in their networks. When the process is fair, women do get promotion. Fundisa, who

served for many years at the same school with Nqobile, often helped the school when it was in a leadership crisis, but when the principalship post was advertised, she was not appointed. A male who was less qualified was appointed. The fight for that position ended with the circuit manager killed, allegedly by one of the contestants for the post. The school has still not appointed a female principal. Fundisa stated that hard-working women are overlooked when a principalship position becomes vacant.

The deputy principal acts as principal when the principal is away hence, their duties are the same as described in the Personnel administration Management. Nokuthula felt hard done by the fact as deputy principals their salaries are far less than those of principals are yet they do almost the same work or even more. Nokuthula was not happy that her Principal would not delegate tasks that would equip her for principalship and that later affected her chances to be appointed.

Nqobile and Nokuthula mentioned that as curriculum coordinators, the deputy principals must ensure that teaching and learning covers the syllabus. This exposes them to confrontations and conflicts with teachers and learners, as they have responsibility that is more disciplinary. Because principals are not always present at their schools, deputy principals are left to do the work. A study by Eagly (2007) supports this finding, indicating that principals' leadership style is to avoid solving problems when at school or to just be absent at critical times. The school policies are not supportive, preventing the women from executing their disciplinary responsibility. A case in point was when the SGB chairperson at Thembekile's school refused to sign the code of conduct that would help with discipline. Fundisa and Nokuthula are dissatisfied that the principal receives the highest salary and all the praises for the school's performance. Deputy principals are seldom delegated to represent principals in interview panels, because ex officio principals do not delegate their decision-making responsibilities to the female deputy principals. Being in the deputy position does not open up enough opportunities for them to be appointed should the principal leave. A study conducted by Gregg (2007) in Ohio found that the role of deputy principal does not adequately prepare a person for the role of principalship.

4.3.2. Lack of mentoring, poor networking and limited sponsors

Networking and support from peers are important for women aspiring to a principalship, helping them to know what is happening and sponsor them should senior positions open up. Nqobile feels she needs to network more. She has seen the gap in not having networks. Not being part of network has disadvantaged her in accessing the principalship position. She has contested for principalship knowing that she was not going to win the post as it was reserved for someone else. In many districts in South Africa, schools are clustered so that they share information. Educators generally are benefitting from this system, but senior female managers do not benefit, as there are very few women in those positions of deputy principals and principals. Deputy Principals are also not benefitting from the Department of Education's Women In, Into Management and Leadership position program as it caters for women principals only. Studies by Fernando and Cohen (2014) and Brown and Merchant (1993) in Sri Lanka and Texas respectively on women as school executives point out that women still struggle to access networks. Compared to their male counterparts, women are unlikely to exploit their networks even if they do have access to them. Their attempts are further blocked by the barrier of "respectable femininity" which refers to behavioural expectations in workplaces, streets and homes" (Fernando & Cohen, 2014). Women's behaviour in these networks is constrained by their gendered responsibilities. Their agency for career advancement is limited.

Underrepresentation of women in principalship, especially in secondary schools, is another frustration, given the lack of mentorship available to aspiring women. Moorosi (2010), states that informal networks and support from sponsors are very important to the second phase in the experiences of women in management. In the interviews I conducted, it was clear that the women needed sponsors to help them to access leadership positions. Such sponsors could be principals, gender conveners in the teacher unions or the educator component of SGBs. I asked Nokuthula if her outgoing female principal had sponsored her for the principal's post before she left the school. She was not sure that she had been sponsored. In her Oklahoma study on factors influencing women's access to high school principalship, Kruse (2012) found that all women who attained principalship had been encouraged by their principals and colleagues to apply. Moreover, Kruse (2012) found that schools that

had a female principal previously were more likely to appoint a female principal again, compared to schools who had never done so before. In my study, that was not the case; the schools that previously had female principals did not appoint Nokuthula after the principals left. However, it is true that women are encouraged by someone to apply.

Nokuthula was encouraged by a friend. Nqobile was encouraged, sponsored by her principal, and later became a principal. Encouragement and acknowledgement seems very important for women. Nqobile explained how her being nominated for the national teacher's awards strengthened her aspiration to be a principal. She believed in herself more than before.

4.3.3. Poor collegial relations and lack of support from staff

Relationships are very important for personal wellbeing, according to the CA. They can constrain or enable the aspirations of women for principalship. Relationships in the working environment shape the experiences of people in that environment. Relationships are also regulated by policy as well as the codes of conduct of the South African Council of Educators and teacher unions.

Thembekile, Fundisa and Nokuthula indicated that a great deal of infighting took place between staff members as well as between staff and management. They stated that teachers did not want to be corrected as one of the reasons. When Thembekile was acting principal, her efforts to hold teachers accountable for poor performance were seen as victimising the teachers. Unions will be called by teachers to intervene in the conflict with the principal. It must be said that this happens to male principals as well, but it is worse for female principals, as they are seen as easy targets. Males still have some problems about being led by a female. Nqobile had a hard time with the one of male deputy principals after her appointment. The deputy principal would not do any management work like supervising learners to go to class. When Nqobile requested him to handle some of the disciplinary cases, he would use that opportunity to discredit Nqobile to parents and learners. The boys were also aggrieved and began bullying girls at the school. The learners told her that when she was not at school, no effective teaching and learning took place. "I think they want me to fail," she said.

Men who have difficulty-accepting women as leaders make conditions challenging for women; in turn, this affects how women experience leadership.

At Thembekile's school, learners smashed her car because she tried to protect two girls from a boy who was beating them up two days in succession. When the fighting broke out, the teachers did not support Thembekile; they were passive spectators and did not try to calm the learners. Fundisa indicated that female teachers were supportive to her. When I questioned them further, asking if the female teachers would be supportive if one of them were appointed as principal, they were not sure. In their experience, female staff tends to be supportive before appointment, but once a woman is appointed to a higher post, things change. Nokuthula commented: "They did not want me but they realise now that they need me. They are happy taking instructions from me as a deputy but not as a principal."

It is clear from the interviews that both males and females are still not eager to work under women leaders.

4.3.4. Lack of support from district officials

In the interviews, women indicated that none received support from female circuit managers and other district officials. The participants indicated that it was actually even more difficult for women to get a promotion under leadership of a woman circuit manager.

"We as women are our own enemies, for you to get the post with a female in front of you I don't know how hard one must work" says Nokuthula.

In the area where I conducted the study, all three circuits were headed by female circuit managers. In 2016, one of the women retired and a male circuit manager is acting. It was a concern for me as a researcher and deputy principal that women were not progressing into the position of principalship, despite the numbers of female circuit managers. The circuit managers sit in as departmental officials during interviews for principalship posts. Policy allows them to make a ruling on the fairness of the shortlisting and the interview process. This raises several questions. Where and what are the female circuit managers saying when discrimination against women takes place? If women are not being discriminated against but just failing in interviews, are there no programmes to capacitate them? Kattula (2011) conducted a

study in the US on the perceptions of male and female superintendents and women high school principals. That study indicated that principals viewed attaining a principalship as more difficult than the superintendents did. One of the reasons given was that some superintendents had never been principals. Similarly, some of the officials who visit our South African schools have never been principals. Some of them have moved straight from being HOD to become subject advisors. This might explain the poor understanding of senior officials when appointing deputy principals and principals and hence their lack of support for female candidates. Thembekile received no support from the district manager, who was well aware that the resistance against her is deliberate. There are moves afoot to replace her by a male, owing to the size of the school. One of the officials at the district told Thembekile that female leaders are not trusted at big schools. Thembekile is at home risking losing her job, as her leave is not authorised but fearing for her life after the incident where angry learners at the school smashed her car. A male is acting in her post.

4.4. Conclusion

Their qualifications enabled the female deputy principals to move into the positions they hold, despite the challenges to accessing principalship. Because Nqobile got support from her principal and nominated by the staff for the national teacher's award, it prompted her to aim very high. Her belief in herself as leader worked to her advantage. The community rallied around Nqobile when the learners were striking at the school, quickly returning the situation to normal and enabling her to continue working. She believes that the fact that she was always on hand and visible at the school in the absence of the principal changed the parents' perceptions about her as a leader.

Fundisa, Nokuthula and Thembekile believed in themselves too and worked very hard to be recognised. However, all the efforts they put in their work were thwarted by institutional factors. Structures such as the SGB, unions and district officials blocked their route to principalship. The attitudes and actions of the relevant principals did not work in their favour either. Different policies enabled their aspirations, but the failure to implement some policies due to social and environmental factors is a deterrent. The case at Fundisa's school, where one of the male candidates for the principalship position allegedly killed the circuit manager, is

evidence of officials' involvement in or interference with recommendations for a principalship. The incident suggested that the policy governing the appointment process stood little chance against the machinations of politically motivated individuals. When the SGB chairperson at Thembekile's school refused to sign the school's code of conduct and educators used that as an excuse for not disciplining learners. Their recalcitrance led to the smashing of Thembekile's car by learners. Again, policy stands no chance against vindictiveness. Thembekile's capability of applying policy to create order at the school and be able to lead the school was constrained by the failure of the SGB, union and district director to implement policy impartially. In Nqobile's case, when the region and province were alerted about what was happening with interviews at the school, they acted swiftly to take over the interviews from the SGB. The regional and district manager did not apply policy, but made a ruling in Nqobile's favour. This raises the question of the role of the union one belongs to. Nqobile belongs to SADTU and Thembekile to Naptosa. The more powerful union, SADTU, wielded greater influence over Thembekile's chances for appointment. The politics of the power of unions seemed to dominate the appointment process and policy was shunted to the background. This is confirmed by the findings of the Ministerial Task Team (2016) appointed by the Minister of Basic Education in 2014 to investigate the selling of posts.

The highly politicised school environments constrain the aspirations of women towards secondary school principalship. It is arguable that the aspirations of women such as Thembekile and Fundisa were compromised because they did not belong to the more powerful union.

Fundisa, Nqobile and Nokuthula had been in the same school at some point in their careers. Hence, they were exposed to the same environment but ended up at different levels. Nqobile is now a principal, having moved as an HOD from that school. Nokuthula is now a deputy principal, having moved from the school as an educator only. Fundisa, who remained at the school, is still a deputy principal. She did not make any progress although the school appointed three principals during her employment. What one reads from this scenario is that the environment can constrain or enable one's aspirations, no matter how favourable the policy environment is.

In Chapter 5, I will show how social and cultural factors affected the conversion factors of female deputy principals' aspirations and agency positively or negatively towards accessing secondary school principalship.

CHAPTER 5

Women tell their stories: Social and cultural contexts

5.1. Introduction

In Chapter 5, I deal with research sub-question 3 on how social and cultural factors affect women's aspirations to a secondary school principalship. The social and cultural factors that I will focus on are:

- socially gendered expectations of men and women
- the exclusion of women from decision-making structures
- family responsibilities
- violence as a deterrent for women aspiring for principalship

Culturally gendered roles in society create certain expectations from men and women. Young girls and boys are socialised into these gendered roles (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2011). Deviating from those expectations is not acceptable (Lumby & Azaola, 2014). Society expects women to take care of their families and men to provide and take leadership in the family and society. Women are excluded from participating in societal activities outside the home and decision-making structures. Women are assigned many family responsibilities, which constrain their aspirations for leadership positions that require more time and commitment. Due to these gendered roles, society has formed stereotypes of how things should be.

The competition for the position of principalship is surrounded by violence, which deters women from competing for it. Furthermore, violence is directed at women who happen to access this position.

All these factors constrain the conversion of women's capabilities into functionings. My aim is to understand how social and cultural factors, in other words the environment, influence the conversion of capabilities into functionings for the women in this study (Goerne, 2010).

5.1.1. Gender stereotypes

South Africa, like many countries, is a patriarchal society, which reinforces values and norms that see men as leaders subordinating women (Eboiyehi, Fayomi &

Eboiyehi, 2016). Patriarchy has infiltrated social structures, making it difficult for women to access senior management and leadership positions. Girls and boys have been socialised into different gender roles that influence their career choices later in life (Kiamba, 2008). Traditional and religious beliefs have positioned women to take care of the home and men to be providers of their families (Maposa & Mugabe, 2013). The father is seen as the head of the family. These gendered roles have prevented many young girls in African countries from attending school (Sperandio, 2011), hence affecting their opportunities for finding, their way into management and leadership positions (Moorosi, 2007). The women in this study, when asked who inspired them towards leadership, all mentioned their fathers, except for Fundisa, who said "my mother of course". This to me indicated the dominance of men and absence of women on the leadership scene.

Management was seen as a male domain where women could not fit in (Moorosi, 2010). The women's fathers were the only role models they could see. This has an impact on female leadership later in life, because when given the opportunity to lead, they want to lead in the men's way. Losing their femininity made their leadership unacceptable to both males and females. Within a culture, there are customs and traditions that belittle women and negatively affect their confidence. Many studies conducted on female leadership found that a lack of confidence on the part of women was one of the impeding factors (Kanjere, Thaba & Teffo, 2011).

Women are perceived to be weak, too emotional and poorly mentored for senior leadership positions (Mestry and Schmidt, 2012). Their leadership was not easily accepted. When Nqobile was appointed as a principal at her school, the male teachers had a problem. "In this school its males, even when I started as a principal the males, even boys in the classrooms, started complaining." The acting principal prior to Nqobile's appointment left the school on the day the results of the interviews were announced. He could not accept defeat by a woman. One of Nqobile's male deputy principals is not supportive. When Nqobile gives him tasks to do, he will not execute them satisfactorily; instead, he uses the tasks as an opportunity to discredit Nqobile.

A paper presented by Coombs (2004) on the perceptions of stakeholders towards women in educational management indicates that the negative attitude towards

female leadership is unchanged, mostly caused by traditional beliefs of what or who should be in leadership. According to a study by Lumby *et al.* (2010) on the experiences of female principals, women still have a lower status in society. Hence, they are not respected at schools. Kirai and Kobia (2012), in their study on women's career progression in Kenya, concluded that women's aspirations to advance their careers were negatively affected by culture that views women inferior. A study in Uganda by Lunyolo, Ayodo, Tikoko and Simatwa (2014) on socio-cultural factors that hinder women's access to management proved the perception that women can only look after the home to be unfounded as women are capable of balancing work and family commitments. Nqobile, Fundisa and Nokuthula in this study have echoed the same sentiments, namely that the government officials are aware that the deputy principals who happen to be women are doing most of the work. The officials, who are mostly male and male principals, accept the situation as normal and right. The traditional gendered relationships in which women do the work and men are the beneficiaries have played out in the workplace too. No matter how hard women work, they are not considered for promotion to a principalship position. Fundisa was very disappointed at her school when a vacancy opened up for a deputy principal; although she was a hard worker, she was not appointed. The post was given to a male who was underqualified.

Fundisa and Nokuthula think that society is still not ready for female leadership. Nqobile remarked "In my church, community, ngiyazifaka," meaning I elect myself. Some community members still believe males to be good managers. No matter how hard women work, they do not get recognition (Moorosi, 2010). Nokuthula was not appointed as a principal at her school, despite her hard work. When the newly appointed principal came to the school, Nokuthula said, "The principal did not take the school away from me." Teachers who did not want her as a principal were happy to take instructions from her as a deputy principal. "They actually realised that they did not want me, but they need me," said Nqobile.

Women's chances to be appointed in big schools are minimal. Women are not entrusted with senior appointments at big schools. One of the district officials at the labour department told Thembekile: "Mam that is a big school, they are going to frustrate you until you resign". When I asked Thembekile who "they" were, she said the official feared for her life and did not want to mention names. No one wants to

come forward and say exactly what is happening behind the closed doors of some offices within the department or government. Lumby and Azaola (2014) likewise found that the size of the school was a problem. Women's chances of being appointed to lead in big schools are minimal.

The progress towards changing the negative perceptions of different stakeholders towards female leaders is very slow. Fundisa remarked that teachers were beginning to accept and support her as a leader: "Mam, if you can try gradually to understand us."

Nqobile said the community was positive towards her, as she was a "hands-on person". The fact that parents would always find her instead of the principal at school gave her an advantage as she could form good relationships with parents and be seen working to gain their trust and confidence in her. Even when learners were striking against Nqobile the community, her strong presence among parents helped to put out the fire quickly. The parents are the ones who reported that learners from other schools and boys from the community who used drugs had infiltrated the school.

In the case of Thembekile, the community was not behind her. When the violence erupted at the school, the teachers and parents were just standing by, watching what learners were doing. Nqobile used her personal agency to rally parents behind her. Her positive relations with parents, the community and SGB and Thembekile's contrasting negative relations affected the way they used their personal abilities to deal with the conflict at their schools.

In the case of Thembekile, many factors were at play. Parents are not told the truth during meetings by the SGB chairperson: "He turned everything that was said by the director into a lie, that I have been doing things my way." The poor relationship with the SGB chairperson was sparked by Thembekile's refusal to withdraw from the deputy principal post so that a relative of the chairperson could apply. "After that it was a cat and a dog fight between the SGB and me." The director was aware that Thembekile was deliberately being mistreated so that she could quit, but the district director could not resolve the matter.

The involvement of SADTU by district officials in trying to resolve Thembekile's problem at her school when Naptosa the union to which Thembekile belonged to was not invited further complicated matters. Thembekile and Nqobile experienced similar student protests but the conditions under which they experienced those protest made the difference at the end of the day. Her relations with the SGB disadvantaged Thembekile, where the chairperson expected her as a woman to comply without asking questions, as was expected in their culture. Because she is assertive and firm, she refused to do so. Belonging to a union that was not politically dominant did not help Thembekile's case. Teachers who were not in favour of a female principal continued to constrain her aspirations for the principalship. On the other hand, Nqobile, who enjoyed good relations with the SGB and the trust of the community, was able to resolve the problem quickly. This goes to prove that human relations in institutions play an important role on the conversion of capabilities to functionings for female deputy principals. The other difference is the leadership styles exhibited by these female deputy principals versus society's expectations.

5.1.2. Women's perceptions of their leadership and social expectations of female leaders

Women as mothers in their families are nurturers and care for everyone in the family, as expected culturally (Lumby *et al.*, 2010). These expectations follow them to the school environment, where the school community expects female deputy principals and principals to be caring and gentle (Eagly, 2007). All the women in this study are positive that they can lead and that they are doing a great job. They know how they want to lead and are comfortable about their feminine leadership styles. Fundisa describes women leaders as "warm, caring, loving and sort of concerned" and believed *that women have* that instinct of seeing through the learners emotions and conducting interviews with them. What would have been problem can be dissipated by women. These motherly qualities were seen as important and an advantage by female principals in a study by Lumby and Azaola (2014) on overcoming social problems prevailing at schools.

On the other hand Thembekile and Nokuthula see their leadership style as one that promotes order and discipline." I want discipline to take place, I want teachers to go to classes" said Thembekile

According to Nokuthula "Parents were very happy about discipline in this school being run by a woman" (her principal). Nokuthula is described as "strict "as a result educators at her school said that they do not want to have her as a principal. This finding is supported by Mdluli (2002) in a study in KwaZulu-Natal on the perceptions of educators, principals and SGB members about women principals' leadership, noting that women principals are good in promoting order and discipline.

The differences between male and female leadership styles are becoming less as women learn and become comfortable with using their feminine leadership styles. This can also be attributed to the androgynous conception of leadership which emphasises task and people skills equally in leadership (Rosette & Tost, 2010). Nqobile is said to be "bossy" by male teachers at the school, but learners call her "mom", showing that she is bringing her feminine touch into management. Teachers at Nqobile's school now accept the fact that although she is friendly, she has a duty to see to it that there is teaching and learning.

A study by Eagly (2007) further shows that it is more difficult for women to succeed in leadership than men as leadership is still a male-dominated terrain. Women actually face what Eagly terms "double standards" of competence, that increase the higher the position applied for. This means they have to work twice as hard to prove that they are worthy to be appointed to those positions. According to this study, women are expected to show traits such as kindness, warmth and gentleness but as soon as they become agentic and ensure they fulfil their management, role it becomes unacceptable. Nqobile was accused of being bossy by one of the male educators. She agrees that she is loud but not harsh. Her assertiveness might be confused with being harsh or 'too strong for a woman'. Although women manifest the leadership styles associated with effective performance, men and women are still not inclined to work under women. Nokuthula was not appointed as principal, because teachers were saying, "we do not want another woman, she is strict just like the outgoing principal".

Nqobile and Fundisa describe themselves as hands-on people and having good financial and administrative management skills. They are comfortable with bringing their feminine qualities into their leadership style. Fundisa exhibits a very feminine leadership style, but it did not advantage her. Nqobile, although she is tough, exhibits

a motherly leadership style. Nqobile and Fundisa have also described themselves as hardworking. There seems to be a number of similarities between Nqobile and Fundisa, but the outcome for the two is not the same. It is possible that their support network, could have contributed to the difference in outcomes. The difference in their union membership could be another explanation: Nqobile belongs to SADTU, a powerful union and Fundisa to NAPTOSA, a less powerful union.

I see women in this study as “servant leaders”. It must be said that the word *servant* has negative connotations for some individuals, as pointed out by female principals in a study by Ngunjiri (2006) in Nairobi. The women in that study preferred to refer to it as serving humanity, which is what I read from the stories of my participants. Ngunjiri has shown how servant leadership is grounded on spirituality and emanates from Christian beliefs. Ngunjiri (2006) sees the intersection of culture, gender, religion and social norms as hegemonic powers that oppress women leaders. To counter this, many women have used servant leadership to withstand all the injustices from these hegemonic powers. Fundisa puts the wellbeing of learners above everything else. Fundisa and Nokuthula bring their spiritual aspect into their leadership. They believe it is God’s will for them to be in those positions and that they are there to serve. Some of Fundisa’s statements show characteristics of servant leadership, such as healing and empowerment: “I am supportive to my leaders, I want them to grow, and one is grooming them.”

When I asked Fundisa how she felt now that she was about to exit the teaching profession without attaining the principalship position, she said, “Lord... this is the place where you think I will not make it”. This is how servant leadership helps women to heal. Fundisa is exiting the profession as a happy woman, satisfied with the impact she had on young people, changing their lives for the better, becoming people that she envisions in her community as nurses, teachers and engineers. Learners called for Nqobile, who is now principal, to be removed from her office. Her answer was “Even if you remove me from the office, I would still lead from the ground.” To her, leadership is not the position but the service rendered to people. Although the women incorporated these strengths in their leadership styles, some of them, like Thembekile, Fundisa and Nokuthula, were nevertheless unable to attain a principalship. Society still seems to be blinded by the deep-rooted belief that male

leadership is the best. Women stand little chance of leadership if society cannot “unlearn” this belief.

5.1.3. Family responsibilities

Balancing work and family responsibility remains a challenge for women, especially for young women. Nqobile was the youngest of all the participants in this study. "It is very difficult to mix the two," she said. Her problem started when she was still a HOD. Nqobile described herself as a workaholic who would leave the school after everyone had left: "When I give learners classwork I want to give feedback the next day." Hence, Nqobile has been engaged twice and divorced once. She often had to choose between her work and marriage. Now a principal, she still fights with her spouse about coming late from work and attending sleepover meetings. Nqobile has to exercise her personal agency to stand her ground and act on what she values. The problem of balancing work and family life for women in leadership is well documented in studies conducted in South Africa and other countries (Chabaya, 2009; N; Uwizeyimana & Mathevula 2014). According to Coleman (2006), it is seen as inappropriate for women to be principals, because they neglect their children and husbands. Nqobile's spouse is not happy about her travelling with male principals to meetings. He has accused the district director of creating sleepover meetings so that the director can have private time with Nqobile. One of the findings of a study by Maposa and Mugabe (2013) in Zimbabwe was that 47, 2 of the women felt marriage was no longer a barrier to their advancement. The same study reports that some marriages broke up because husbands accused their wives of receiving promotions in exchange for sexual favours. Nqobile had been divorced once and her position as a principal was putting strain on her current relationship. Moorosi (2007) confirms these findings, stating that women's marital status and age affected their aspirations of becoming members of senior management. Fundisa, Thembekile and Nokuthula were older and did not have small children; hence, they did not have a challenge in this regard.

A significant aspect was that women are still not allowed culturally to take decisions independently. When Fundisa consulted her family, they stated, "It is enough; we cannot have you endangering your life again." This suggests that women's individual agency is limited and that family and traditional expectations take precedence. It

speaks to the agency of women's ability to choose who they want to be and what they want to do. Eboiyehi *et al.* (2016) similarly found that women had to ask for permission before taking up leadership positions. Fundisa was doing well in her hometown, but had to relocate because of marriage. African culture requires women to move to their husband's home after getting married and to follow their husbands to their workplace (Moreau *et al.*, 2013). Had Fundisa stayed at home where the community was fully supporting her, who knows how far she would be in life? Women state limited mobility as another hindrance preventing them to access leadership, as their husbands do not allow them to go far; moreover, societal norms and values are not friendly towards women who do that.

5.1.4. Violence as a deterrent for women aspiring to principalship

Women face many forms of abuse, ranging from verbal to emotional and, worse, physical abuse within their families and in society in South Africa and many countries around the world. This study showed that in some instances women who apply for principalship face violence directed at them; if appointed, they have to be able to deal with violence in their schools. Nqobile and the other acting HODs at her school had to listen to the principal telling the whole staff that they did not know the work, although they were working very hard. The SADTU chairperson in front of the district manager told Thembekile: "I don't see you with your relevant education leading this school. I don't think the HOD will be stupid enough to appoint you." The SGB chairperson verbally abused and harassed Thembekile in the presence of parents when they had a disagreement on filling a vacant teaching post. He accused her of being a liar when she was trying to explain to the SGB that she has a directive from the HOD to hire educators without interview, as it was not promotional posts. There were too many vacant posts at the school waiting for the interview process would disadvantage learners.

Women frequently have to face verbal and emotional abuse when applying for or taking up leadership positions. The abuse can escalate to violence to deter them from taking up those positions. Nqobile and Thembekile faced violence in their respective schools in 2016. Thembekile's car was damaged and she had to be rescued from the school by the police. Such violence is not only directed at female deputy principals; girls are also victims. Thembekile was protecting a girl at her

school when the violence erupted. Nqobile also reported that she had to protect girls from boys at the school after her appointment school as principal. The reason is that males have been socialised to be in control and women to be submissive. The violence erupted at Fundisa's school where the circuit manager was allegedly murdered by one of the applicants for the principalship post, led to Fundisa's family refusing to give her permission that she apply for the post. She was also harassed while acting as the principal by the group of educators aspiring to the principalship position, which constrained her own aspirations for the position. Fundisa mentioned that there were no women shortlisted for the position, as she was able to see all the candidates who came for interviews at the school.

Thembekile had her car smashed by learners while the teachers and parents who were supposed to help her remained onlookers. When I last spoke to her, she was at home. "I fear for my life," she said, when asked if she was going back to the school. The violence inherent in the competition for principalship is constraining women's aspirations for principalship. The violent society, in which we live, where women and children are the vulnerable parties, is another factor constraining women's aspirations for leadership, as the strategy of using violence filters into our schools and other institutions.

5.1.5. Poor representation of women in political and decision-making structures.

Nqobile, Nokuthula and Fundisa noted with concern how women are excluded from decision-making even when they are part of those decision-making structures. Nqobile complained about her principal who never wanted to take any ideas from her. "I was always shut down," she said. Nokuthula and Fundisa, female members of the SGB, do not have a say; they refer to it as "elethu", meaning they only agree with men in whatever suggestions they put forward, as Nokuthula said. Nqobile attributed this to the literacy level of the parents in the SGB. Nokuthula believed it was due to female SGB members' lack of exposure to and participation in social structures. This originates from the African tradition that women in their communities were not allowed to participate in decision-making. In many South African communities, the men sit in the kraal discussing matters and making decisions (Mafela, 2007). Women do not enter the kraal, which means that they are not allowed to be part of decision-making bodies. A kraal is an enclosure for sheep and cattle (Compact Oxford

English Dictionary: 563) in African culture, men would sit discuss and take decisions issues that affect the members of the community under that kingdom.

The lack of women's voices in those structures, because they hold less influential positions, is hindering women's progress towards senior management positions. Men take decisions that will affect women, pass laws or even influence the implementation of the policies ostensibly affirming women. Women have been marginalised in politics, leaving men to dominate senior positions in political structures. Kiamba (2008) states that the marginalisation of women in politics and male dominance of senior positions in political structures as a hindrance to women's progress to leadership positions. Even when women make it in such structures, they do not occupy the influential positions. Exclusion of women from key decision-making positions and political participation continues to impede the progress of women into senior management and leadership positions (Ahmed, 2013). In the teaching fraternity, female teachers are the majority. However, very few of them are part of decision-making bodies. Budlender (2011) has also noted that only three out of 18 members in National Economic Development and Labour Council are females. Women have internalized such exclusion from decision-making as a way of life over a long period of time (Kirai & Kobia 2012). It is difficult for them to break away from tradition, even though there is legislation that prohibits discriminatory practices. In summary, despite supportive legislation, cultural and traditional practices are still deeply embedded in how women engage with the world, the agency they deploy to advance their lives, especially their careers, and the way in which they are perceived and received by their peers.

It is not only within SGBs and SMTs where women's opinions do not count but also in teacher unions. Unions play a very important role when legislation is enacted. SADTU as an organisation is struggling with representation of women in their structures. A study conducted by Mannah (2008) on the experiences of women leaders in SADTU in KwaZulu-Natal showed that SADTU has a large membership of women but very few women in the executive. One of the participants in Mannah's study described her experience in serving on the executive of the union as "a baptism of fire". Another woman in the same study by Mannah said the men in their SADTU executive committee treated her as if "I am not there". The findings of a study by Briskin (2006) on the leadership of women in trade unions concur with

Mannah's findings that women face discrimination inside unions. It is a known fact that certain portfolios are a male domain, for example, the chairperson and general secretary posts. Women would get the treasurer and gender convener posts. Men, even in the SGBs, generally hold the influential positions so that they can protect their hegemony against women. All the findings from the different studies support what the women in this study are saying about the unions. Women's agency is seriously constrained by these structures. Nqobile and Nokuthula are SADTU members and they have agreed that women are still discriminated against within their unions in relation to appointments to senior positions. Only well-known members get promotions. Most of them are males because of their networks. Biyela's (2008) research showing the importance of networks to enhance the possibility for promotion is borne out by the experiences of the women in this study. The situation is exacerbated for Thembekile and Fundisa, because they are not SADTU members. When I asked the participants how SADTU officials managed to influence decisions up to appointment level, given that the interview panel only recommends, they commented as follows:

Starting from the director all these people are SADTU. (Nokuthula)

Remember that up there our officials are having political posts they will submit to anything because if they don't submit then the fort will be against them (Thembekile)

The Ministerial Task Team (2016) report on selling of teaching promotional posts the HODs from North West and Free State has acknowledged appointments do rely upon union support. It is alleged that in "North West SADTU as the dominant teacher union in the province controls, manages and influences appointments at schools. When they conduct their elections those who lose their positions are redeployed to senior posts in the department irrespective of whether they are qualified or not, whether there is a vacancy or not.". These acts by union representatives and SGB members indicate that politics are triumphing over policy. The District Director admitted to Thembekile that he was aware of the plot to disqualify her for principalship of the school where he was an acting principal. The district director has since been unable to take a decision and act. On the positive side, these experiences of discrimination bring out transformational leadership in these women.

This means that women are using their personal conversions to overcome social and environmental factors. Nqobile stressed, "You must be strong, know your story."

The exclusion of women from decision-making structures helps to preserve the status quo on female representation in management and leadership. Women are unable to influence or ensure fair implementation of policies to improve their chances of breaking through towards equal opportunities to access senior leadership positions. It is important that when decisions concerning women are taken, women should be fairly represented in those structures.

5.2. Conclusion

In the societal structure as it stands presently, with men leading and women following or submitting, women stand little chance of achieving their functionings and becoming who they value. The exclusion of women from decision-making positions and the limited numbers participating and holding influential positions in political structures continue to limit their voices from being heard and creating opportunities for them to assert their agency. The policies are in place, but social and cultural factors continue to obstruct fair implementation. Chapter 6 summarises the findings by validating them against the CA.

CHAPTER 6

Analysis: applying a capabilities approach

6.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I interpret the data using a capabilities framework. The CA is an evaluative approach for assessing human wellbeing. According to the approach, evaluation should look at what capabilities are open for women to be or do what they want to rather than focusing on resources. Human beings are different and having the same resources does not guarantee the same outcome. In other words, conversion of resources depends on the personal factors within an individual as well as the external environment in which the individual lives and works. CA urges institutions to create and facilitate opportunities that encourage individuals to convert opportunities into valued functionings, where functionings refers to the ability to achieve the outcomes they desire. While recognising the critical role of institutions and policies that encourage the achievement of functionings, CA also recognises that ultimately the individual bears significant responsibility for their own functionings.

The national and school policies on gender and promotion comprise an important part of the social environment that will influence whether women educators are successful in their quest for leadership. Social norms, beliefs and values shape our social arrangements and people's relationships with one another. Social arrangements affect how people use their personal conversions to live as they wish to. CA also posits that if a woman values leadership, it is her right to pursue it and that the policy environment should indeed be an enabler toward this goal (Robeyns, 2005). I concur with Sen (2004), who declines a prescriptive list of indicators for wellbeing, and instead use the women's stated aspiration for principalship as a "measure" of wellbeing.

For the purposes of this study, therefore, wellbeing and the achievement of functionings are understood to be the attainment of the leadership position of principalship. The research goal of this study is to understand why women have not progressed to secondary school principalship. The participants each sought to become principals of secondary schools. In this final chapter, I use CA to analyse the

data detailing the experiences of the four participants towards achieving this functioning. In so doing, I argue that:

Despite a supportive policy environment that seeks to enhance women's opportunities for leadership, the highly politicised and unsupportive school environment thwarts women's aspirations for leadership.

- The sociocultural environment expects women to follow and not lead and this further constrains their ability to apply successfully for principalship and achieving their desired functionings.
- The lack of support from those in authority, for example district officials, SGB members and teacher unions, serves to undermine the enabling policy environment created by the Constitution and concomitant supportive legislation. The lack of support from officials sets up a disabling environment in which potential women leaders are not able to achieve their desired functionings.

In summary, I argue that internal conversion factors such as determination, skill, qualification and motivation may be evident in the women in this study. However, although the external environment is theoretically supportive through legislation, it is often not supportive of the aspirations of the women in the study owing to social or institutional censure.

6.2. The external policy environment versus an unsupportive institutional environment

In Chapter 2, I described a strong policy and legislative environment that supports the promotion of women into leadership positions in education. Chapter 2 Section 9(3) of the Constitution prohibits unfair discrimination against women. Chapters 2(5) and 6(1) of the EEA respectively emphasise that employers must provide equal opportunities and ensure that their employment policies do not discriminate against any person. Therefore, the HOD appoints educators after recommendations by the SGB, under section 7(1) of the Employment of Educators Act, read together with section 195(1) of the Constitution, which stipulates that the ability of the candidate

and the need to achieve broad representation should be considered when a candidate is appointed to a post.

However, despite a supportive policy environment that seeks to enhance women's opportunities for leadership, this study shows that the highly politicised school environment thwarts women's aspirations for leadership. Fundisa, Nokuthula and Thembekile were unhappy because policy was not implemented in the selection and appointment processes. SGB members are expected to declare any interest before they sit on the panel, because if a panel member has an interest in one of the participants, it can compromise the fairness of the interview process. Thembekile said, "They come with people in their pockets", meaning that the SGB members who attend interviews already know who they want in the position concerned.

Male SGB members are biased in interviews, favouring males, and they hold influential positions in the SGB. Their power often serves to suppress the voices of the few women on the SGBs. Fundisa was surprised when an underqualified man at her school was appointed and advised to improve his qualifications. Fundisa felt that his lack of qualifications was overlooked mainly because he was a man and therefore the preferred candidate. The fact that the SGB disregarded qualifications when making recommendations, clearly contradicts section (7)1 of the Employment of Educators Act. Thembekile expressed her frustration over the SGB's bias in appointing people because of their gender. She said, "To make things worse, you again have to mentor the new principal because he does not have the experience and qualifications but as long as they are men they get the post." No matter how hard women work, their hard work is not acknowledged. Fundisa says, "We are just fire extinguishers," meaning that when there is a crisis, women's leadership is good enough for solving that problem; however, when an appointment is made, the post will be given to a man. The personal attributes (hard working, qualified, having management skills) of the women to achieve what they value are hampered by the institutional bias against women as leaders. The highly politicised school environments defeat policy yet again, where the abilities of the female deputy principals are overlooked when recommendations and appointments are made.

Nokuthula and Fundisa believe that if SGB members received proper training, women in the SGB would be able to make informed decisions. This study concurs

with Moreau *et al.* (2014), who suggest that it is important that people sitting on the appointing panels be trained. Thembekile's attempt to implement policy and bring order to the school was diminished by the SGB chairperson's refusal to adopt the school's code of conduct. Sections 8(1) and 20(1) d of SASA respectively stipulate that the SGB must adopt a code of conduct after consultation with all the stakeholders. In terms of section 20(1) e of SASA, the SGB is expected to give support to the principal and staff for effective teaching and learning to take place. Irrespective of what the policy states about the duties of the SGB, Thembekile is not getting any protection from the district director. She believed that this was deliberately done to discredit her and ensure that she would not be appointed when the post was finally advertised. According to Robeyns' (2005) understanding of CA, policy has to remove obstacles and help to expand opportunities so that women can convert resources into functionings. In the experiences of the women in this study, the implementation of policy is hindered by the sociocultural factors that favour men and do not see women as leaders.

6.3. The socio-cultural environment

This study shows that the socio-cultural context, in other words the external environment as described by CA, often acts against the women's aspirations for leadership. The socio-cultural environment that expects women to follow and not lead constrains the ability of female deputy principals to apply successfully for principalship. Nqobile and Nokuthula expressed dissatisfaction on how their principals limited their opportunities to lead. Her principal was always shutting down Nqobile as a deputy principal. The principal ignored her suggestions even if he did not have a viable alternative. For example, when the schools reopened, Nqobile had an action plan for the day, but the principal refused her guidance and this caused much confusion among the teachers and learners. The chaos that ensued in the opening week left circuit managers wondering whether Nqobile was doing her job as the deputy principal, as organising the new intake of students was her responsibility. When she eventually did become principal, she had learn how to conduct meetings, as her principal had given her little opportunity or guidance in this respect. The principal allegedly interfered with the results of the interviews for HOD posts advertised at the school. The SGB were puzzled that they did not the sign the

minutes of the interview but appointments of educators that they did not recommend have been made. Had it not been for the SGB who noticed this corruption Nqobile would have not had the opportunity to successfully apply for principalship.

Nokuthula's principal did not give her a chance to take leadership, for example, in conducting meetings or developing new curriculum monitoring instruments. When the principal left the school, the other staff members were unsupportive towards Nokuthula, challenging everything she introduced in their meetings. The lack of exposure to leadership opportunities contributed to Nokuthula being not appointed. Nokuthula's chances of success were also compromised because the former principal, a woman, had been very strict. The teachers felt that they did not want another female principal who would be just as strict in their opinion. The educators within the SGB carried this view into the interview, which affected Nokuthula's chances of success. It can therefore be argued that poor relations with the staff had a negative impact on Nokuthula's opportunity to become a principal. According to CA, it is arguable that the external environment, namely the school and the SGB, was frequently not supportive of the women's aspirations for leadership.

Fundisa indicated that her principal did not allow her as deputy principal to interact with the SGB. This meant she lacked a relationship with the SGB and therefore had little opportunity to earn their trust. This had a negative impact on her chances of promotion, as SGB members are involved in the panel that interviews candidates for the post of principal.

Fundisa felt her hard work as a woman was not recognised by the SGB and district officials because of the traditional African beliefs and gendered roles that insist that women must look after men. In other words, it is expected of female deputy principals to do all the hard work, while the men lead. The male principal, who was absent from the school most of the time, received all the praises for good school performance from officials of the Department of Basic Education and educators at Fundisa's school. This limited her chances of being appointed. Hence, she was due for pension, leaving her teaching career without advancing beyond the level of deputy principal. This finding confirms findings by Mestry and Schmidt (2012) in their study of female principals experiences in Gauteng. The study confirmed that departmental officials subject female principals to gender stereotyping.

The violent context in which she worked, further constrained Fundisa. A male candidate who strongly believed that he should lead the school allegedly killed a circuit manager after realising he was not going to be appointed. The violence surrounding the competition for the principalship induced fear and discouraged Fundisa from applying for the post. Her family eventually advised her not to apply as they felt she was endangering her life.

The SGB chairperson who believed that men should lead and women follow was unhappy after Thembekile refused to accede to the SGB members' demand to withdraw the advertisement for the deputy principal post so that his relative could get a chance to apply. As a man, he expected Thembekile to follow his directive. Thembekile's behaviour was seen as contrary to the social expectation that women should follow and men lead. The SGB chairperson deliberately abused his powers and refused to sign the school's code of conduct. Teachers and learners seized the opportunity to render Thembekile's management ineffective so that she could not be appointed. Learners were striking against Thembekile for protecting a girl who had been beaten by a boy. Again, those in authority chose a gendered approach and neither the educators nor the SGB supported her. To Thembekile, it was unthinkable that a girl who had been beaten was not given the necessary support. CA argues that it is possible that a disadvantaged group, in this case women, might accept their status as normal after being exposed for a long time to oppressive structural opportunities (Deneulin & McGregor, 2010). Thembekile was trying to protect the girl, but other women educators did not regard her action as liberating a younger woman from the patriarchal behaviour that socialises boys into this aggressive behaviour. These incidents discouraged her from applying and she said that she even feared for her life.

The experiences of the women in this study showed that women's path to principalship is still fraught with barriers. The trend at Fundisa's school is that men lead and women follow. The school has appointed two male principals in the time Fundisa was there. As a deputy principal, Fundisa was trusted enough to act as a principal when the school was experiencing a crisis but not enough to be appointed.

Fundisa and Thembekile stated that they believed that the policies that affirm women are only there on paper. Poor representation of women in the SGB and union

structures at school and policy-making structures limit the women's ability to guide policy (Budlender, 2011). Alkire (2009) argues that freedom should be effective, the freedom that allows one to exercise agency and convert capabilities to functionings. Fundisa should have had the choice to apply for the principalship without being intimidated by violence and negative attitudes from the staff. She lacked that freedom, with staff members coming to her as acting principal demanding to know the progress on the appointment of a principal although they knew very well that she could not recommend or appoint candidates.

6.4. The absence of external support

The absence of support from those in authority, for example district officials, SGB members and teacher unions, serves to undermine the strong policy environment created by the Constitution and the concomitant supportive legislation.

District officials who visited her school dissatisfied Thembekile as an acting principal about unconstructive criticism of her work. When the school results were good, she received no acknowledgement from the officials. It is still not clear why a female circuit manager would bring a male SADTU district chairperson who ends up insulting Thembekile to try to resolve a matter of an acting principal who does not belong to SADTU. In his gendered and highly politicised approach, the district director failed to recommend that the HOD intervene by applying SASA section 22(1) and dissolving the gender-biased SGB. This had a negative effect on the situation of female deputy principals. There were enough grounds to dissolve the SGB, because it was failing in its functions of supporting the principal and ensuring that there is a favourable environment for teaching and learning as stated in section 20(1) of SASA.

In Thembekile's district, a male circuit manager was killed in violence related to a vacant principalship post. The district director intervened and the SGB was dissolved, as it was found that they were fuelling violence at that school. Thembekile found herself in a life-threatening situation where she could have been killed by angry learners had she not been rescued by the police. Despite these dangers, the SGB proceeded to recommend that a man be appointed as acting principal and ignored her even though she had experience as a deputy principal. Thembekile was in a dilemma not knowing whether to resign or go back to the school where she feared for her life. Failure to implement SASA's stipulation that suggests removal of

corrupt SGB members compromised Thembekile's pathway to principalship and the achievement of gender equity in school leadership. During our last interview, Thembekile was at home and a male acting principal was running the school.

According to CA, human relations are important as they influence the achievement of functionings. The poor relations between Thembekile, the SGB, parents and teachers definitely limited her opportunities to achieve the principalship. This scenario indicates how societal norms that value men as good managers shape social relations and social arrangements that have a negative effect on the conversion of opportunities into functions for women.

Thembekile and Nokuthula felt they were not supported by female circuit managers in their pursuit of principalship posts. Although circuit managers sit in the interview panels to oversee the fairness of the whole process, they felt they did not receive any active encouragement or support from the circuit managers. Indeed, Nokuthula felt that it was even more difficult for a woman to be appointed when there is another woman as a senior. "We as women are our own enemies, for you to get the post with a female in front of you I don't know how hard one must work," she remarked. Nokuthula was not appointed as a principal although she had worked very hard with her former principal, who had fought for her to be appointed in the deputy principal position. After her principal retired, her only hope was the female circuit manager to ensure that the interviews were free and fair. It did not happen; she knew that she was not going to win the post even before the interviews.

Fundisa has related how disadvantageous it is to belong to a less predominant union for appointment in principalship. When a woman who deserved an HOD post at Fundisa's school was not appointed, Fundisa realised that "it depends to which union you belong and what role you play". The deliberations at the end of the interview focused on the union the applicant belonged to and not on her ability or her qualifications. It was clear that if one belonged to a union that is not predominant, the chances of being appointed were limited. The participants in this study had similar experiences. Due to her union affiliation, Fundisa was not appointed at her school despite her hard work. Thembekile, who is also not affiliated to SADTU, the dominant teacher union, was told by the SADTU district chairperson: "I don't see you leading this school with your relevant qualifications." In Fundisa's case, not her

qualifications but her union membership was instrumental in her not being appointed. These findings confirm the findings by Biyela (2008) in a study conducted in KwaZulu-Natal that teachers were unhappy that political affiliation plays a role in interviews.

Further, for women, belonging to the more powerful union was not enough. Nokuthula contested the post knowing very well that she was not going to win it because SADTU, the union she belongs to, had already identified a male to take that position. She believes that she needs to network more, because although she was a member of the dominant union, her lack of a network was detrimental to her opportunities to be appointed. The male who won the principalship position at Nokuthula's school is a well-known SADTU member. It is evident that unions are failing to advocate for the women that they claim to represent and who are in the majority. According to Mannah (2008) and Briskin (2006), the disproportionate representation of women in union structures helps to keep the status quo of masculine leadership and subordination of women alive. Even if women are there, their voices are not heard as they occupy the less influential positions.

6.5. Conclusion

This study has shown that as described in CA, the personal environment factors of the women in this study enabled their aspirations. They showed motivation, hard work, and the desire and commitment to becoming principals. They are confident that they are ready to take this huge responsibility of becoming principals of secondary schools. However, personal conversion factors have not been enough to enable the women to convert their capabilities into functioning. This study shows that internal conversion factors should be supported by external conversion factors that encourage them to convert capabilities into functionings. In this study, external environmental factors such as the socio-cultural expectations that women cannot be leaders and the lack of support from those in authority constrained the women's aspirations for leadership. The narratives of the female deputy principals show that despite a strong policy environment, the external and institutional environment are unfavourable, thereby limiting their freedom to convert capabilities into functionings.

The supportive policy environment was seen to be an enabling factor for the women who sought leadership. However, policies at school level as well the implementation

of the national policies do not seem to create social arrangements where women could exercise their agency and freedom to become who they valued to be, namely school principals.

Finally, the study shows that a sociocultural environment that does not have confidence in women's leadership abilities will consistently militate against women's potential for leadership. If women are to use their agency and capabilities to achieve wellbeing, it is critical that institutional practices and policies as well as a supportive sociocultural environment be encouraged.

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APPENDIX A: Assent letters for the participants



ENQUIRIES:

The researcher: Mrs Phakathi C.S

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Supervisor: Prof V.Pillay

Email: Venitha.pillay@gmail.com

Dear Madam

Letter of Assent for participation in a research study

I am Mrs.C.S. Phakathi, a Deputy Principal at Sibongamandla Secondary, am a registered M.Ed student at University of Pretoria. I am conducting a study to fulfil the requirements for my Master's degree. My study is titled "**Policy and practice: enabling or disabling women's aspirations for secondary school principalship**". My aim is to understand why women deputy Principals who apply for principalship at secondary schools are often not successful despite the favourable government policy that encourages women to become principals. The study aims at finding out how the social and cultural factors in the school as well as in society constrain or enable the aspirations of female deputy principals towards secondary school principalship.

As a woman Deputy Principal in the area where I am conducting a research, I request your assistance by participating in the study. I believe that your insights and experience can help me answer my research's questions. This may help also to lift

the voices of women who may be experiencing such cultural or social barriers in their career path. It is also possible that findings of this study will inform policy makers to understand the factors constrain or enable women to achieve this goal.

Please note that participation in this study is voluntary. There are also no incentives/rewards for taking part in this study. You have the right as a participant to withdraw from participating in the study if you wish at any time. Your identity as well as the school's name will be kept confidential. Our interviews will be conducted outside the school premises to protect your identity. As a researcher, I will also respect your privacy. You will not be forced to divulge any information that you do not want to.

My request is to have two interviews if possible. In the first, I would like to focus on the following interview questions.

1. Tell me about your experience when you applied for the position of principal.
2. How does the school environment help or support your desire to become a principal?
3. What do you see as enabling or constraining the aspirations of female deputy principals into becoming principal?
4. How does the policy regarding promotion support your goal to become a principal?
5. What is your take on the local community perceptions about women leadership?
6. What are your experiences of the promotion processes towards principalship in your area?
7. What support do you need and from whom, to help you to achieve your goal of becoming a principal one day?

During the second interview, I would like to have an opportunity to validate the information you shared with me. I would also like to fill the gaps that I may find as I transcribe our first interview.

Finally, I shall provide you with a complete transcript of our interview. At this stage you will have an opportunity to review the information shared, amend or delete anything that you may not be comfortable with. Once you are satisfied, I shall then proceed to write your story in my thesis.

I understand that the interview will take up much of your valuable time. I deeply appreciate an effort you will make in sharing your story and time with me.

If you are willing to participate, please sign the letter of informed consent below.

Thank you.

I a Deputy Principal in Nkangala District agree to take part in a study conducted by Phakathi C.S (Researcher) for M.Ed. with the University of Pretoria. I fully understand the conditions under which the research will be conducted as stated in the letter. I agree to participate in the study under the conditions as stated.

_____	_____	_____
Participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Supervisor	Signature	Date

APPENDIX B: Letter to the Mpumalanga DBE requesting permission to conduct interviews



**P.O.Box 3863
Kriel
2271
26 October 2015**

The Head of Department

Mpumalanga Department of Education

Private bag x11341

Nelspruit

1200

Madam

Request for permission to conduct research in Nkangala District (Emalahleni circuits)

I, Charity Phakathi, Persal: 80649611 Deputy Principal Stationed at Sibongamandla Secondary, I am a registered Med student at University of Pretoria (student number: 12010931). I request permission to conduct a research study titled "**Policy and practice: enabling or disabling women's aspirations for secondary school principal ship**". I would like to interview female deputy principals from three schools, who have previously applied for principalship and have not been successful. As a deputy principal in the area where I am conducting a study, I am in professional

contact with other deputies in the area. The study aims to find out why female deputy principals have not progressed to principalship despite the policies affirming them.

The following are interview questions that I shall ask:

1. Tell me about your experience when you applied for the position of principal.
2. How does the school environment help or support your desire to become a principal?
3. What do you see as enabling or constraining the aspirations of female deputy principals into becoming principal?
4. How does the policy regarding promotion support your goal to become a principal?
5. What is your take on the local community perceptions about women leadership?
6. What are your experiences of the promotion processes towards principalship in your area?
7. What support do you need and from whom, to help you to achieve your goal of becoming a principal one day?

The study may help to lift up the voices of women who might be experiencing barriers on their career path. It is possible that findings of this study may inform policy makers gain insight into what it is that still hinders the progress of women into leadership positions.

Participants will be made aware that participation in the study is voluntary and they will have the right to withdraw from participating in the study if they so wish at any time. Their identity as well as the school's name will be kept confidential. Our interviews will be conducted outside the school premises so as to protect the identity of the participants and not to interfere with their work schedule. As a researcher, I will also respect the participant's privacy. They will not be forced to divulge any information that they do not want to. Ideally, I would like to conduct two interviews

with each participant. In the first interview, I would like to focus on the interview questions described above. The second interview would be to validate the information participants shared with me. I would also like to fill in any gaps that I may find as I transcribe our first interview.

Finally, I shall provide the participants a complete transcript of our interview. At this stage, participants will have an opportunity to review the information shared, to amend or delete anything they may not be comfortable with. Once they are satisfied, I shall then proceed to write their stories into my thesis.

I am willing to answer or respond to any concern that the DBE may have.

I look forward to your positive response.

Yours faithfully

Sharon Phakathi

.....

Signature

Cell no: 0844529362

Email: phakathics@gmail.com

APPENDIX C: Core research questions answered by the participants

Seven core questions were answered by the interviewees/participants:

1. Tell me about your experience when you applied for the position of principal.
2. How does the school environment help or support your desire to become a principal?
3. What do you see as enabling or constraining the aspirations of female deputy principals to become principals?
4. How does the policy regarding promotion support your goal to become a principal?
5. What is your take on the local community's perception about female leadership?
6. What are your experiences of the promotion processes towards principalship in your area?
7. What support do you need and from whom to achieve your goal of becoming a principal one day?



APPENDIX D: Application to conduct research



education
MPUMALANGA PROVINCE
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Building No. 5, Government Boulevard, Riverside Park, Mpumalanga Province
Private Bag X11347, Nelspruit, 1200.
Tel: 013 766 5552/5115, Toll Free Line: 0800 203 116

Isifundo: Imibutho, Umshinga we-Fundo

Department of Education

Kusasa: the ye Dyedisa

Phakathi CS
P.O. BOX 3863
Kriel
2271

RE: APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: PHAKATHI CS

Your application to conduct research was received and therefore is acknowledged. The title of your study reads: "Policy and practice: enabling or disabling women's aspirations for secondary school principal ship."

The aims and the objectives of the study will benefit the department, in particular the learners. Your request is approved subject to you observing the provisions of the departmental draft research policy which is attached. You are also requested to adhere to your University's research ethics as spelt out in your research ethics document.

In terms of the attached draft research policy data or any research activity can only be conducted after school hours as per appointment. You are also requested to share your findings with the relevant sections of the department so that we may consider implementing your findings if that will be in the best interest of the department. To this effect, your final approved research report (both soft and hard copy) should be submitted to the department so that your recommendations could be implemented. You may be required to prepare a presentation and present at the department's annual research dialogue.

For more information kindly liaise with the department's research unit @ 013 766 5478 or a.baloy@education.mpu.gov.za.

The department wishes you well in this important project and pledges to give you the necessary support you may need.

MRS MDC MHLABANE
HEAD OF DEPARTMENT

26/11/15
DATE





APPENDIX E: Language editing statement



Translating.Writing.Editing

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LANGUAGE EDITING STATEMENT

2016-09-16

Policy and practice: enabling or disabling women's aspirations for secondary school principalship

by Charity Sharon Phakathi

- Has been edited for language correctness and spelling.
- Has been edited for consistency (repetition, long sentences, logical flow)
- Has been checked for completeness of list of references and cited authors.

No changes have been made to the document's substance and structure (nature of academic content and argument in the discipline, chapter and section structure and headings, order and balance of content, referencing style and quality).

HESTER VAN DER WALT

