



Career advancement of senior women through executive leadership development programmes

Prisha Surajlall

11356317

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ABSTRACT

Despite government policies and organisational practices intended to redress this imbalance, women in business continue to face what they have faced for many years already: under-representation. More specifically, under-representation in the upper echelons of higher management, under-representation on company boards, under-representation in senior positions within firms. Despite more years in the workforce, more women systematically entering previously labelled “male” fields, despite more years receiving higher education, women still don’t often find the road to senior positions a road easily travelled.

This research seeks to explore one very specific approach to advancing women’s careers—women’s leadership development programmes designed for women identified as potential senior managers, leaders and board members. As a number of these programmes exist, this research sought to explore the programmes’ strengths and weaknesses, to explore ways to improve such programmes to the increased benefit of women in business, and finally, to investigate ways that businesses themselves can support such programmes to the benefit of their female employees: more representation in higher positions.

Findings showed that women’s leadership development programmes do in fact provide a safe and supportive environment for nurturing confidence, acquiring new business skills, and learning from the experiences of successful women role models. They are a useful addition to other strategies designed to increase the number of women in senior positions, as factors such as organisational culture and commitment from CEOs also impact on a woman’s career progression. This research proposes a model to organisations that can be used to design and position future women’s development programmes. For maximum benefit, programmes should be strategically positioned, taking into account the environmental context and should help women identify and tap into existing networks and access suitable mentors. Further, elements unique to women must be inherent in the design of these programmes in order to facilitate career advancement, with the goal at hand: equal representation in senior positions.

KEYWORDS

Career Advancement, Women, Leadership Development Programmes

DECLARATION

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.



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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH PROBLEM

1.1 Introduction

Women have been entering professional and managerial ranks of business at the same rate as men for decades; even so, they remain under-represented at senior levels (Ely, Ibarra, & Kolb, 2011). A study carried out by Grant Thornton (2012) found that globally, women hold one in five senior management roles, increasing just marginally from levels observed in 2004 (19%). The study confirmed that countries with the highest numbers of women in senior positions include Russia, Botswana, the Philippines and Thailand whilst countries with the lowest representation are Germany, India and Japan. It also established that 34% of businesses worldwide have no women in senior management, roughly the same as the 2009 figure (35%) with women largely employed in finance and human resources roles and less than one in ten businesses being led by a female CEO. Because of this disparity, organisations are implementing various practices and certain economies have responded by implementing quotas on the number of women required on boards (Grant Thornton, 2012).

Figure 1: Percentage of women in senior management globally as supplied by Grant Thornton IBR 2012



In South Africa women constitute 52% of the population and only 45.1% of the total workforce (Business Women Association of South Africa, 2011). The 2012 Women in Leadership census carried out by Business Women South Africa paints a bleak picture of female representation in the private sector, finding that women held only 3.6% of chief executive or managing director positions, 5.5% of board chair positions, 17.1% of directorships and 21.4% of executive manager positions. However, of imminent concern is the increase in the number of companies with no women *at all* on their boards of directors or in executive manager positions. This number grew from 8.0% in 2011 to 10.6% this year (The Presidency, 2012). The proportion of women on boards of JSE listed companies more than doubled since 2004, but women still represent less than one in six of all members (Grant Thornton, 2012). Women occupying senior positions are therefore truly a minority group in an ever growing population of employed women (Business Women Association of South Africa, 2011).

The Commission of Employment Equity in South Africa confirms that women constitute 44.8% of the economically active population; however, males still dominate top management positions in South African companies. At top management levels representation by males is 67% as opposed to their female counterparts who only represent 33% (Commission of Employment Equity, 2010-2011)

While much improvement is needed in South Africa, on a global level the country does not fare badly against many others. According to the 2012 Women in Leadership census report, women account for less than 9% of executive management and director positions in Australia. In Canada, women account for 17.7% of executive management positions and 14.5% of director positions, while in the US, women account for 14.1% of executive manager positions and 16.1% of director positions. In Israel, surprisingly, women account for 30% of executive manager positions, higher than in South Africa. However, only eight of South Africa's top 25 companies by market capitalisation have women occupying more than 25% of their executive management positions (HRFuture, 2012).

Several organisational practices exist to address women's inclusion and advancement within organisations. Kottke and Agars (2005) suggest that best practices include benchmarking on gender, mentoring programmes, a supportive organisational

infrastructure as well as organisational policies and practices related to gender advancement and diversity management (i.e. support networks).

Krishnan (2009) suggests that women require training and development throughout their careers, including having exposure to opportunities that will allow for functioning in operational and line functions, and building the competency and skill-set that will enable a woman to ascend to senior roles within the organisation.

This research aims to investigate leadership development programmes as a tool to support career advancement, with a view to unpacking the underlying factors that either facilitate or hinder the success of such initiatives (Kottke & Agars, 2005).

1.2 Benefits for appointing more women into senior positions

What is becoming increasingly clear to executives is that employing women in top positions drives profitability (Barsh & Yee, 2011). Their inclusive and collaborative management style is displayed in their ability to draw on the expertise of colleagues (Evans, 2011). Evans (2011) suggests that when women are included in all levels of management, a diverse environment is created where the best talent comes together, regardless of gender, to affect business decisions and directions. This view is further supported by Arfken, Bellar, and Helms (2004) who found that the representation of women on boards ensured that their viewpoints and ideas as both professionals and consumers are brought to the fore, resulting in more profitable decision-making. Further benefits of employing women in management structures include enhanced strategic planning and product positioning decisions, more focussed and effective marketing activities as well as insightful packaging ideas (Arfken et al., 2004; McKinsey & Company, 2012). Given that women are known to make the majority of purchase decisions, female directors use their innate knowledge of needs to develop successful products and services (Arguden, 2012).

Diverse corporate boards also result in more diligent oversight as they invest more effort in auditing when the complexity of the business warrants heightened security (Perlberg, 2012). Perlberg (2012) suggested that mixed-gender boards allow for a better mix of leadership skills, access to wider talent pools and improved corporate governance. Women in these roles change the behaviour of their male counterparts by encouraging them to be more focussed (CNBC, 2012). As a result of women on the

board, a company is more in tune with the customer and has a better understanding of its product market (Arfken et al., 2004; CNBC, 2012). Arguden (2012) the author of a recent Harvard Business Review article suggests that female directors deal more effectively with risk matters than their counterparts. Furthermore, they tend to prioritise long term projects whilst also addressing the concerns of customers, employees, shareholders and the local community (Arguden, 2012).

The 2012 Fortune 500 list includes 18 companies that are led by female CEOs, ten of which feature in the top 250 category (Hoare, 2012). Catalyst analysed the performance of Fortune 500 companies with women as board members, finding that from 2004 to 2008, the Fortune 500 companies with the most female directors outperformed those with the least by 16% on return on sales and by 26% on return on invested capital (Catalyst, 2011). Companies which had three or more women on boards for at least four of those years outperformed those with the lowest rates of female representation by 84% on return on sales, 60% on return on invested capital and 46% on return on equity (Hoare, 2012).

A report issued by the Credit Suisse Research Institute showed a stronger correlation between the presence of women on boards and performance of stocks in the post-credit crisis period (Perlberg, 2012). Perlberg (2012) found that the key reason as to why these companies outperformed in this period is because companies with women on their boards tended to make fewer risky decisions and as a result, the companies had less debt. The study suggested that the net debt to equity ratio for companies that were comprised of at least one female director was 48% compared to 50% at all male boards. The study further showed that companies with women on their boards eliminated debt faster as the global economic slowdown and financial crisis unravelled (Perlberg, 2012).

Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger, and Meaney (2008) found that another reason for promoting women concerns the looming talent shortages that companies face as a result of the impending retirement from the baby boomer generation. They suggest that approximately one-fifth of the working-age population (16 and older) of the United States will be at least 65 by 2016. As such efforts to hire and retain women at all levels in the workplace will assist in creating a talent pool that can be drawn upon when these shortages hit (Desvaux et al., 2008).

The benefits of gender equality provide yet another reason for more representation of women in higher level of business: gender equality is imperative for the development of any country because greater gender equality contributes to economic efficiency and achievement of other key development outcomes. For example, gender equality spurs growth by minimising barriers and allowing for more efficient allocation of women's skills and talents in order to increase productivity (The World Bank, 2012). The report issued by The World Bank (2012) found that the next generation is afforded a more promising future because of increasingly numerous opportunities and varied choices available to women, both individually and collectively, resulting in better outcomes, institutions, and policy choices.

1.3 The South African context

Ernst and Young Global Limited (2011) confirmed that South African women make up 52% of the growing population and their under-representation in social, political and economic spheres must be addressed if the country is to leverage fully off its potential. They reported that women's participation in the formal economy is both under-represented and under-valued. Finding that women are not only less visible in the economy as a result of the lack of women in senior management positions, but also as a result the wage gap that exists between men and women which reinforces the view that women are regarded as less valuable than their male counterparts, even when the same work is performed. Despite well-documented views on the value that female leadership brings to an organisation, women's full potential is not being realised or appreciated in South Africa (Ernst & Young Global Limited, 2011).

Challenges are experienced in the retention of women in the formal sector as a result of negative perceptions and attitudes to female leadership (Ernst & Young Global Limited, 2011). The Head of the Women Leaders' Programme at the World Economic Forum, Saadia Zahidi, supports this view arguing that women constitute half of the resources available to a country and "if that half is not being channelled into the economy and not being made part of decision-making processes, then that country's economic potential is bound to suffer. As business leaders and policy-makers seek to navigate their way through the current crisis, they need the talents of both women and men more than ever to come up with the best solutions" (Ernst & Young Global Limited, 2009, p. 2). For South Africa to perform at its highest potential, the skills and talents of

its women must be applied to activities that make the best use of those abilities (The World Bank, 2012).

The South African government is recognising the need to draw on the economic potential of women in order to challenge the way business is conducted and thereby navigate out of its current financial crisis (Ernst & Young Global Limited, 2009). President Jacob Zuma, in his recent Women's Day speech, admitted that the advancement of women in this country, especially in the economic sphere, still requires a great deal of attention given the backlogs. To address the slow pace of gender transformation, the government's programme of action includes the promotion of a Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill for harnessing the positive effects that women's economic empowerment and leadership will have on the global economy. More long-term, the economic empowerment of women is included in the National Development Plan which was released on 15 August 2012 in Parliament by the National Planning Commission. This plan proposes that the transformation of the economy must involve the active participation and empowerment of women. The empowerment of women and women-owned enterprises as laid out in the National Growth Path is integral to that success (Mail & Guardian, 2012; The Presidency, 2012).

Minister of Women, Children and People with Disabilities, Lulu Xingwana, commented that the Bill seeks to ensure a fifty-fifty representation of women in both the private and public sectors (SABC, 2012). It proposes bold and progressive steps to place women firmly and squarely at the centre of the South African economic story. The drafters have insisted that there can be no economic development and growth if the central pillar is not the inclusion and advancement of women. The government acknowledges that a shift in the employment patterns of women is necessary to eliminate the current entrenched inequalities that are present in the formal economy. Women are under-represented in high-skill and high-wage employment such as mining and construction; however, in order for women to occupy these positions they require training and development. The Bill puts forward that any future training and skilling efforts to take place must have a strong bias towards women (i.e. 50% learnerships to be exact) (Bikitsha, 2012).

Dr De Matos Ala, Lecturer in Gender Theory at the University of the Witwatersrand International Relations Department, cautions about legislation as its effectiveness is dependent on its execution and the extent to which the objectives of a bill are enforced

and realised. She asserts that success is primarily dependent on a company's agenda toward women, whether or not the company is gender sensitive, whether they see promoting gender equality as a primary goal, and the degree to which a company is able to influence the institutional culture of the respective organisation. "Women are empowered if an initiative expands an individual's range of positive choices and their freedom to choose for themselves", she asserted. Women who aspire to senior positions necessarily make choices about how they manage their corporate and private lives; nevertheless, this is an individual choice that must be respected and supported by society (Skillsportal, 2012).

Forward-thinking organisations understand that women bring vital qualifications and experience to the workplace and are consequently amending organisational practices in order to capitalise on these vital skills. These employers are introducing flexible work arrangements, maternity benefits and mentorship opportunities to entice their female employees to stay. Through the retention of these women, these organisations create role models for other women aspiring to top positions. These women stand out as examples of high-achievers who have overcome their fears and become successful businesswomen (Ernst & Young Global Limited, 2011).

Taking local changes and the impact of globalisation into account means that South African organisations are faced with the challenge of transforming themselves whilst remaining competitive within the global arena. "South Africa needs to focus quite realistically on tapping into its source of female talent" (Business Women Association of South Africa, 2011, p. 9). Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) (2010) has concluded that over the next five years, 533 executive and non-executive directors intend to retire and suggests that this presents an ideal opportunity for women to be groomed to fill these posts.

Recognising this opportunity, changes have begun slowly, primarily within companies themselves. To achieve the required level of transformation, organisations must look to their leadership development programmes to ensure that they are robust enough to up-skill and create a pipeline of talented women.

1.3 Business case for leadership development programs

Mercer, a global HR consulting firm, revealed that 71% of companies do not have a clearly defined strategy to develop women for leadership roles. According to Mercer's survey, almost half (47%) of the employers surveyed globally indicate that their organisations do not offer any activities or programmes targeted to the developmental needs of women leaders. While 21% of organisations said they offer *some* activities or programmes, another 6% of organisations said they are only planning to add programs and activities in the future (Mercer, 2011).

Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) confirmed that only 54% of participating South African organisations in their study offered leadership development programmes to women. Carter and Silva (2010) aptly pointed out that women's career progression lags when compared to men's despite the higher number of female graduates from leading business schools globally. They also note that the rate of women's career advancement has slowed in recent years (Carter & Silva, 2010).

Most large organisations are experiencing the effect of a critical global shortage of effective leaders at all levels. To address the situation, organisations around the globe are spending exorbitant amounts of money on leadership development programmes to develop the capacity and capabilities of their current and future leaders. Miller (2012), in citing Miller and Dalglish (2011), put forward that leaders who had attended these programmes felt that fewer than 10% of the experiences that are considered as key and shaping events in their knowledge building was gained through training programmes or traditional education. Delegates on the programme reported back to their CEOs that whilst the course was a positive experience, they did not actually gain further skills by attending the course; rather, it provided an excellent platform for networking. Clearly, these training programmes are not addressing delegate needs, nor are organisations reaping the benefits on their return on investment (Miller, 2012).

Further support was provided by Blume, Ford, Baldwin, and Huang (2010) who commented that despite there being a dramatic growth in programmes aimed at training and developing managers, organisations do not know the true yield of their training expenditures and cannot link training to improved employee performance when back at work. Because organisations do not understand the critical competencies required for leadership development, aspiring executives are required to develop a vast

array of skills in order to advance. This approach leaves learners uncertain where to focus their developmental efforts (Beeson & Valerio, 2012).

In the past, organisations faced challenges pertaining to gender diversity at top management and board level because there were too few women who met the requirements in respect of skill, education and experience. Women were more likely to work part-time or to settle for lower paid but more convenient positions, and hence would be less likely to participate in on-the-job training for more senior roles, as neither they nor their employers would gain a reasonable return on the investment in training. But in recent times, women have invested both time and finances in education and adopted a lifetime work pattern similar to that of men. By examining human capital theory, we learn that directors' appointments are based, in large part, on the human capital (knowledge, skills, experience) provided to the firms. This study shows that this new cohort of female directors has accumulated human capital fairly similar to their male peers in terms of education, reputation, board experience and career experience (Singh, Terjesen, & Vinnicom, 2008). In support of the growth of women's educational advancement, studies show that in the United States and Canada, between 2010 and 2011, women earned 36.8% and 34.5% of MBAs respectively (Catalyst, 2012). The effect of this increase in the number of highly educated women will be a more diverse set of human capital experiences that can be utilised by organisations (Singh, Terjesen, & Vinnicom, 2008).

The research explores the executive leadership development factors that play a role in the inclusion of women at the top echelons of business. Despite their profitable 'human capital', women are not yet achieving the same positions or the same salaries in their careers as their male counterparts. Certainly, the continuing lack of women in leadership positions gives grounds to question the reasoning behind these scarce numbers.

1.4 Motivation for the research

The rationale behind this research is partly personal and partly pertinent to the South African context. Personal career experiences as a career-oriented woman in corporate South Africa have prompted the researcher to perform this research. The researcher has firsthand knowledge of how frustrating it is to be permanently 'developed' for executive roles. And yet, despite being nominated by her organisation for management

development programmes and an MBA, her 'development' has not yet translated into a senior leadership role.

In reviewing the background information and popular press it was found that although many multinational organisations value gender diversity in leadership, they are focused on broader diversity objectives and not specifically on accelerating the development and pipeline of qualified women leaders. As a result of this lack of strategy, the climate of support in South Africa for developing women leaders' remains varied (Mercer, 2011).

The lack of gender-specific leadership development programmes is one clear reason organisations are not achieving their goals of gender-equality. Many organisations do have talented women in their leadership pipelines; however, some organisations don't recognise the unique attributes that female leaders bring to the table. To be successful in advancing women into leadership roles, organisations need a definite strategy, one that includes amending the organisation's corporate culture to recognise the value of a diverse leadership team, as well as intentional development of women for leadership roles (Mercer, 2011).

1.5 Aims and objectives of the study

The purpose of the research will be to explore one approach to advancing women's careers, specifically through a tailored development programme designed for those women identified as having high potential for progressing to senior management. It reports on participant experiences of such programmes and their perceptions of its value in supporting career advancement (Clarke, 2011).

This research will firstly seek to understand the benefits of current development programmes for women. It will then identify the challenges/failures of development programmes that impede women's advancement. It will then seek to understand what elements are required in development programmes to overcome these challenges, fill developmental gaps and groom women for promotion. As such, it will be necessary to explore the unique skills that are necessary to equip women with adequate tools for moving into more senior roles. Then the research will investigate what exactly is required by an organisation to facilitate their programmes impact.

The research will propose a model for the development of women that will be used to position and inform women's leadership development programmes within organisations. To fully explore this topic and understand how development programmes should be re-designed, various views and perspectives are required. Consequently, this study reports on participant experiences of such programmes and their perceptions of its value in supporting career advancement (Clarke, 2011), specifically interviewing aspiring female executives, as they will have an informed view on what this will entail and how they would suggest going about it.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction – The corporate gap

The recent global economic crisis has resulted in a significant change in the way business is conducted. CEOs are now focussing their attention on the medium-term rather than the long-term, and the success of their businesses hinges on creating an environment in which the best minds, ideas, innovation and leadership can flourish. For a country to succeed in this turbulent environment, it must nurture its talented human capital. The country's skill base, level of education and productivity of its workforce provide its businesses with its source of competitiveness (Zahidi & Ibarra, 2010).

To achieve the required level of country competitiveness, it is imperative to acknowledge the economic participation of women. Given that women in the developing world account for more than half of a country's university graduates, all that remains is for companies to tap into this growing talent pool, educating and then utilising its immense female talent. Gender equality and governmental policies must be in place for companies to create an ecosystem where the best talent—whether male or female—can and will flourish (Zahidi & Ibarra, 2010; Singh et al., 2008).

Furst and Reeves (2008) found that women are in fact considered to be superior candidates for top positions in the current turbulent business environment. They argued that successful women executives employ a variety of complex behaviours and provide new approaches to leadership that make them particularly effective during turbulent and uncertain times. Further, women develop a more complex repertoire of leadership behaviours and skills through their varied career paths and divergent life experiences. In addition to diverse work experiences, many of these women are or have been working mothers, forced to balance work and family demands. These experiences, when viewed together, enable women to develop uniquely competitive skills that should be highly valued in a turbulent, uncertain environment (Furst & Reeves, 2008).

Despite the global recognition that women need to be integrated into the economy and the growing need for knowledge workers, it is evident that job opportunities available to women are still minimal compared to those of men (Zahidi & Ibarra, 2010). Beeson

and Valerio (2012) found that the rate of promotions, irrespective of gender, has slowed as a result of the global economic crisis. However they assert that the impact of economic rebound coupled with emerging demographic pressures on companies as well as an aging executive leadership pool will put senior leadership talent retention at the fore for most organisations. Companies that do not advance their female leaders will stand to lose these highly skilled colleagues to the global war for talent and those companies that do not show commitment to developing women executives will suffer a talent drain as high-potential women leave to take advantage of other opportunities. They conclude that it is therefore necessary for organisations to amend their attraction and retention practices and adapt their mindsets so that they are able to retain future leaders, especially women (Beeson & Valerio, 2012).

Evans (2011) echoed this stating that organisations lose their top female talent by underestimating and underutilising their leadership skills as a result of not addressing the impact of barriers of gender stereotyping. To this end, organisational leaders must eradicate barriers preventing women from progressing into senior leadership roles and provide equal opportunities for women (Zahidi & Ibarra, 2010).

2.2 Gender stereotyping

“Gender stereotypes are socially constructed categories of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ that are confirmed by different behavior depending on sex, different distribution of men and women within social roles and statuses, and are supported by a person’s psychological needs to behave in a socially acceptable manner and to feel integral and not discrepant” (Kliuchko, 2011, p. 17). This definition explains that stereotypes are societal constructions of masculinity and femininity, constructs which influence external perceptions as well as an individual’s internal identity and sense of belonging (Kliuchko, 2011).

Kliuchko (2011) further highlighted other important aspects about gender stereotypes. The attribution of qualities according to masculinity and femininity tends to categorise individuals. Characteristics such as ‘Active-Creative’ are generally attributed to masculinity, with qualities such as activity, dominance, self-confidence, aggressiveness, logical thinking, and leadership ability associated to it. ‘Passive-Reproductive’ principles are attributed to femininity with characteristics such as dependence, solicitude, anxiety, low self-esteem and high emotionality associated with

it. Heilman (2001) argued that this attribution of qualities to gender becomes problematic when it begins to elicit gender bias from evaluators; “They produce the perceived lack of fit responsible for many types of biased judgments about women in work settings” (p.660). Heilman (2001) also argued that gender stereotypes are not only descriptive, but prescriptive as well. They prescribe what women should be like and how men should behave. Those not fitting to these prescriptions are judged harshly by society. Medina and Magnuson (2009) supports Heilman (2001) stating that socially constructed and gender-stereotyped expectations about motherhood do not typically include the additional responsibility of professional leadership or career attention.

Foldy (2006) argued that gender schemas and stereotypes that associate leadership qualities, potential, and ability with men serve as a psychological barrier to women’s advancement in managerial and leadership roles. This is especially since male stereotypes are characterised by high needs for dominance, achievement, aggression, and autonomy, compared to the female stereotypes that are characterised by high needs for affiliation, nurturance and deference (Fullagar, Sumer, Sverke, & Slick, 2003).

Gender stereotyping of the managerial position has been offered as a possible reason why women are not well-represented in top level positions (Heilman, 2001; Schein, Müller, Lituchy & Liu, 1996; Elacqua, Beehr, Hansen & Webster, 2009). Heilman (2001) proposed that the primary cause of women’s scarcity at the top level of organisations is gender bias in evaluation: “Because of gender bias and the way in which it influences evaluation in work settings, being competent provides no assurance that a woman will advance to the same organizational levels as an equivalently performing man” (Heilman, 2001, p. 657)

Again, gender stereotyping, which is also referred to as ‘sex-role’ stereotyping, has been “consistently identified as a psychological barrier to women’s advancement in the workplace” (Fullagar et al., 2003, p. 94). One of the reasons for this is that gender stereotypes tend to be associated with certain family and professional roles. “For a woman, housewife and mother is considered the most significant social role. She is assigned to the private sphere of life: home, giving birth to children and responsibility for interrelations in the family is entrusted to her. Inclusion in social life, professional success, and breadwinning are the lot of men” (Kliuchko, 2011, p. 18). This reveals a very prescriptive bias that results from gender stereotypes.

Ely et al. (2011) identified "second-generation" forms of subtle gender bias as an impediment of women's progress in business. These practices and patterns, although unintentional, favour men and create structural career blocks for women. Leadership development in this light is positioned as "identity work" requiring the person to undertake two tasks: internalising a leader identity (coming to see oneself and being seen by others as a leader) and developing an elevated sense of purpose. Furthermore, a leader's identity is tied to her or his sense of purpose. Leaders are most effective—both with themselves and with those they lead—when their personal values align with the work they are doing and connect to something that is larger than themselves. But women doing the sort of identity work it takes to reach top-level positions in companies are often stopped in their tracks by subtle forms of gender bias, which are deeply ingrained in workplace culture and society at large. These biases can interfere with the dual requirements of internalising a leader identity and developing an elevated sense of purpose (Ely et al., 2011).

These gender stereotypes, constructed by society, explain to a degree the under-representation of women in senior roles as they act as barriers to women's advancement. The reality of the situation is that women do, in fact, still encounter numerous barriers to career progression and may therefore pursue unique career paths that are different from men's over their life spans (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005). Beeson and Valerio (2012) found that organisations should offer workshops aimed at unpacking the sources of gender bias and offer tools for managing a diverse workforce.

2.3 Under-representation of women and overcoming the barriers

While it is a common assumption, perhaps because of these gender stereotypes, that women prefer *not* to advance in business, Hoobler, Lemmon, and Wayne (2011) challenged this common belief that women do not desire senior management roles. They argued that the majority of women today are, in fact, actively pursuing management careers and *do* have the desire to progress to senior levels within the organisation. They identified four main barriers to explain the lack of advancement of women: 1) the glass ceiling effect; 2) the progression through the pipeline; 3) the genetic predisposition of women; and 4) the current 24/7 economy. However, Evans (2011) acknowledged several other barriers to women's success: lack of workplace flexibility, exclusion from informal networks, lack of role models and mentors, competence and businesses' inadequate strategies for developing women leaders.

It is important to understand the role that these barriers play in career advancement for women. The next section, therefore, explains these barriers as well as the strategies that successful women have employed to overcome them.

2.3.1 Glass ceiling

This invisible barrier exists as a result of discrimination of women in the workplace. A form of stereotyping, the glass ceiling results from behavioural perceptions of women's expected mannerisms in the workplace. These beliefs, though, contradict with traditional male leadership archetypes and result in women being judged as unsuitable rather than as suitable for leadership positions. It is this phenomenon that explains why women attain middle-management but cannot transcend into senior roles despite being educated and visible (Hoobler et al., 2011).

Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) suggested that women can break through the glass ceiling but that it involves goal-setting, self-assertion and self-promotion through directive communication, determination to persevere and achieve goals, and the need to be receptive to research and education that will advance a woman's career path.

2.3.2 Progression through the pipeline

Women are often faced with the belief that it takes a substantial amount of time for qualified women to gain career experience and skills that will *eventually* stand her in good stead to assume leadership positions in equal numbers to men (Hoobler et al., 2011). This view, created by society, is overcome by determined women who have genuine desire coupled with a high degree of motivation and commitment to succeed. Successful women have shattered the glass ceiling by prioritising tasks, believing in their abilities and focussing on what is important in order to permeate upper management and make it through the pipeline in a fair and timely fashion (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010).

2.3.3 Genetic predisposition of women

Another barrier is the assumption that women are not genetically predisposed for top management. At the core of this view is the notion that women supposedly *prefer* positions with greater job security and fewer challenges and are not as interested in the

high-stakes environment of top jobs with their corresponding challenges. It is also assumed that maternal instincts are stronger than women's career motivation (Hoobler et al., 2011). Successful women have overcome this challenge by being able to anticipate negative attitudes and detach from such stereotypes. This strategy maintains objectivity in the drive for success (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010).

2.3.4 24/7 economy

This type of barrier takes into account the way work is structured in today's business world. Vast amounts of time and energy are required from employees in a 24/7 economy: this seems incompatible with the time and energy that women require for other responsibilities (for example, childcare) (Hoobler et al., 2011). Women have responded to this challenge via the establishment of a strong support system in order to enjoy a successful career and family life. The alternative is the either/or dilemma – either choosing a career or choosing a family life (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010).

2.3.5 Lack of workplace flexibility

Some women felt that flexible work opportunities and work-life balance were a problem in that organisations did not provide opportunities for them to excel in their dual roles as leaders and mothers (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012). Women have been scrutinised regarding their ability to balance family demands and work demands for longer hours and weekend work, and travel requirements (Furst & Reeves, 2008; Medina & Magnuson, 2009). Eagly and Carli (2007) suggested that companies adopt family-friendly resource practices to support women and allow them to retain their jobs. However, even those women who are committed to their careers may be viewed as less committed if they take advantage of flexible work arrangements and work-family policies (Rogier & Padgett, 2004).

2.3.6 Exclusion from informal networks

Yet another barrier is that influential informal networks tend to be comprised entirely of men and are based on male-related activities, making it very difficult for women to gain access to and leverage off these networks (Eagly & Carli, 2007). To overcome this barrier, women need to rise above the old boys' network, diplomatically gaining access

to the networks, not being afraid to invite themselves to join in professional and social activities with colleagues, male and female (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010).

2.3.7 Lack of role models and mentors

Sometime, other women themselves are a barrier. A staggering 64% of respondents in the Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) study confirmed that women felt that other women in the organisation were responsible for *not* supporting their advancement and in actual fact, held them back.

In order to be break through this barrier, successful women need to make conscious choices in their selection of mentors, aligning the choice to career stages. Finding a mentor provides a trusted source of wisdom to help build specific strategies en route to achieving goals. Being able to learn from accommodating senior women in the organisation and embracing emotional sensitivity as a positive leadership value, combined with critical thinking and analytical skills, catapult women into senior management roles (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010).

2.3.8 Businesses' lack of strategy for developing women leaders

The lack of strategy from business for developing female leaders and investing in their training and development is underscored by an overall lack of male-dominated industry initiatives (e.g. mining industry bursaries awarded to women) (Hofmeyr & Mzobe, 2012).

2.3.9 Competence

Women are regularly required to prove their competence and are subjected to stricter scrutiny of their qualifications (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). However, their male counterparts are assumed to have this competency and are often promoted based on previous experience (Beeson & Valerio, 2012).

Levitt (2010) quoted Steiner (2006) commenting on the barriers that women face confirming that the expectations and public image of female leaders may be rooted in traditional concepts of leadership roles. Steiner (2006) suggests that leadership development programmes should seek to be mindful of reducing bias and increasing opportunities to address issues regarding bias within the context of each delegate's

environment. He advises programme designers to call on leaders, regardless of their sex or their gender role, to break these barriers and proudly celebrate the natural styles and beliefs of men and women. In this way society might even benefit from female leaders who, as a way to validate women engaging in similar struggles, publicly share the challenges they face in their effort to balance multiple roles and responsibilities (Levitt, 2010).

Having discussed the barriers that women face in career advancement, it is important to consider the changes expected of women in preparation for career advancement.

2.4 Addressing the Self

2.4.1 Leadership style

Levitt (2010) found that women are expected to display leadership attributes that show a drive to lead; however, they are penalised for being aggressive or abrasive if they act tough. On the other end of the spectrum, they are dismissed as being too soft for not displaying assertive behaviour (Levitt, 2010). Women suffer from the damned-if-she-does and damned-if-she-doesn't double bind, making leadership all the more complex for women (Catalyst, 2007).

Evans (2011) commented on the dilemma above, stating that women are considered competent when they exhibit traditionally male valued leadership behaviours such as assertiveness. It is because of this stereotyping that women are considered poor leaders when they exhibit a masculine leadership style and men are lauded when they tone down their dominance with more empathic behaviour (Eagly & Carli, 2007). A de-emphasis of hierarchal boundaries between supervisors and subordinates aids in achieving acceptance of the leadership style of women (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010)

In order to understand the leadership aspects of gender roles Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003) described these gender stereotypes as 'agentic' for males and 'communal' for women. 'Agentic' behaviours assigned to men include assertiveness, toughness, dominance, self-sufficiency, ambition, competitiveness, daring and self-promotion. In employment settings, 'agentic' behaviours might include speaking assertively, competing for attention, influencing others, initiating activity directed to assigned tasks, and making problem-focused suggestions (Carli, 2001).

‘Communal’ behaviours assigned to women include agreeableness, connecting with others, cooperativeness, empathy, nurturing, and concern with the welfare of other people (Carli, 2001). Characteristics used to describe these are affectionate, helpful, kind, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive, nurturing and gentle (Eagly et al., 2003). In employment settings, ‘communal’ behaviours might include speaking tentatively, not drawing attention to oneself, accepting others’ direction, supporting and soothing others, and contributing to the solution of relational and interpersonal problems.

It is for the reasons above that men are judged to be emotionally stable, strong, assertive and workplace achievers whilst women are seen as emotionally unstable, weak and timid (DeArmond, et al., 2006).

In terms of business advancement, then, Beeson and Valerio (2012) cautioned that the ‘agentic’ behavioural traits mentioned by Carli (2001) may be seen as core to advancement by company leaders. The concern is thus that executives may assign specific traits to aspiring leaders based on gender and underestimate a candidate’s executive potential based on preconceptions rather than actual performance and true leadership capability. As managerial skills are primarily associated with men rather than women, people are more resistant to managers exerting influence when managers are female than when they are male (Eagly & Carli, 2007). Women are required to very tactfully blend toughness with warmth in order to be regarded as credible leaders, where this isn’t necessarily so for men (Beeson & Valerio, 2012).

Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) concluded that women needed to use their assertiveness when it came to driving their own career paths and engaging with managers for assistance in reaching their goals. Budworth and Mann (2010) found that because women are typically not oriented toward self-promotion, they are more likely to suffer in terms of both remuneration and career progression.

It is necessary, then, for women’s leadership development programmes to include training in self-promotion (Budworth & Mann, 2010). Leadership self-awareness was described as an important element of the development programmes for women, as it is critical that leaders, male and female, develop an awareness of their own leadership strengths and limitations in order to maximise strengths to their benefit and to overcome their shortcomings (Riggio, 2008). Budworth and Mann (2010) suggested that women in management need to be trained to overcome ingrained social barriers and address the socialised concerns of likeability and gender appropriateness. Further,

women must be taught that it is necessary to make one's accomplishments known to the decision-makers (Budworth & Mann, 2010).

2.4.1.1 Self-sacrificing behaviour

A positive trait attributed to women's leadership that contributed to advancement opportunities is self-sacrificing behaviour (Furst & Reeves, 2008). The self-sacrificing behaviour of an executive is especially important in turbulent business environments when employees may be asked to work longer hours and forfeit privileges. This willingness to self-sacrifice communicates a vision of cooperative enterprise which can motivate employees in times of chaos and demonstrates self-sacrifice (Furst & Reeves, 2008). Choi and Yoon (2005) found that employees tend to attribute charisma to leaders based upon their superior leadership competence and on their self-sacrificing behaviour.

2.4.2 Building self-brand

A 'self-brand' is yet another trait for women's advancement. "Personal branding entails capturing and promoting an individual's strengths and uniqueness to a target audience," (Labrecque, Markos, & Milne, 2011, p. 38). Morton (2012) added that authenticity forms the foundation of any personal brand. He commented that it is important to stand out from others around, especially when looking to further career development, and cautioned that a successful personal brand needs to be consistent through all areas of brand management. When a brand exemplifies multiple identities to its target audiences, it can be confusing to its publics and deemed as less credible (Morton, 2012). Laud and Johnson (2012) echoed the sentiment of Morton (2012), identifying the need for women to build their self-brand as a career advancement strategy that differentiates them, bringing attention to their unique skills and abilities.

The constructs considered important in building a self-brand include training and education, networking, reputation and integrity, politics and confidence (Laud & Johnson, 2012). Hoobler et al. (2011) added that training and on-the-job experiences including challenging work assignments and networking result in increased productivity as well as the accumulation of a set of portable skills that an individual accumulates for current and future roles. Laud and Johnson (2012) argued that integrity and ethical

behaviour were also essential elements in building personal reputation and brand, as important for leadership advancement as they were in sustaining a leadership position.

2.4.3 Skill Building

Woolley, Chabris, Pentland, Hashmi, and Malone (2010) found that women are at an advantage over men in that they fare superiorly in what is called 'collective intelligence' or 'evolved thinking'. The study found that women's innate feminine skills allow them the social sensitivity to read non-verbal cues and other people's emotions. They are also able to read relational intelligence, emotional intelligence, holistic perspective, inclusion, empathy and intuition (Woolley et al., 2010).

These skills as well as other skills pertinent to leadership and management will stand her in good stead as she advances in her career. During the journey of career advancement, women must develop such skills. It is important for women's leadership development programmes to include the teaching of the following skills:

2.4.3.1 Assertiveness and Confidence

Confidence was defined as the level of courage, assertiveness and willingness to take initiative in uncertain situations (Laud & Johnson, 2012). In the business world, women who are aggressive, assertive and confident, and who can turn these traits 'on and off' depending on the social circumstances, get more promotions than either men or other women (O'Neill & O'Reilly III, 2011). This suggests that for women to be successful they must simultaneously present themselves as self -confident and dominant while tempering these qualities with displays of communal characteristics. The aim is for women to fit into their environment by assessing social situations and adapting their actions accordingly (O'Neill & O'Reilly III, 2011).

Self-confidence was found to blossom in an environment where women were provided with the space to develop their identities as leaders and discuss common concerns with peers (Bonebright, Cottledge, & Lonquist, 2012).

2.4.3.2 Communication skills

Communicating assertively with subordinates, combined with effective listening skills are key drivers of the success of women (Baumgartner & Schneider, 2010). Communicating effectively requires poise and polishing, a skill that women need to motivate others and articulate a message (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). Because of their superior listening skills and enhanced sensitivity towards others, women enhance boardroom discussions (Bilimoria, 2000).

Women identified solid skills such as conflict management and difficult conversations as key skills necessary to advance and operate in senior levels. Many women found that workshops provided opportunities for them to understand themselves, see how they interact with others, and practice skills in technical and professional areas (e.g. handling difficult conversations and conflict) (Eunice, Morrow-Jones, & Ballam, 2012) .

2.4.3.3 Negotiation Skills

Female negotiators face a series of obstacles in negotiating (Kulik & Olekalns, 2012). Small, Gelfand, Babcock, & Gettman (2007) found that as negotiators, women are more timid and less likely than men to initiate negotiations, thereby depriving themselves of opportunities to improve their employment terms. They often doubt their abilities and expect to perform poorly, making fewer demands during the negotiation and assuming an accommodating style that is less likely to deliver the economic benefits of a more competitive negotiation style (Small et al., 2007).

Women can take actions to remedy these situations, and one of them is to negotiate more proactively and effectively for wages and opportunity (Kolb, 2009).

2.4.3.4 Feedback

Women need to be pro-active concerning the management of their own careers and should seek the feedback of executives on how well placed they are for promotion and what skills are still required for advancement (Beeson & Valerio, 2012). Riggio (2008) concurred that female leaders must develop the ability to accept constructive criticism in order for positive change to occur. Beeson and Valerio (2012) go on to explain that constructive feedback will also uncover how aspiring executives can display executive presence—the self-confidence and control—that is required by an executive leader.

They do caution however that feedback must be received graciously and appreciatively to keep lines of communication open. Beeson and Valerio (2012) conclude that presentations and effective communication to executive groups are important ways of conveying executive presence.

Riggio (2008) added that leaders must be open to feedback from assessment tools, such as 360 degree evaluations, and heed the advice of their executive coaches in order to reflect personally upon their own leadership skills.

2.4.3.5 Pursue executive experience

Beeson and Valerio (2012) propose that women should also test their new skills on projects in their current jobs to see if they have acquired the key skills for the executive level. They found that women who expose themselves to cross-functional organisational initiatives often benefit from broadened relationships and a wider depth of organisational knowledge. This also increases their visibility to other executives in the organisation. Through their internal networks, women should identify the assignments that have historically produced senior leaders and build knowledge about the specific business to allow them to be considered for line functions, pro-actively seeking allies and thinking strategically about career development (Beeson & Valerio, 2012).

2.4.3.6 Reflection & role models

It is important for women to be strategic and adopt a long-term perspective on career development by reflecting on experiences, feedback, career options, and short-term and long-term goals (Beeson & Valerio, 2012).

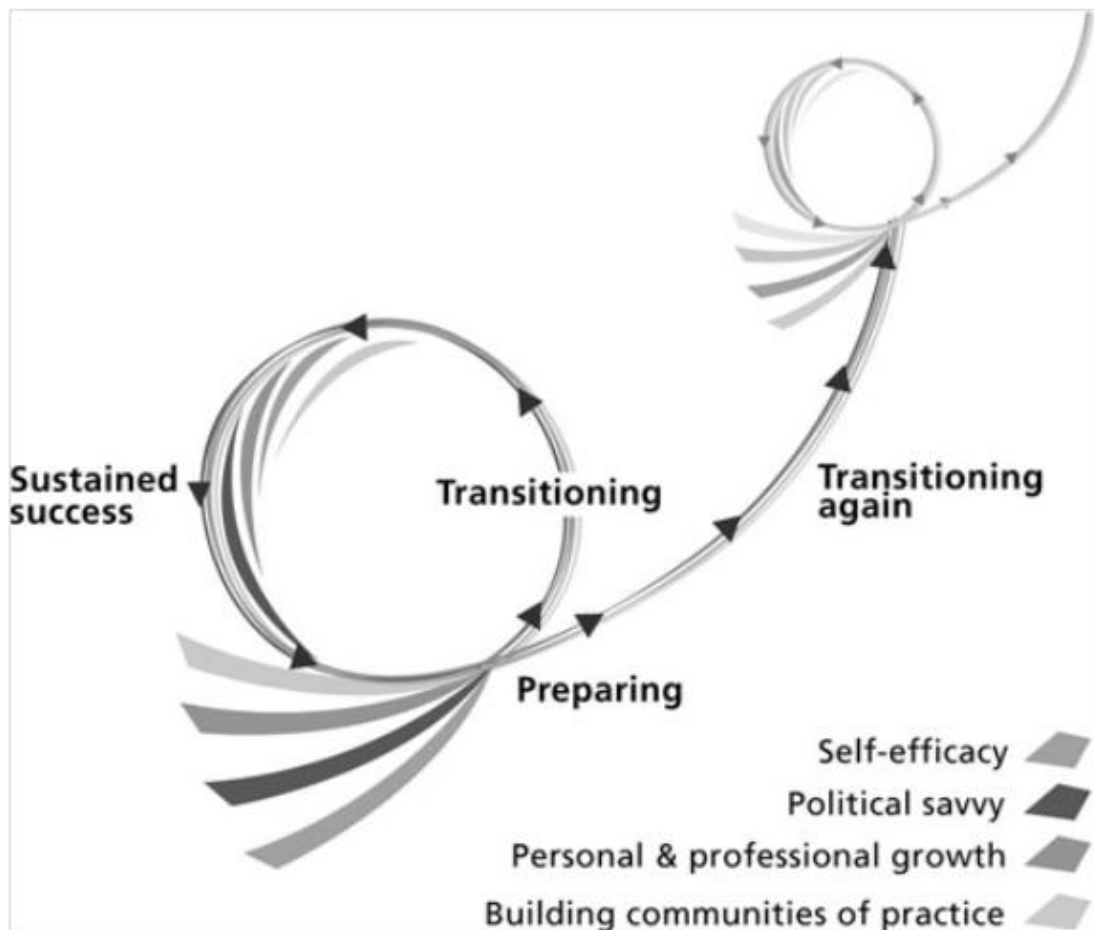
The ability for women to learn from their peers was a strong finding in the support of leadership development programmes (Bonebright et al., 2012). For these women, being able to connect with peers about professional activities and common interests such as raising children or seeking advanced degrees while working full-time was also beneficial. To add to this, guest speakers share their leadership journeys and the lessons learned along the way (Bonebright et al., 2012).

The model below presents leadership evolution for women as they develop the skills required for success transition through increasingly responsible leadership positions

2.4.4 Evolving model of leadership for women

The Leadership Continuum Model, developed by the Association of American Medical Colleges (2009), as cited by Morahan, Rosen, Richman, and Gleason (2011), described the process that most women progress through as they advance in their careers. In this model, the looping cycle of four phases predicts how an individual transitions into these positions of increasingly responsible leadership (Morahan et al., 2011).

Figure 2: Leadership Continuum Model as supplied by Morahan, P. S., Rosen, S. E., Richman, R. C., and Gleason, K. A. (2011).



The first two cycles are evident in early to mid-career stages and are particularly important in terms of placing women in their first leadership role. The third and fourth

stages are evident in mid to late-career stages. Transitioning between these stages is an on-going process (Morahan et al., 2011).

In the initial cycle, women preparing for leadership positions equip themselves with leadership and management skills, increase their visibility, develop a trust-based community of peers, and learn to value relational skills (Morahan et al., 2011). The second phase involves a transition into leadership. Psychologically, women must become comfortable with power if they are to leverage policies, resources, and connections successfully to effect change, especially deep-seated organisational or cultural change (Morahan et al., 2011). They must also develop practical skills required for a career campaign, including interviewing for positions, performing due diligence to determine if a position is a good fit, negotiating for the resources necessary for success, and transitioning out of the former position and into the new position (Morahan et al., 2011). In the third phase, the female leader must garner sufficient and appropriate support to ensure sustained success in the leadership position. The fourth and final phase is transitioning once again from one leadership position to another (Morahan et al., 2011).

Whilst this model and several others exist to explain how leadership evolves, they do not offer explanations for the practicalities of women moving into senior positions.

Consequently, there is an evident need for businesses operating in the current economic and social climate to partner with organisations that support women's development programmes (Evans, 2011). Explicit practical interventions are needed to place and sustain women in leadership roles, given the restrictions of the glass ceiling and the failure of the pipeline model, the entrenched structures and norms, socially constructed prohibitive gender stereotypes, and the difficulties establishing a critical mass of women in senior leadership positions (Ely et al., 2011). As such, an array of career advancement tools must be available to women in this regard.

2.5 Leveraging tools for development

Career development opportunities are defined as the competencies and on-the-job experiences that are required to achieve managerial effectiveness (Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh, 2009). The statement above is extrapolated by Kraimer, Siebert, Wayne, Liden, and Bravo (2011) who equated organisational development to those

experiences, skills, or education that are attained by individuals and drawn upon when performing their current roles or used in future career considerations.

The tools for career development opportunities for the benefit of women in business, as particular recommendations for women's leadership development programmes, are discussed below.

2.5.1 Networking

Networking was identified as a driver of career success for women, bringing with it increased salary, promotions and career satisfaction (Siebert, Kraimer, & Liden, 2001). Networks are a source of social capital and power (Molloy, 2005; Timberlake, 2005). Eagly and Carli (2007) noted that in fact, women have reported that their primary barrier to career advancement was their exclusion from organisational networks. They were unable to gain access to resources as quickly as their male colleagues as a consequence of a number of underlying organisational processes that prevented them from accessing networks (Eagly & Carli, 2007).

Cross and Armstrong (2008) proved that participating in women's networks yielded positive results. Participants of the study felt that the networks provided a forum in which women could transfer their experiences and share their learnings with the group (Cross & Armstrong, 2008). Beeson and Valerio (2012) found that women need an internal network of peers, managers and supportive others who can provide career guidance. Networking outside the organisation provides the opportunity for managers to feed their strategic skills and knowledge of innovative approaches and introduce these to the company (Beeson & Valerio, 2012).

Networking among participants and presenters of leadership development programmes, as well as national and institutional contacts, was considered a key element of a programme's success (Harris & Leberman, 2012). However, it was also identified as the largest challenge for leadership development programmes, with participants requesting a formal mentoring component and follow-up programmes (Bonebright et al., 2012).

According to O'Neil, Hopkins, and Sullivan (2011) members of networks did not believe that the network in itself encourages a behavioural change in women, allowing them to gain visible leadership roles. They felt that organisational factors played a bigger role

in their attainment of these positions. Whilst members conceded that they would make the requisite changes in areas under their control, namely gaining confidence and skills, being supportive of other women and increasing self-awareness, they also noted that for a network to be successful, senior leadership must demonstrate the competitive advantage that the women's network holds by promoting it for the impact it has on the organisation's bottom line. Importantly, the women's network must be embedded within a culture that supports gender diversity if it is to be successful (O'Neil et al., 2011).

2.5.2 Sponsorship

The single most important networking variable that was highlighted in the Laud and Johnson (2012) study was the securing of an active career sponsorship. Women's progression was frequently based on their association with an established manager and access to this manager's networks; it is therefore essential for women to be visible within their organisations and to gain strong organisational sponsorship in respect of their career advancement within the firm (Berggren & Söderlund, 2011).

Siebert et al. (2001) supports the positive correlation between sponsorship and career achievement. The value of powerful career sponsorship should not be overlooked as it is the ultimate goal of high-level vertical networking, along with the necessary confidence and insight to recognise and then seize opportunities that present themselves (Laud & Johnson, 2012). Women who had been afforded the opportunity to learn a new skill-set and were being sponsored by senior members in the organisation had the opportunity to increase the return on investment for both themselves and the organisation (Kraimer et al., 2011).

2.5.3 Mentoring

The core attributes of workplace mentoring were found to be reciprocity, developmental benefits and relational interaction over a period of time. 'Reciprocity' involved a mutually beneficial relationship of social exchange as opposed to a one-way relationship. 'Developmental benefits' were longer lasting benefits that extended beyond the skill that was required to perform a job. 'Mentoring relationships' of relational interaction were of the long-term nature, extending over a period of time (Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, & Wilbanks, 2011).

Humble, Solomon, Allen, Blaisure, and Johnson (2006) found that the most effective mentoring may follow more feminist-oriented principles. They identified themes such as self-disclosing to nurture relationships, analysing power, dealing with resistance to feminism, and working toward social change as important issues for women to overcome.

Women require accessibility to multiple mentors at several high-level positions throughout the organisation as this provided them with access to a pool of talented leaders who had the ability to provide distinct insights that were more beneficial than those of a single mentor (Laud & Johnson, 2012; Mayer, Files, Ko, & Blair, 2008). This idea of multiple mentors supported the finding of Siebert et al. (2001); however, this contradicted the work of Molloy (2005) who argued that having a single mentor sufficed.

Beeson and Valerio (2012) found that it is important for organisations to be able to support women's networks and encourage them to share experiences with other women. Humble et al. (2006) confirmed that mentoring relationships help women to develop their interests and make important professional contributions. They also found that without female leader role models of their own, many women may not know how to mentor other women.

Beeson and Valerio (2012) suggested that organisations should recognise male champions who are dedicated to fostering diversity in leadership development by allowing them to mentor women. Women should not underscore the need to strengthen their game by engaging a mentor who can assist in developing the skills needed to succeed at the next level (Beeson & Valerio, 2012).

Beeson and Valerio (2012) concluded that leadership development plans for women must include an external focus. That is, the programme must expose women to external leaders in order to build both leadership experience and engagement outside the organisation.

2.5.4 Coaching

“Coaching can be defined as the process of challenging and supporting a person or a team to develop ways of thinking, ways of being, and ways of learning” (Berg & Karlsen, 2012, p. 178). Berg and Karlsen (2012) found that the purpose of coaching is

for the coach to assist the woman in developing her strengths and achieving both her personal and organisational goals.

Gray, Ekinci, and Goregaokar (2011) sound that for women, the coach's ability to establish the coaching partnership through rapport building and mutual trust, and the coach's qualifications and accreditation, were regarded as essential attributes. They stated further that whilst other attributes such as empathy, listening, motivation and trust were important in both mentoring and coaching, role modelling and career coaching were seen as attributes important for mentoring, not coaching. Possession of business knowledge was also a key attribute required of a coach (Gray et al., 2011).

2.5.5 Challenging job experiences

Challenging job experiences were considered an important source of career development, equated to job characteristics that provide individuals with the opportunity and motivation to learn (De Pater, Van Vianen, Bechtoldt, & Klehe, 2009). These experiences provide opportunities for women to learn from unstructured or non-routine situations and use the knowledge and skills acquired to enhance the performance in one's current job (Aryee & Chu, 2012). These challenges are what women require as they are always being subjected to further assignments before being considered for a promotion (Lyness & Heilman, 2006). The view of Beeson and Valerio (2012) is to include such 'stretch' assignments in the development plans for women. Such assignments are designed to promote long-term career advancement.

Hoobler et al. (2011) found that immersing employees in complex and perhaps even difficult problems allowed them to develop new skills and apply their competencies to new projects, customers and markets, thereby building their level of experience and skill base. Employees were motivated when faced with challenging jobs and the exposure to more challenging work resulted in an increase in the employees' capacity to assume managerial roles (Hoobler et al., 2011).

The work of King et al. (2010) demonstrated that although men and women showed equal interest in challenging work, women were assigned less-challenging assignments as a result of benevolent sexism, suggesting that women deserve protection. The findings of Hoobler et al. (2011) reflected that when women received more challenging

work assignments, sufficient training and development and enough career encouragement from their managers, higher managerial aspirations were noted.

2.5.6 Constructive feedback

Essential to developing future leaders is the need for constructive feedback about where one stands in terms of the core selection factors required for executive advancement (Beeson & Valerio, 2012).

Beeson and Valerio (2012) found that many executives are hesitant about providing feedback to women. They suggested that this stems from their lack of comfort in providing feedback that cannot be substantiated objectively and therefore is unable to address the women's core developmental needs. A study carried out by Mattis (2001) revealed reluctance on the part of male managers to have meaningful and strategic career management conversations with women. The study found that while male managers gave feedback about job performance in both male and female reports, additional time was spent with males and their reports, discussing their career path in the organisation. Male managers helped their male employees think about how they can position themselves for important developmental assignments that will lead to advancement, and yet they neglected to have such discussions with their female reports (Mattis, 2001)

Beeson & Valerio (2012) suggest that career discussion dialogue must be candid in order to address the developmental needs of women. Innovative opportunities must be offered for global exposure that is cognisant and respectful of women's family responsibilities (Beeson & Valerio, 2012).

2.5.7 Training and education

Laud and Johnson (2012) suggested that both men and women consider training and education as important to their personal development as well as their career advancement. The value, prestige and usefulness of educational qualifications were confirmed by both genders. The study carried out by Laud and Johnson (2012) indicated that women maintained a more consistent regard for education as a point of differentiation from their male counterparts, as higher job levels in the organisation were attained. For women, their education represented something tangible, a positive

contributor to their image, aiding them in levelling the playing fields in male-dominated organisations (Laud & Johnson, 2012).

The following section discusses the concept of learning in general and concludes with the manner in which learning influences women leadership development programmes.

2.6 An understanding of learning

Jarvis (2006) defines learning as being “the combination of processes whereby the whole person-body (genetic, physical and biological) and mind (knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, emotions, beliefs, and senses) experiences a social situation, the perceived content of which is then transformed cognitively, emotionally or practically (or through any combination) and integrated into the person’s individual biography resulting in a changed (or most experienced) person” (p.13). Jarvis (2006) suggested that experiences can be transformed into learning three ways, singularly or in combination—thinking as a way of learning, doing as a way of learning, and feeling as a way of learning. The combination of these three ways of learning results in various types of learning, including critical thinking, action learning, problem-solving learning and reflective learning (Jarvis, 2006).

2.7 Theories and schools of adult learning

2.7.1 Andragogy versus pedagogy

Marquardt and Waddill (2004) explain that adult learning, andragogy, concerned with how adults learn, “recognises and acknowledges that a number of factors influence how adults learn differently from children”, or pedagogy (p.187). They indicated that according to Knowles (1970, 1984), the distinguishing factors between andragogy and pedagogy include adult learners being self-directed, adults engaging in education with either a life, problem or task-centred orientation to learning, and adults finding internal motivators as the most potent, internal motivators which include “self-esteem, recognition, better quality of life, self-confidence, and self-actualization” (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004, p. 187).

2.7.2 Orientations of learning

Marquardt and Waddill (2004) found that over time, five major schools, or orientations, of learning have emerged, namely cognitivist, behaviourist, humanist, social learning and constructivist. Marquardt and Waddill (2004) suggested that these schools are distinctive, yet some of their perspectives and approaches have common features. According to Marquardt and Waddill (2004) *cognitivists* believe that people are capable of insight and perception and that they can attribute meaning to their experiences. This school is mainly concerned with people using internal processes to acquire, understand and retain knowledge.

Behaviourists are concerned with learning through people controlling their external environments (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004). The three assumptions underpinning the behaviourist school are the following: changes in behaviours are indications of learning; elements in the environment determine learning; and repeating and re-enforcing learning behaviours help contribute to the learning process (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004).

Humanists believe that people seek self-actualisation through learning and therefore determine what they learn (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004). Furthermore, they believe that learning is self-directed, placing emphasis on the development of a person as a whole (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004).

Social learning theory is concerned with how people learn through interactions with other people (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004). They believe that people can learn by imitating other people like role models and mentors (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004).

Constructivists believe knowledge is contextual and that an individual's internal understanding of reality allows a person to assign meaning to learning. Reflection is vital to this school of learning and the importance of changing oneself and the environment are emphasised (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004). According to Orey (2008), there are three key elements to constructivism, namely activity (practice), concept (knowledge) and culture (context). Transfer of learning, then, takes place where tasks are authentic and have a meaningful context (Orey, 2008).

With regards to this study a social learning theory approach applies as women learn through their interactions with other male and female role models and mentors in business. Furthermore a constructivist approach to learning applies as these executive

programmes impart knowledge all in the setting of a greater organisational context. The culture and context of the organisation will determine the extent to which learning from executive courses will vest in women being promoted in organisations.

2.8 Learning best practices

2.8.1 Developmental learning

Konkola, Tuomi-Gröhn, Lambert and Ludvigsen (2007) referred to a concept called 'developmental transfer' which focuses on the collaborative efforts of organisations to create new knowledge and new practices rather than the individual transferring knowledge into the organisation. They suggested that over time, boundaries had been created between learning initiatives and work and transcending these boundaries was challenging yet necessary to achieve transfer of knowledge from learning initiatives to work and vice versa. In order to achieve this, they suggested establishing a team of teachers, students and practitioners to address challenges faced by business. This team would benefit from the theoretic and practical expertise of the group and this would result in developmental transfer (Konkola et al., 2007).

This concept appears ground-breaking in theory and if successfully implemented could result in benefits for all stakeholders. Generation of new ideas based on theory could potentially give business a competitive edge, as teachers would be better able to integrate practice with theory for future classes, and students would actively practise what they learned, thus solidifying their learning. A key challenge will be the willingness of business to open their doors to teachers given issues around confidentiality of information, processes and ideas which form the basis of business's competitive advantage. However, the potential of this collaboration does offer more upside benefit to an organisation, and confidentiality agreements could mitigate business risks (Konkola et al., 2007).

Schilling and Klamma (2010) made a similar suggestion that projects should occur at participating businesses and they recommended that these projects should include collaboration between students and company experts. The main goal of these interventions would be the establishment of best practice between academia and business. They recommend that only companies willing to offer up their facilities should be collaborated with. Furthermore, they suggested a long-term relationship including

the implementation of many small projects as profitable and beneficial to all parties. They cautioned against once-off projects or engagements, as these would not result in long-lasting long-term benefits to any of the stakeholders (Schilling & Klamma, 2010). Furthermore, Schilling and Klamma (2010) saw group coaching in these projects as a vital part of reflection on collaboration and suggested that lecturers should be more involved in the project work.

2.8.2 Action learning

According to Marquardt and Waddill (2004), action learning is centred on a problem, project or challenge and the resolution thereof is of high priority for an individual, team or organisation. The problem should be substantial, within the control of the team and yet creating an exciting opportunity for learning. Action learning is a powerful method of learning which results in relevant long-term learning condensed into a short span of time applicable across various entities including individuals, teams and organisations. Action learning combines elements of the various schools of learning, allowing for the solving of complex problems and adding speed to learning (Marquardt & Waddill, 2004). Marquardt and Waddill (2004) further suggested that action learning provides a basis for reflection and that the constructivist theory of learning supports an action approach.

Lysø, Mjøen, and Levin (2011) suggested that management learning is more likely to have an organisational impact if learning and action are balanced and if action learning projects are collaborative. They argued that for action learning projects to be effective in practice, organisations must have clear reasons for sending managers on management development courses, ensuring that such managers have the support of their direct superior and facilitating the participation of other members of the organisation in the action learning projects.

Gosling and Mintzberg (2006) challenged the design of traditional executive development programmes suggesting that learning needed to be more interactive and reflective. They proposed seven key principles in structuring learning, including limiting education to practising managers and selecting such managers based on their demonstrated results. They further suggested that managers should remain in their jobs and apply what they have learned back to their jobs. Continuing on, they suggested that management education should leverage life and work as fully as

possible. They noted, however, that the key to learning is reflection. Affording managers time and space to sit back and reflect on their studies and work experiences was key to ensuring that managers actually applied what they learned (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006). This reflection should therefore result in beneficial impact to the organisation. Gosling and Mintzberg (2006) felt that management education should be a process of interactive learning by addressing managerial concerns from practice through facilitated discussions in class.

2.9 Organisations

Organisations have transitioned their executive education programmes to be less functional and more strategic in order to increase the benefit to the organisations (Conger & Xin, 2000). General Electric, Phillips and Ersnt and Young are examples of companies which have embraced executive education as a tool to align their organisations to strategic goals. These companies have successfully reshaped the focus of executive education by uniting senior leaders in an effort to encourage them to work together and to change and drive organisations rather than focus solely on the individual executive's education. Conger and Xin (2000) stated three objectives by which executive education should be guided: 1) raising awareness and support for strategic change; 2) facilitating organisational change to ensure the organisations are able to achieve their changing strategic objectives; and 3) building a leadership talent pool.

The work of Baruch (2009) suggests that organisations who are serious about investing in their people sponsor students on leadership development programmes. The message to employees is clear and does not change simply because the student leaves the employ of the company once her studies are completed. The author further suggests that the reason for the student leaving could be a lack of recognition and appreciation of their new skills (Baruch, 2009).

Organisations that are choosing to remain competitive are prioritising programmes that support the development of women, as these businesses will become leaders in attracting and retaining a talented workforce (Evans, 2011).

2.9.1 Leadership development programmes

Today's corporate educational environments are highly complex. The extent to which executives interact and learn in collaboration with one another is influenced by organisational structure and culture (Watkins, Lysø, & deMarrais, 2011). Leadership development should be more holistic and all-encompassing, focussing on challenging experiences, developing the skills and acquiring the knowledge to be able to solve real business problems through action-based learning (Blackler & Kennedy, 2004; Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006). Programmes must be designed to take these complexities into account in order for individuals and management to construct outcomes that are useful for both parties. Often outcomes are discovered by accident from the experiences, the settings selected and the challenges faced. Executive leadership development programmes, therefore, need to be redesigned, taking into account the above factors for maximum benefit, both for the organisation and the individual (Blackler & Kennedy, 2004; Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006). Given that the delegates on training programmes are senior leaders in the organisation, the learning must be tied to the level and scope of an individual's work, further reiterating the need for exploratory work that develops strategic, global thinking (Watkins et al., 2011).

Ely et al. (2011) suggest that studies relating to social conditioning show that women require different support and learning structures to men. They posit that coaching, sponsorships and company-specific training programmes are required to develop the leadership skills of women. They further acknowledge that skills like negotiation and leading change, 360-degree feedback developmental tools and networking, are developmental areas required for women (Ely et al., 2011). Leadership development programmes need to be customised in a way that ensures that the training intervention takes women's specific needs into account.

2.9.2 Creating a safe learning space for women

Baruch (2009) suggested that development programmes provided women with a valuable range of knowledge necessary to ensure that they became more efficient and effective managers. Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) described the perceived benefits as financial and non-financial. Non-financial benefits include self-confidence, global insight, increased skill and knowledge, greater productivity and job satisfaction.

The work of Kelan and Jones (2009) argues that students are exposed to new experiences in a variety of contexts and this broadens their perspectives

Debebe (2011) found that women-only leadership development programmes give participants the opportunity to learn from and with other women. Participants at a women-only leadership development programme felt that their experiences were validated and therefore important. They were able to share experiences and discuss them openly, learning from others. The egalitarian ethic established in the group aided in putting participants at ease when sharing perspectives (Debebe, 2011). Several participants felt that they would not have opened up and shared their experiences in a mixed-gender environment (Debebe, 2011).

In further support of women-only development programmes, it was found that working in small groups or in project teams was effective at developing women's abilities to think critically and strategically. It was also found that women-only groups have a greater level of intimacy and openness than when men are included (Clarke, 2011). Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) reiterated Debebe's (2011) sentiments that women-only MBA programmes or women-specific training, while not common, are beneficial for allowing women to learn and grow whilst sharing experiences in the midst of a group where they felt safe and supported.

Ely et al. (2011) argued that women-only programmes are debilitating for women, creating an artificial environment that removes women from the interactions they need to have with male colleagues within organisations. These women-only programmes, they argue, deprive women of an opportunity to network and collaborate with their male counterparts (Ely et al., 2011).

2.10 Conclusion

This research pertaining to executive leadership development programmes concentrates on the operations level, which includes evaluating and investigating managerial learning for women in management programmes and in the workplace (Watkins, Lysø, & deMarrais, 2011).

The literature reviewed clearly highlights the barriers that women face as well as the career advancement tools available to fast-track their careers. It is also clearly

articulated that leadership programmes if designed robustly can prioritise the development needs of the women and the business goals of the organisation. Several ground breaking concepts were referred to in the literature and these as well as other will be tested with participants to this study to uncover how women's leadership development programmes can be designed to have a greater impact.

The research questions below aim to confirm the developmental objectives for women that the literature has revealed and suggest what might be lacking from current executive leadership development programmes, specifically in the area of developing women for senior roles. It also seeks to identify the components necessary for women's leadership development programmes and propose the level of organisational support that is necessary to promote the agenda of women.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 suggests that very little research has been conducted into the practicalities of how executive leadership development programmes need to be designed in order to advance women, and how they need to be positioned in organisations.

This research will seek to better understand how the positioning and content of executive leadership development programmes can improve their overall impact for women aspiring to senior positions. The initial step is to unpack the leadership development programmes themselves and confirm the theories in Chapter 2 around the benefits and challenges faced by the women in respect to advancement. Once this has been established, the research will then explore key elements necessary for a programme to maximise its impact on the organisation and female employees.

Having established the base for an impactful programme, the research will seek to understand what is required at an organisational level to more fully support the agenda of women.

Essentially, the research will aim to understand how to use leadership development programmes as a tool to develop and promote women in organisations into senior positions.

As such, female delegates to leadership development programmes and training providers are considered stakeholders in the process.

3.2 The research questions

The research is exploratory in nature and seeks to answer the following research questions identified to support and add to literature:

Research question 1: In what ways are current leadership development programmes beneficial for women and their career advancement?

Research question 2: What is lacking in current leadership development programmes that could potentially aid in advancing women?

Research question 3: What core elements should a leadership development programme contain to maximise the impact for senior women?

Research question 4: How can organisations interact and support women's development and advancement?

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research method

The purpose of this study was to examine the significant shortcomings in leadership development programmes that fail to develop a woman holistically and thus prevent women from being fast-tracked into senior positions.

A qualitative research method, exploratory in nature, was used to gain an understanding of the underlying causes for the failure of leadership development programmes to adequately equip women for senior roles. The results of this research will inform organisations concerned with the training and development customisation of the necessary requirements for success of women's development programmes.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested that for specific types of research such as “research that elicits tacit knowledge and subjective understanding and interpretations” (p. 91), a qualitative methodology must be applied. Furthermore, Rossman and Rallis (2012) recommended a qualitative design when attempting to answer questions about the real world, as they suggested that it best fits research which seeks “to learn about some aspects of the social world and to generate new understandings that can then be used” (p. 4). Through this qualitative study, we intended to discover new insights into why leadership development programmes have not successfully achieved fruitful career advancement for women.

Scott Holste and Fields (2010) suggested that tacit knowledge is most useful in nature as it goes beyond the obvious and documented. Furthermore, it is personal and difficult to capture. Tacit knowledge is engrained in a person's skill, experiences and abilities (Scott Holste & Fields, 2010). The aim of this research required exploring the tacit knowledge that women possess but do not necessarily or readily share, which if brought to the forefront could be used in designing more effective leadership development programmes targeted at women. This assisted in identifying the underlying challenges of these programmes currently, and putting together a robust set of requisite skills needed by women for future programmes.

Qualitative data provides rich, detailed information for the researcher (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). Rich data was needed to draw parallels and conclusions based on

stakeholder perceptions of leadership development programmes targeted at women. Furthermore, rich description was necessary to obtain an in-depth understanding of the factors that programmes lack and yet are critical to the successful advancement of women in their careers.

Applied research is “concerned with using the knowledge acquired through research to contribute directly to the understanding or resolution of a contemporary issue” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 24). Rossman and Rallis (2012) define applied research as research which “aims to inform action and enhance decision making” (p. 5). This research lent itself to an applied research approach as it used the knowledge acquired from understanding the different components required for women’s leadership development to provide stakeholders with information on which to base further actions and decisions in this regard.

“Cross-sectional studies are carried out once and represent a snapshot of one point in time, while longitudinal studies are repeated over an extended period” (Blumberg, Cooper & Schindler, 2008, p. 199). Saunders and Lewis (2012) supported this understanding of cross-sectional research by defining it as “the study of a particular topic at a particular time, i.e. a ‘snapshot’” (p. 123). Due to time constraints with regard to the research, a ‘point in time’ study was most appropriate for the topic at hand. The study sought to understand the leadership development factors that are currently preventing women from achieving career progression with the eye to incorporating these factors in future women’s leadership development programmes, thus supporting the definitions above.

4.2 Research philosophy

‘Interpretivism’ is “a research philosophy which advocates the understanding of differences between humans in their role as social actors” (Saunders & Lewis, 2012, p. 106). Ritchie and Lewis (2003) referred to Immanuel Kant’s (1781) proposition that people’s understanding of the world is wider than just direct observation. Kant’s proposal was that perceptions relate to our human interpretations of what our senses tell us and that our understanding of the world results from us thinking about what happens to us, and not experiences alone (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003).

The research sought to uncover the perceptions of the social actors involved and their thoughts and feelings around how effective current leadership development

programmes actually are at developing women for senior positions. The social actors, the stakeholders, involved with women's development programmes revealed different perceptions of the programme and the value they derived from it. The research sought to uncover and understand these perceptions. As such, the research lent itself to interpretive philosophy.

4.3 Research approach

Saunders and Lewis (2012) define 'induction' as a "research approach which involves the development of theory as a result of analysing data already collected" (p. 109). The inductive approach allowed the researcher to observe patterns or occurrences of phenomena which could then be investigated, with the ultimate aim of arriving at conclusions or theories (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Saunders and Lewis (2012) stated that the emphasis of the research "is on a close understanding of the research content" (p. 109) and a more flexible structure allowed for changes in the research emphasis as the research progressed.

The research aimed to build an integrative model that took into account the holistic development of women, collecting specific observations of women who have been exposed to training, examining the training itself, as well as hearing from training partners and organisations. From this process, common patterns and occurrences were observed, allowing the researcher to gain deep insight into prevalent themes surrounding women's development programmes. During this process, more specific research questions were shaped, as trends were identified in interviewee responses.

4.4 Type of research

Ritchie and Lewis (2003) explain contextual research as "describing the form or nature of what exists" and exploratory research as "why phenomena occur and the forces and influences that drive their occurrences" (p. 27). Contextual research suited this study as the research first described the way leadership development programmes are designed to accommodate women. The exploratory angle explored the forces that prevent women from advancing in their careers, despite these leadership development programmes.

4.5 Research strategy

A flexible research strategy was followed and a naturalistic inquiry into the real work was conducted—that is, women occupying senior positions in organisations, women aspiring to senior positions and training partners offering leadership development programmes to women (Rossman & Rallis, 2012).

4.6 Research process

Two data sets were collected via semi-structured in-depth interviews. The results and themes that emerged from the interviews with programme delegates were tested in the interviews with subject matter experts. The face to face, semi-structured in-depth interviews provided the platform for exploring the concepts and ideas surrounding how leadership development programmes meet or fail to meet the developmental needs of women (Saunders & Lewis, 2012). Triangulation enhanced the credibility of the research through the use of multiple sources of data. Furthermore, triangulation prevented the researcher from studying only a sliver of the complexity that the research aimed to unearth (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The details of each step are as discussed below.

4.6.1 Semi-structured, in-depth interviews

It was recommend that before deciding whether in-depth interviews were appropriate to the data collection process, certain rationale should be considered for interviewing. This rationale included obtaining an understanding of individual perspectives to deepen understanding, to generate data which is rich and descriptive, and to obtain an understanding of the context (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). The semi-structured interviews sought to address this. Qualitative in-depth interviews are typically much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). In-depth interviews were undertaken with senior women who attended leadership development programmes to uncover delegate perspectives, as well as with Learning and Development consultants in large organisations and companies that partner with large organisations to provide training.

4.7 Scope

The scope of this research is Leadership and Development. The reason for this is that the research sought to explore how development programmes for women can be enhanced to more adequately prepare women for senior roles.

4.8 Population

Saunders and Lewis (2012) define a population as “the complete set of group members” (p. 132). The population for this research encompassed all stakeholders who are affiliated with an executive programme, including business schools and other learning organisations who offer an executive development programme, businesses which employ women in senior positions and women who are in or aspiring to executive positions.

4.9 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis was a stakeholder to a leadership development programme. This included business schools that offer women’s development programmes, training partners to organisations, women who attend these development programmes and women who aspire to join the ranks of senior management.

4.10 Sampling

4.10.1 Sampling technique

A non-probability sampling technique was used as a result of a lack of a complete list of women in executive positions, business schools and training partners to organisations and organisations who employ women in executive positions. Purposive sampling is a technique where “she or he is using their judgement to actively choose those who will be best able to help answer the research question and meet the objectives” (Saunders & Lewis, 2012, p. 138). The sample of stakeholders that the researcher ultimately chose ensured that women who had recently been exposed to or leadership development programmes were interviewed, as these individuals were in a position to provide valuable input to the research topic. A wide range of women at different stages in their careers were considered appropriate. All of these women had

been involved with or attended leadership development programmes. Furthermore, subject matter experts with an exceptional reputation and vast industry knowledge were also interviewed.

4.10.2 Sample size

There are two distinct groups which provided input into the research: 1) women in executive positions or those aspiring for executive positions; and 2) subject matter experts from business schools and other training institutions who run executive development programmes (partners to organisations). Nineteen in-depth face to face interviews were conducted. The rationale for selecting nineteen interviews was explained by Marshall and Rossman (2011) who suggested that a sample size should be able to provide sufficient variability and depth of experience in order for it to be useful. The researcher was of the opinion that given the time and costs involved, nineteen interviews would suffice in obtaining the depth and variability within these constraints. Five interviews were held with business school employees and training partners to organisations, fourteen with women who have attended executive leadership development programmes. The five business school and training partner employees comprised faculty and management, while the fourteen business practitioners comprised women who have attended training programmes. The fourteen women were women in executive positions and women aspiring to executive positions and who have already attended or are currently attending an executive programme.

4.11 Data analysis

Qualitative data analysis involves refining data collected into smaller, more manageable amounts. By formulating summaries, patterns and themes became visible (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The technique used to identify words which occur more frequently in the data is known as 'content analysis technique' and involved the manual or automated coding of data including transcripts, documents or audio with the view to identifying such words. Through narrative analysis, respondents and interviewees got to re-live their experiences through the process of telling a story with the view to identifying the hidden meaning behind the story (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2008).

This research used Atlas.ti which is data analysis software. Data was coded into a variety of themes or constructs and these, through an iterative process, were combined and collapsed into major themes. Given that the data collection and analysis process was an iterative process, a constant comparative analysis method was adopted as early as the second interview by which new data was compared with previous data. In this regard, then, data collected from each interview was compared with data already collected (Blumberg, Cooper, & Schindler, 2008).

Themes were reorganised continuously through the coding process for appropriateness of classification. These themes or constructs were used to present the findings in Chapter 5.

4.12 Potential research limitations

The following aspects are potential limitations to the study:

The study was limited to South African women who had attended or are currently attending executive leadership development programmes. Therefore, it might not be feasible to generalise findings across various organisational levels or different countries. It may be advisable to interview women at lower levels in various organisations to determine their experiences with development programmes.

The sample size was small and consequently may not be representative of all programme participants.

Only women were interviewed. The other key stakeholder was men, in particular men in executive positions. As their perspectives may be different from those of women, and yet were not sought for this particular study, the study is restricted.

Data analysis, conducted as part of qualitative research, had an inherent limitation of introducing bias into the analysis and interpretation of the results of the study.

4.13 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the research methodology that was used in this study. The most appropriate methodology for this research was considered to be qualitative as it tapped into the tacit knowledge of respondents to unearth interesting insights with regard to why leadership development programmes have not achieved fruitful career

advancement of women. Furthermore, qualitative data provided this research with rich description in order to fully understand the perspectives of the various stakeholders around the critical factors necessary to aid the advancement of women. Given the time and cost constraints this research was a qualitative, cross sectional study. The research adopted an applied research approach. The research adopted an interpretive philosophy to understand and unpack the perceptions of the various respondents.

The research approach was inductive in nature as it sought to gain deep insights from women who had been exposed to development and training partners and providers around the prevalent themes surrounding women's development programmes. Contextual research suited this study as it first described the successes and challenges of women's leadership development programmes and then explored ways in which programmes can be modified to improve the programme's impact. A flexible research strategy was followed and a naturalistic enquiry into the 'real world' was conducted.

The research compared the results of the two distinct data sets, namely women exposed to leadership development programmes and subject matter experts, to validate the results and major themes. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with the senior women who attended leadership development programmes and Learning and Development consultants in large organisations and companies that partner with large organisations to provide training. The scope of this study pertained to Learning and Development. The population of this study were stakeholders affiliated with an executive programme, business schools and training partners and women in or aspiring to be in executive positions in organisations. In this regard a purposive sampling technique was adopted. The five subject matter experts and the fourteen women who had attended leadership development programmes provided sufficient depth and variation in the data and surface several key themes. Data was analysed using Atlas.ti, a data analysis software. The identification of themes was an evolving and iterative process.

Limitations of the study include interviews only with South African women who had attended or currently attended leadership development programmes, the sample size was small and not representative of all participants, and the study only considered the views of women and did not consider the views of men in executive positions who are another key stakeholder in the development process.

CHAPTER 5: RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the results of the qualitative study which was performed. It begins by outlining the sample demographics, discussing the characteristics of the sample, and then proceeds to detail the data analysis techniques and finally presents the results of the semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The results are discussed and interpreted in Chapter 6.

5.2 Sample demographics and characteristics of sample

This qualitative study sought to identify the critical components required when designing leadership development programmes specifically for aiding in the advancement of women. Consequently, key stakeholders for this research were the female delegates who had attended, or are currently attending, leadership development programmes and subject matter experts from business schools, leadership development consultancies and corporates who design and deliver these programmes. A total of nineteen interviews were conducted with twenty respondents sharing their experiences (one of the corporates interviewed comprised of two subject matter experts who each gave their views). The sample demographics are shown in Table 1 and the characteristics of the sample in Table 2 below. The sampling method, as detailed in Chapter 4, was convenient and purposive. Details of all respondents have been kept confidential.

Table 1: Sample demographics

Interviewees	Number of Interviews conducted	Number of respondents
Female delegates	14	14
Subject matter experts	5	6
TOTAL	19	20

Table 2: Characteristics of sample

Delegate	Gender	Race	Employment status	Industry	Company description	Employment Level
1	Female	Indian	Employed	Financial Services	Largest consumer bank in Southern Africa	Senior management
2	Female	Indian	Employed	FMCG	A brewing and bottling company headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa	Senior management
3	Female	Coloured	Employed	FMCG	A brewing and bottling company headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa	Senior management
4	Female	White	Employed	Financial Services	Largest consumer bank in Southern Africa	Senior management
5	Female	White	Employed	Metals & Mining	Multinational mining company headquartered in London, United Kingdom	Senior management
6	Female	Black	Employed	Energy	South African electric public utility	Senior management
7	Female	White	Employed	Financial Services	One of South Africa's big four banks	Senior management
8	Female	White	Employed	Information Technology	Intelligent solutions company	Senior management
9	Female	White	Employed	FMCG	A brewing and bottling company headquartered in Johannesburg, South Africa	Senior management
10	Female	White	Employed	Financial Services	Stock exchange located in Johannesburg	Senior management
11	Female	Black	Employed	Financial Services	Largest consumer bank in Southern Africa	Senior management
12	Female	Black	Employed	Automotive	Multinational division of a German Car manufacturer	Senior management
13	Female	White	Employed	Communications	South Africa's second largest Internet Service Provider	Senior management
14	Female	Coloured	Consultant	Self employed	Consulting strategist	Owner/manager

Table 2: Characteristics of sample (continued)

SME	Gender	Race	Employment status	Industry	Company description	Employment Level
15	Female	White	Employed	Higher education	Leading South African business school based in Johannesburg	Senior management
16	Female	Indian	Employed	Higher education	Leading South African business school based in Johannesburg	Executive
17	Female	White	Employed	Financial Services	One of the Big Four professional services firms	Senior management
18	Female	White	Employed	Financial Services	One of the Big Four professional services firms	Senior management
19	Female	White	Employed	Information Technology	Research and advisory firm	Senior management
20	Female	White	Consultant	Marketing & Advertising	Strategic solutions for brands and people	Owner/manager

5.3 Individual data analysis

Data from each of the interviews was analysed to identify the major themes and concepts. Since semi-structured interviews allow for both open and closed-ended questions, the various themes were grouped according to the relevant research questions, where appropriate. The content of the interviews was analysed to identify the richness and depth of the data.

The interview questionnaire is attached in Appendix A. It was designed based on the interview guide of Clark (2006b). Pre-testing of the instrument involved mock interviews with colleagues and fellow MBA classmates to determine relevance of questions. The mock interview transcripts were discarded once the researcher felt that the questionnaire was adequately designed.

The views as expressed by the respondents and their actual words and points are presented in this chapter. Many views and themes were expressed only once; others emerged from more than one respondent. Certain themes appeared directly while others were implied by respondents. Some respondents spoke readily and others required a bit of probing and prompting to explore their views and thoughts with greater depth.

Certain themes expressed by delegates featured strongly amongst the various respondents and provided support for the concepts and views expressed. These were then cross-checked against the views of the subject matter experts. Some themes provided consistent views, while others highlighted a divergence in the views of these two groups.

The semi-structured questions asked initially led to a general discussion surrounding the benefits and shortcomings of leadership development programmes, thereby confirming current literature and current views on leadership development programmes. Then the discussions proceeded to explore with greater understanding the developmental criteria and skills required by women to advance in today's business environment. Finally, respondents were asked to present their views on how their organisations supported the advancement of women. The views have been classified into main themes, with sub-themes contributing to the main themes.

5.4 Research question 1: In what ways are current leadership development programmes beneficial for women and their career advancement?

Table 3: Research question 1 categorisation and number of responses

Beneficial Factors	Number of respondents
Self-awareness	4
Confidence	3
Technical skills	8
Competence	4
Discipline and tools	4
Exposure	2

The interviews began generally by understanding the respondents' views on the beneficial factors of current leadership development programmes. This helped to focus the conversation and engage respondents in a comfortable dialogue. Table 3 represents the most beneficial factors as defined by respondents.

When asked about the benefits of training programmes, most respondents gauged their success by how much the leadership development programme had added to their own personal growth and leadership style.

For example, respondent 2 remarked, “the training that I really found useful has been training that I’ve chosen for my own personal development and it’s always useful if it’s part of the company, because it means that they’ve invested in what you’re doing, so leadership programmes have really been great”.

Respondent 1 also appreciated the benefits: “I’ve connected with a bunch of different people and that, you know, that I’ve learnt something about myself and that I’ve sort of learnt some content in the process. It’s much more about your own personal leadership and own personal growth and figure it out what it is you want that helps you probably become a much more effective leader and that’ll probably help you progress a lot more quicker”.

5.4.1 Self-awareness

The respondents felt that benefit was gained through heightened awareness of their own leadership style. Many of the respondents commented that they used the platform provided in the form of leadership development programmes to confront their own developmental needs. Respondents were also very particular around the choice of training programme they attended, always ensuring that it supplemented their repertoire where they felt that their skills were lacking.

Respondent 2 had this to say: “The differentiator for me has been my access to specialised training in developing me and my personality and giving me the personal skills required to help me navigate through those difficult areas, the grey areas, the people areas, and that has set me apart from my competition”.

Respondent 4 added, “I’ve actually found that it’s more introspective, that it’s more about, you know, finding your leadership style and working around other people basically to develop that.”

And respondent 7 admitted being choosy: “Well, all of them, I was quite picky in what I chose”.

5.4.2 Confidence

The respondents also felt that leadership development programmes were beneficial by helping participants bolster their confidence, accentuating their strengths. Several participants felt that they were better equipped to engage at senior levels and interact

with different leaders as a result of the confidence they gained. Findings emerged that these programmes helped women to position themselves well where they otherwise tended to adopt the sacrificial role of stepping back and supporting others instead of themselves.

Respondent 14 appreciated gaining “self-confidence of almost teaching women to step forward and not step back and support the others”.

And respondent 2 as well, appreciated the confidence gained through “initiatives that have allowed me to grow as an individual, has allowed me...has given me the confidence, the self-esteem and the ability to interact with people at very senior level”.

5.4.3 Technical skills & competence

Many of the respondents who have been successful in their careers have attributed their success to the fact that they had educated themselves at the highest levels so that their qualifications and technical ability could never be questioned. Their experience in their fields and wealth of knowledge are how they ensured their credibility.

Respondent 7 confirmed this: “my toolbox has been my qualifications, it’s being a subject matter expert, going to as many courses as possible, so that I both have my technical skills, but I also have the soft skills”.

Respondent 8 concurred: “I think as a rule, woman will educate themselves as far as they possibly can”.

Respondents also commented that success was gauged more on how a woman is able to present herself and deal with the work environment. A woman must be able to articulate her competence.

Respondent 14 explains, “You’ve got to help people make sense of what it is that you do, and why it is such a good thing: you know why you are adding value; how is the work that you’re doing making a difference”.

5.4.4 Discipline and tools

The role that attendance on a leadership development programmes has played is evident through the discipline that is gained.

Respondent 3 felt that “it takes discipline to attend something and to do assignments and all of that, and people have that sort of discipline are normally the kind of people you want”.

Respondent 5 appreciated the benefits that she gained from programmes: “Look, my career progression I think I would say has been otherwise faster than most people that I probably graduated with, so the impact and the usefulness of the programme has been being able to equip you and give you tools and information that allows you to operate at a higher level and at a much faster pace”.

Respondents felt that systems thinking that is taught on courses are extremely valuable in problem-solving and preparation for the next role.

5.4.5 Exposure

Training and development exposes women to other parts of the business whereas otherwise women might be limited to only their division.

As respondent 5 appreciated, “It exposes you to leadership, the leadership of the organisation, it exposes you to an opportunity to be able to influence and interact with senior leaders, so I think it is quite useful in that sense and it helps you to be able to be ready to operate at another level. So, when my boss was moved from his current role, you know, it was almost an obvious choice that I would be the next person because of the exposure that I’d had and the skills that I had gained during that period”.

5.5 Research question 2: What is lacking in current leadership development programmes that could potentially aid in advancing women?

The respondents were of the opinion that women’s leadership development programmes failed to take into account the broader environmental and organisational issues that plague women. It also failed to take into account the individual strengths

that women bring to business. These failures are represented graphically in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Research question 2 categorisation and number of responses

Context	Failures	Number of respondents
Environmental Context	Socialisation of Women	6
	Legislation	3
Organisational Context	Buy-in of the company	11
Individual Context	Strengths	11
	Collaborative Management Style	3
	Soft Skills & dealing with stress	7

5.5.1 Environmental context

5.5.1.1 Socialisation of women

Socialisation issues were cited as one of the reasons for the failure of leadership development programmes. Many respondents felt that training programmes could be used to create awareness of the changing perceptions of the role of women in contemporary society. Respondents felt strongly that in order to shape the minds of young girls, a fundamental change is required in the way society views women.

The following remark from respondent 5 explains the issue clearly: “I think we need to look at ourselves as society to say what is it we do that makes women’s agenda to be so unattainable? Because I would think that after all these years we should be getting to a point where it is normal to see a woman as a CEO, you know, it’s not something that makes the front page of a newspaper. But, to this day, we still get the first woman to do this, the first woman to do this, so there’s something backward about the way we are as a society that just does not support the gender of women...There’s also an issue of from, you know, from pre-school, how do we shape the minds of young girls in how they see themselves in society?”

Change *must* begin with girls and boys being socialised in order to negate the existing stereotypes. It must become commonplace for children to see women going to work and having a career while men are more involved in the household chores and taking care of children. Respondents felt that this neutralisation of stereotypes must take

place whilst children are young because it is difficult to break down these behaviours once beliefs are ingrained.

Respondent 14 asserted: “Socialisation where it’s neutralised and the stereotypes are broken down. It is very hard once you’ve got those typical patterns to change it later on. You’re wired in a certain way so, I mean, if you... to then be unwired is pretty hard”.

5.5.1.2 Legislation

Respondents felt that leadership development programmes fail in the respect that they are not prioritised with other strategic imperatives for the country. However, one respondent felt that the actions taken by the South African government in respect of the Gender Equality Bill showed great strides in terms of how the current leaders of the country view women in leadership. In order for there to be traction in terms of the number of women in management positions within companies, the South African government is formalising the need for changes through legislation.

Respondent 19 summed up the imperative by saying “a Woman in Leadership Programme is for anyone who’s interested in the competitive landscape of this country. And that means business, government and society. It means individuals and so, and that means both, well, men and women”.

Respondents cautioned that organisations might see the call by government as favouring women over men and only comply begrudgingly. The message is that it is not about the number of women who are appointed on boards but rather an appointment of the best person for the job.

5.5.2 Organisational context

5.5.2.1 Buy-in of the company

A major reason cited was the lack of support for leadership development programmes from company’s leadership. Unfortunately, many companies just do not see the need to incorporate women into their management teams. The respondents felt that the people in power, mainly men, needed to be educated in this regard in order to willingly drive the ‘women agenda’ from their level. Programmes must be marketed based on their

importance for their bottom line, and for to happen, people in power must realise the need and benefits of incorporating women in their management structures.

Respondent 14 explained that “a socialisation is needed at the highest level in an organisation, where the financial benefits for employing women in senior roles is presented to the board”.

5.5.3 Individual context

5.5.3.1 Strengths

Leadership development programmes aimed at women do not make enough effort to play to the strengths of women. In fact, women are often in tumultuous conflict about where their responsibilities should reside, turmoil that places them under undue stress. The findings highlighted that this conflict is not necessarily a negative trait, but should be used to demonstrate to women that therein lies their competitive advantage: because women are innately better at multi-tasking, juggling multiple roles at the same time, they possess a heightened intuitive ability to assess a situation and apply lateral thinking to reach a democratic decision. Their ability to absorb and assess different vantage points of information gives them an edge over their male counterparts, especially in the boardroom where they can showcase their ability by quickly filtering large volumes of information, using this in a strategic manner to promote their agenda while addressing the needs of the company.

As respondent 11 said, “Women are good at complexity; they manage their home, kids and jobs. We don’t compartmentalise as much as men do. Multi-tasking is in their nature of being a wife, mother and a working woman”.

Respondent 6 commented on the value of capitalising strengths: “I think women can use their ability to gather knowledge and to harness knowledge and summarise knowledge into something, which becomes very powerful in a boardroom, because people don’t have the time to read all the stuff, but if you actually read the stuff and filter it, and digest it, so you actually put a strategic perspective on to your particular field, and you look at the implications for the company, then you become extremely valuable...I don’t think it’s very difficult for women to learn the skill, because they are able to multitask...So I think one could work actually on strengths”.

And respondent 14 summed up succinctly: “I think the other important thing for women in terms of their stress is to show women what they’re strong at and why women are better. In particular, we’re more intuitive, we’re more inclusive, we can sense things better, we can be more lateral thinking”.

5.5.3.2 Collaborative management style

Women possess a unique ability for a collaborative approach when making decisions. They are able to maturely manage disagreements and conflicts which tend to be brought to the fore by male counterparts and their egos. In general, they do not compromise on their values and are diligent when carrying out tasks, enhancing the credibility of their collaborative style. They ensure that appropriately skilled individuals are placed in jobs that allow employees to utilise their strengths. The fact that women are more compassionate and empathetic than their male colleagues can be seen as yet another strength, provided that empathy is a controlled emotion in the workplace. Training programmes need to supply pertinent tools to help women use these strengths effectively.

Respondent 12 acknowledged the fine line between empathy and ‘softness’ as one is seen as a strength and the other a weakness: “I can only talk from a personal perspective, but I would say how to use what you have as a woman...we empathise better, we have a softer side to us. I would say, how to optimise that in the work place, because being soft and being sensitive, and being all those things which are actually wonderful things about being a woman, can work against you in the work place very quickly. If you don’t know how to use it, and if you don’t know how to optimise it to your advantage, and to be aware of it, and not to let it work against you”.

Respondent 13 also applauded women’s ability to work and think collaboratively: “It’s not really about being a man, or trying to turn into a man, but how you use your strength as a woman...it’s getting everyone’s opinion, understanding who has got the strongest skills in different areas...it’s the higher intuition, high empathy thing, that you put people in the right places, to play to their strengths...what I used to do is individually go to each of them, around things, and ask for their opinion and then, when I came into a meeting, I kind of knew where the common points were, and where the sensitive issues were, but by the time we came to the meeting to make a decision, all I did was

articulate what their common point was, and then they agreed and the decision was made”.

5.5.3.3 Soft skills and dealing with stress

Soft skills—negotiating, persuasion, conflict management, being able to ‘take people along with you’, managing and gaining the trust of your team—are skills that are not emphasised in leadership programmes.

Respondent 2 commented that where women have failed, “it has not been as a result of their technical inability, it has been as a result of their emotional intelligence not being at the level it should be. Their people skills, communication skills, their cultural intelligence, all of those soft skills that have been defined as the less important, have now in this changing world become incredibly important”.

Prioritising and understanding work/life balance is another area that women need help: issues pertaining to career management and personal family life as a wife and often a mother, and sustaining both roles long-term. Current leadership development programmes do not take into consideration that women have a particular lifestyle with particular stress levels, and necessary coping mechanisms are simply not taught. Programmes do not go into enough detail as to how to recognise when one’s emotional well-being and ability to cope under pressure are drained. Women need to learn to respond well to changes within an environment, respond to life and family crises, all the while, carrying on in a job.

As respondent 6 noted, women need to be taught how to co-exist with men without bring too much of their personal life to work: “I think the relationship that women have with men are often based on romantic kind of relationships, and they struggle to get to a more formalised, more impersonal, not personal sharing or over sharing with men in the work environment. He’s not interested in your personal life”.

5.6 Research question 3: What core elements should a leadership development programme contain to maximise impact for senior women?

The question unpacked three areas in which women’s leadership development programmes need to focus namely addressing the past which entailed tools to overcome ingrained social prejudices against women, addressing the self which helps

women uncover their leadership DNA, promote themselves more pro-actively and identify and develop the requisite skills associated with leadership. Finally, the tools that are available to leverage development are presented through the lens of what is important for women. Table 5 below depicts the various elements necessary for career advancement and the number of responses.

Table 5: Research question 3 categorisation and number of responses

Area to be addressed	Core Elements	Number of respondents
Addressing the past	The barriers	11
	Tools to cope in male dominated environments	6
	Resilience	5
Addressing the self	Self Insight & Understanding personal leadership style	15
	Personal Branding	2
Skill Building	Assertiveness, confidence & communication skills	10
	Listening skills	2
	Difficult conversations	4
	Negotiation skills	11
Leveraging tools for development	Stretch Assignments	5
	Networking	8
	Coaching	10
	Mentoring	9
	Access to role models	10
	Applied learning projects	7
	Feedback	6

5.6.1 Addressing the past

5.6.1.1 The barriers

The barriers to career advancement were highlighted as obstacles that continue to prohibit women's advancement. Respondents felt that women continued to be 'boxed-in' because of the traditional roles they play both in business and society. Women are still occupying the typical roles that keep them out of the limelight, those roles that require them to operate quietly in the background, roles such as HR and Marketing.

Respondent 19 felt that women are still being stereotyped into roles that continue to feed the misguided belief that women are to be submissive, a catch-22: "I mean think about, generally, the role women do play; a quiet, kind of, get down and knuckle down and just do the work, you know. And people keep saying do more, more, they keep, yes, yes, I'll do whatever...".

It was also suggested that although there has been a change in society with men assuming more of the family-type responsibilities that had predominantly belonged to women, the South African society is not mature enough yet to accept this as the 'norm'.

Respondents argued that the glass ceiling definitely exists—not only prohibiting career growth but also stifling salaries. Wide disparities exist in the amount men and women are awarded for the same jobs. Respondent 8 confirmed this by asserting, "There's a glass ceiling and it still hasn't changed, and I don't think it's just in career profession, it's also in remuneration, which you still have a huge disparity. And...it's not linked to the capability or your background in terms of education".

Coupled with this is the fact that men's perceptions of women have altered very little. Men continue to adhere to past beliefs, beliefs which influence their current expectations and behaviours, especially regarding the roles that women play in organisations.

Respondent 7 explains how women were viewed historically and why men still have this ingrained in their psyche: "Women weren't allowed in the boardroom, except if they were serving tea or taking minutes, and it was very degrading, and took a long while for them to change their perception, and they sort of feel like you're just walking in".

Respondent 10 confirmed that in her experience of applying for a job, she was told that there was a quota for the number of women that the company employed. “He said, they take on one woman a year, only, and they already had their woman for the following year”.

Respondents felt that the bias had shifted just a bit; it was no longer the ‘spoken bias’ but rather an ‘unspoken bias’ that inhibited career advancement.

Respondent 4 confirmed this: “I think it’s more than that, it’s about, yes, something that’s not even spoken, it’s completely unsaid”.

Respondent 10 challenged her male superior manager on his reasons for the lack of women in senior positions and his shocking response confirmed that men continue to hold to these biases: “I used to challenge him on things like...why are there so few women at the top in the bank? Why, when you look at the board of directors, there's no women? ...you know what his answer to me was? His answer to me was, oh, you know what, women, once they get married and have children they aren't worth the effort”.

Because of the legacy of bias against women, many respondents suggested that programmes aimed at the development of women include ways in which women can overcome these barriers.

5.6.1.1.1 Overcoming barriers

Respondents suggested that the best manner of addressing societal stereotypes was to bring the issue to the fore, unpacking the stereotype by insisting upon reflection by the person biased in their view toward women. Often people do not realise that they are in fact being discriminatory; they must be made aware of this fact.

Respondent 19 explained how she addressed this issue when encountering a biased male: “we didn’t know if we should have come because I’m sure you girls were having scones and tea and biscuits and coffee and...Her response was It’s just conscientising, because sometimes...the men aren’t aware that what they’re saying... And then I stopped and I said, are you saying that because you’re serious or do you really think...? And then the person was taken aback because...he didn’t realise that he was actually being condescending in the way he said it. So, sometimes we need to conscientise”.

Interestingly, this point was linked to the perception that once women attain senior leadership roles in organisations, they are assumed to destroy the value of these organisations, resulting in senior leaders exiting the organisation and lack of investor confidence. Society must be persuaded that female leaders will certainly make intelligent decisions in the best interests of organisations; consequently, their gender should not be blamed for their failures in business.

Respondent 5 confirmed this point: “But I think we need to change the way we think as society to stop stereotyping and, you know, linking, trying to find causality from a gender perspective rather than just looking at a merit of a case. Because men fail, women fail - it’s just it happens in the course of business”.

Respondent 8, a Learning and Development specialist, advised her senior partners of the business risk of not addressing these perceptions: “But it is a perception that needs to change, and I’ve been chatting a lot to the senior partners about it because I see they’re going to lose good people, people that you want to be around because you’ve got this perception and you actually need to start changing it”.

5.6.1.2 Tools to cope in male-dominated environments

Many women felt that programmes that would supply them with tools and skills for dealing with the nuances of working in a male-dominated environment would be of the utmost usefulness. The goal is for men and women to work together, harmoniously, to achieve success for the company. It is critical to recognise the strengths and skills that both men and women bring to the table in order to create an environment of understanding and appreciation rather than an environment of division and suspicion—collaboration rather than individualism.

In the words of Respondent 13, “You have to breathe the same air”.

Despite the gender differences, respondents agreed that leadership must be effective and inspiring, instilling confidence into subordinates.

Respondents recognised the need to work at gaining the respect of male colleagues. In most situations, it is the men who are in power and subconsciously, they will not allow the women to rise into power positions if they feel threatened or if they don’t see value in the woman. The people in power will always dominate and, unfortunately, people in

power are primarily men. It is important to neutralise the strong masculine energy and encourage men to become more receptive to the feminine energy within them.

Respondent 17 summed it up this way: “Most of them are just uncomfortable, because you’re there to take their job. They have a fear that you’re going to become their boss in a short period of time, and you really now have to rely on your interpersonal skills, to be able to get people to open up to you, and really persevere and you’ll become successful”.

Respondent 8, however, felt that women need to be the ones who exert more effort to understand the thought processes and manner of work of men: “I don’t think men understand how women think and how they approach things. I also don’t think they’ll get to a point where they actually want to. So I think it will be more powerful for a woman to understand the male psyche, how that works and how they think so that she can adapt...I think it’s about thinking smartly. It’s about understanding why people act in a certain way and by understanding that you’ll probably get a lot more done. But I don’t think that’s an easy...skill to learn”.

Respondent 2 reiterated the need for leadership development programmes to address these issues: “Where you’ve got, for example, 19 out of 20 directors on a board being male, there is a very specific dynamic that plays around the table, and if you have one woman or maybe two, it’s a very unusual environment. And if there is a specific training around how to deal with these tough environments that would definitely benefit women”.

5.6.1.3 Resilience

To be able to function optimally women must be extraordinarily resilient. Respondents highlighted that women continue to carry an enormous amount of guilt about not being able to satisfy all their responsibilities, but suggested that women need to address this by being sensitive to their own needs as much as they are of others.

Respondent 11 declared: “Women must be self-aware rather than other-aware. They must worry about themselves. They must be taught to build resilience. Women carry a lot of guilt - when they are not at work then we worry that we should be working. They need to be 100% where they are at the moment”.

Many respondents felt that women need to be taught not to personalise things in a quest to develop this thick skin. Often when women are criticised they take it as an attack on self rather than seeking to understand the underlying motivation for the criticism.

Respondent 12 believes programmes must assist women in overcoming their natural inclination to personal sensitivity: “I think my training programme, the large, high impact ones that I’ve been on, has definitely helped me to, I want to say, almost desensitise the situation and to extract the information that I need from it, and not taking things that personally”.

Similarly, women need to learn to contain the amount of personal information they share with their colleagues, as they frequently ‘over-share’ and this deviates concentration from the job that needs to be accomplished. Women are stereotyped as illogical and ruled by emotion. Programmes need to teach women how to be brief and succinct in their arguments, sharing only information that is necessary.

5.6.2 Addressing the self

5.6.2.1 Self Insight & understanding personal leadership style

Self-insight was seen as a critical aspect that needs to be explored in the development of women for upper management levels. Introspection, or inward focus, is a necessary starting point for women to understand their personal value system and what they represent as a leader.

Respondent 10 conceded: “I’d say it starts with us women”.

Respondent 6 felt strongly that this insight does indeed develop over time. She felt that only as a woman progresses through life stages does she reflect and realise who and what she is as a person and employee. Respondent 6 expressed, “So what happens is you have less self-doubt, and you have more self-confidence as you become older, and also by the things that you’ve done, kind of like your little achievements, so that is something, which time can only bring you”.

A programme designed to facilitate this type of personal discovery about one’s self will achieve more grounded, self-assured women.

Respondent 18, in describing the success of a training programme that her organisation uses for this, stated, “I think, the more self-reflection, the more self-awareness that happens the easier it is for a woman to feel comfortable in the role she’s in.”

Respondent 19 exhibited this self-insight, stating with assurance that she is in control of her destiny: “I’m going to a one-week course in Stanford on Women in Leadership, paying for it myself. I’m going to go; I’m going to go develop myself and then I’m going to come back with even more armour”.

From this women need to understand and value their own style and authenticity. Women need to understand themselves first because if they are not comfortable in their own skin, they cannot make progress and their identity becomes a bit of a crisis. They will go through the motions in work, in their professional life, but will not advance to the next level.

Respondent 13 felt that this also meant, “You need a thick skin, a thick skin that does not damage your inner core, so your inner core must remain authentic. You mustn’t allow the environment to change you”.

Respondent 13 extrapolated: “You don’t get buy-in by standing at the top and telling people what to do. You get buy-in by having a group of people that buys into what you want to do, and is ready to follow you, whether or not they like the leader, and that is the new model of leadership, and that is actually so conducive to women, because that is what we do. We get people into a team to work with us”.

Respondent 17 described why all leaders should remain authentic to their own style: “I really, really believe that being authentic is important, because I can only be the best of who I am. If I’m trying too hard to be something that I’m not, I’m going to come across to people as fake, and it’s going to be very difficult, particularly if you’re working in very large teams, if they don’t feel like they can trust you, and they know you as a person and what you stand for. It’s difficult for them to follow you, especially at tough times, or when you need them to have your back, they won’t, because they always feel you are false around them”.

5.6.2.2 Personal branding

Personal branding is a success factor that women need to give attention to. Women need to be taught to differentiate their brands from the norm and market their personal brand aggressively. Women often do not realise that their actions, reactions and in fact, everything that they do, is a reflection of their 'brand' statement. They need to envision the end goal and present their brand to achieve this.

Respondent 14 confirmed that she regarded this is an integral part of her ability to stand out from the crowd: "I think was very, very good in terms of how to brand yourself, unique brand signature".

Respondent 19 explained how to go about designing a personal, being distinct: "It's about everything that you're doing, saying, behaving, all through this so people then suddenly says, so it's, like, you become distinct because if you're not distinct then you are just one of the crowd".

5.6.2.3 Skill Building

5.6.2.3.1 Assertiveness, confidence and communication skills

The ability to be assertive was seen by many respondents as a critical skill for women to operate successfully in a male-dominated work environment.

Respondent 14 explained this well when she admonished, "And the other thing is the way you project yourself and step forward. Be a bit more assertive, more confident about who you are".

Assertiveness and confidence-building are important aspects for leadership development programmes because many women are too intimidated to speak up in a boardroom setting.

Respondent 1 described why women need to speak up in such meetings: "In board meetings speaking up, you know, like I think women often feel that, you know, this is not the place to speak up, it's not appropriate to speak up, it's not, you know, you don't have, you can always this conversation offline, whereas I've noticed men they do a lot more posturing in those sort of high profile meeting".

Respondent 12 felt that women miss opportunities to have their voices and opinions heard by not speaking up, “because in the corporate world, there’s so little opportunity to really say your say, and give your opinion and make an impact with what you’re saying, that you need to do it to the best of your ability and to enhance that ability at every opportunity”.

Today’s business world needs women who are in control of themselves and their surroundings, women who are able to articulate their point clearly and effectively.

5.6.2.3.2 Listening skills

Respondents felt that the women need to be reminded of how important it is to observe and listen. Women do not necessarily do this well because their minds are so busy that they have to school themselves into shutting out the noise and actually focus on what is being said. Observing and absorbing data to formulate an argument is critical when deciding what needs to be articulated to have the desired impact.

Respondent 13 issued this warning: “Sometimes they’re so eager to have a say, which is sometimes a pressure that you’re under, being in the minority amongst, you feel under pressure to have a say. But, if you’re not listening to what’s happening around you...”.

5.6.2.3.3 Difficult conversations

Women are known to be diplomatic or remain silent on issues that they consider important, simply because they do not want to deal with conflict. Respondents felt that leadership development programmes needed to stress the importance of having meaningful conversations with colleagues, superiors and subordinates, in spite of a bit of stress. These ‘straight talk’ conversations include performance-related discussions with subordinates so that they are very clear on their expectations and whether or not they are meeting those expectations, as well as conversations with superiors when women feel that they have been treated unfairly.

Respondent 7 confirmed that “what you really need help with in your career is how you deal with those very difficult people, and how you have those straight talk discussions with them”.

Respondent 13 described how she addressed such an issue with her manager, indicating that she chose not to let a comment eat away at her but rather addressed it through a conversation: “I went back a few days later, and I sat down with him, and I said, I’d like to have a discussion about that comment, because it was wrong, in my view, because everything that I had to do, in terms of my job was being done”.

5.6.2.3.4 Negotiation skills

In the words of respondent 8, “the one thing that stuck with me out of the training course is that you don’t get what you deserve, you get what you negotiate”.

Women often lack suitable persuasion skills, the ability to read people, the ability to convince board members and gain their trust. They often fail to negotiate to their fullest value. Women need skills for structuring their arguments well so they can market their ideas effectively.

Respondent 7 describes this as “being able to word it or articulate it in a good enough way so that people can buy into your suggestion, because often you might have a good suggestion, but you’re too shy to raise it, or when you raise it, it just doesn’t come out right, and you need to rephrase it”.

Respondent 17 advised that voice training helped her to make certain her ideas came across properly with confidence.

Respondent 13 explained how women need to negotiate the best deals for themselves, but often find this difficult to do. “We add a lot of value, but we undervalue our contribution and ourselves, and I think that negotiation of going in there, and saying, I’m worth it, so be it money or be it position, we’re not good at selling in, going in and saying, I can do this, therefore I want to do this”.

Negotiation is clearly an important skill for women to acquire, knowing the facts and negotiating hard.

Respondent 6 cautioned, “The key thing to learn is not to lose your cool in a negotiation, but to be open, and caring and sharing, and to put your point of view, but

not fall on your sword for it. But if you have to walk away, then you say to the person, I'm going to walk away for these reason”.

5.6.3 Leveraging tools for development

5.6.3.1 Stretch assignments

The pitfalls for women include that they are not given the opportunity to broaden their array of skills through projects out of their comfort zone. The respondents were of the opinion that stretch assignments provided challenges for developing the skills that they lack, especially when seeking to advance in their careers.

Respondent 3 confirmed this: “Male and female, you don’t grow unless you put yourself in an environment where you’re challenged”.

She backed up her statement with the fact that the opportunities are not always forthcoming; however, other respondents were of the opinion that women need to *create* these opportunities for themselves.

Respondent 7, for example, was given such a stretch opportunity and used the opportunity to learn new skills and learn to collaborate with peers across divisions. This cross-pollination exposed her to organisational processes that she had not previously had to deal with. Being a very young leader in the organisation, she also learnt how to get the necessary buy-in and support of much older colleagues who now reported to her. She also alluded to the fact that these opportunities could be provided by exposing delegates who have attended programmes to projects that challenge them: “A mentorship programme last year for some of our BEE top performing people that we want to grow, and they did that whole thing, but afterwards we should have given the top five or ten, or whatever top projects in the firm for them to look after”.

Respondent 14 cautioned against placing women in roles that are not an appropriate fit for them, citing that they are best placed in roles that accentuate their strengths. “It’s better to use people there where they naturally can grow. Because the learning curve to do the other thing where you’re not intuitively geared for it, it’s hard and it takes a lot of emotional and physical...time and energy. So I think you could stretch people, but find ways where you think they can grow in this they just haven’t had the opportunity, and rather move them in those roles because it will benefit the organisation as well”.

Respondent 17 spoke about the need for women to apply for jobs that would challenge them rather than only for jobs they know they can do. She pointed out that whilst it is important to know that technically you are competent to perform a particular job, women must be cautioned against assuming roles that will not provide challenges. Stretch assignments are valuable. “There’s this, my mentor once said to me, guys go into jobs they want, rather than jobs that they’re ready for. Women go into jobs that they feel they can already do 100%, so in essence, you’re not getting a promotion. You’re just doing the job you should have been doing three years ago...I always look for opportunities that will challenge me, something that I haven’t done before. If I’m not feeling uncomfortable, then I won’t actually take the job.” This respondent also made the point that it is frequently through networking that such opportunities present themselves. Women need to network for relationships with people that they can use to deliver on their tasks.

5.6.3.2 Networking

Networking was highlighted by the respondents as an important skill necessary for women advancing their careers. Women tend to undervalue the importance of building solid relationships, citing family responsibilities as a main reason for not being able to network effectively. A strong finding in this area suggests that women need to focus on building networks with other women and not just networks with men.

Respondent 6 articulated this when she commented, “I think women need to solidify their networks of each other, not only the networks with men”.

Women often do not use their conversations effectively, frequently turning them into gossip sessions, whereas men use the golf course and drinks after work to discuss work-related matters.

Respondent 10 explained how women restrict themselves in this regard: “And our problem with women is we don’t network as effectively as men...guys, you know, meet on the golf course, and...women don’t do that. So they discuss business on the golf course. After work they go for a drink. And so they network more effectively than women. We’ve got to consciously make efforts to, you know, get together with other women. Network with other women. Help them; mentor them”.

When women network effectively, they build lasting relationships. But it requires personal initiative to approach other women and ask for their guidance in areas where guidance is needed.

Respondent 19 placed great importance on building networks “outside of your sector; networks outside of your family; networks outside of your work environment”.

This tends to create discomfort for women because it places them in uncomfortable contexts, and then they argue that their lives are too busy for such networking. However, out of this discomfort comes massive growth and learning.

Respondent 17 has used this approach in her networking; she has involved herself in her industry and professional body to find opportunities to engage with people from different sectors, gaining knowledge in areas that she isn’t familiar with. A substantial investment is required in the time that is required for networking; however, the respondent felt that it is critical if a woman wishes to drive her career forward. She explained the benefits as follows: “People get to know you, and they ask you for stuff, if stuff needs to get done, you then become the go-to person, and you build the reputation, so if there’s an opportunity for an executive position somewhere else, you’re top of mind, even though I don’t know your skill set, I know I’ve seen you somewhere, and I’ve seen you around important enough people, so there’s an assumption that you must know something, and you then get called up for those type of opportunities, but if you really don’t network, it’s going to set you back quite a lot. Men are very good at building networks inside the organisation, outside the organisation, and particularly outside the industry”.

Networking also has benefits for women who join new companies. Having conversations with people outside of the organisation they wish to join helps them to integrate better. But once inside the organisation, women should begin to build these networks immediately.

Respondent 17 explained, “When a guy joins an organisation, he spends the first three months, his first 90 days, just networking. And, men are...not ashamed to go out there to people and build relationships. Whereas women, if they join a new job, they spend their first 90 days just trying to be invested in the job. They don’t even know who the key people are in the organisation. They haven’t met those people”.

The reason for the failure of networking was also highlighted by the respondents: women are too busy with their own schedules they have no time for networking.

Respondent 1 acknowledged that men's cliques exist, the so-called old boys clubs, and indicated that women need to find ways to penetrate these traditional clubs. "If you're not going to be one of the boys, then how on earth are you going to get in, what else can you do?"

5.6.3.3 Coaching

Coaching is a tool whereby women can be guided through the immediate stumbling blocks in their career, helping them to navigate their way through and around employment obstacles.

Respondent 5 commented that coaching allows for "having access to people that can give you a better perspective of the business on a much higher level than you would otherwise have at your current level. So, it's coaching and having people, and having access to people that can give you information as and when required on almost a daily basis".

Respondents felt that there should be more female coaches who would be willing and capable of assisting other women overcome the unique challenges of being a female leader. One-on-one coaching, as opposed to coaching circles, is considered to hold greater value as it addresses the individual woman's unique needs.

Respondent 15 highlighted the downfalls of coaching circles as an experienced facilitator is required in order for it to be effective: "if I can speak out of personal experience in the mentoring and coaching circle, I think because women are more likely to share what's going on, the risk that you have is that that coaching and mentoring sessions become kind of like counselling, like a psychiatric session, as opposed to being constructive in dealing...with your areas of development".

Respondent 8 uses her facilitators on development programmes as potential future coaches.

5.6.3.4 Mentoring

Respondent 2 described mentoring as the process of undergoing personal change necessary to become an effective leader: “My mentor, on the other hand, his role is to slowly develop and change my individual characteristics as a person. So in the long term I can be the type of individual that has the personality, has the people skills, has the emotional intelligence and the maturity necessary for success in an executive role”.

There appears to be an absence of determined women assuming a mentorship role over other women within organisations. Yet having female mentors would allow women to openly share their own experiences with others who have travelled the same path.

But, as respondent 7 lamented, this might just be more an ideal than reality: “They've just never had time for me, and they've just expected me to get on with it, and I often need guidance, in terms of, how do you deal with certain challenges”.

Unfortunately, it seems that women often do not make themselves available for mentoring other women.

Some respondents argued that they have not had a mentor because mentors were simply not available to them. But other respondents proactively sought and adopted mentors informally throughout their organisations, relying on them to gather different opinion then basing their critical decisions on this more widely informed base.

Respondent 7 explained: “The thing is, they were always just very busy people, and I've looked for people, like the one lady is in HR, and I just thought she's really nice; I want to be like her, and so I asked her, and I just developed a relationship. One of the other guys is a manager in Automation, and he's got a very specific sort of IT view on life, whereas I don't have that skill at all, so it's really nice to talk to him. So it's people that have skills that I don't have, and people that look at life in a way that I don't look at it. And I've just been curious to have those views, just to help me make decisions”.

Respondent 10 concurred with respondent 7: “I think also sometimes women are a bit reticent to also approach other people and say, you know what, will you be my mentor? Seek out. Seek out successful people...you'll find that nine times out of ten they're very receptive. Seek them out and...drop them an email, or whatever, and say, listen, you know what, I think I can learn from you, you know”.

Many respondents put forward a case for men as mentors, citing men's wealth of experience in senior roles as a reason for this being an attractive option.

Respondent 14 said, "I think you can have women mentors for a particular, sort of, role but I think men in terms of...just knowing how it works up there, just knowing the cues. That's the other thing with women, there's this unspoken cue in the men's world and you don't just know it and by modelling yourself on men and seeing how they are, you learn. And it's not like compromising your soul but... you can realise there are some good ways of how they're doing things and you can learn like that, by observing it".

5.6.3.5 Access to role models

A strong theme that emerged among the respondents was that women do not act as role models to other women as they progress in an organisation. The respondents felt that women who are already occupying senior roles within an organisation need to support those who are progressing through the ranks, guiding them along the way. It was pointed out that many women are threatened by other women and often do not assist because of their own insecurities.

Respondent 16 commented that her female role models did not put forth any effort in developing her: "I was just there, no different from a maid, to help them achieve their end goal. And that is debilitating".

One respondent suggested that a way to overcome this was to seek out female role models from other organisations as they will not be considered direct competition. She also suggested that MBA and other executive development female alumni act as role models to women, sharing knowledge and experience and guidance, especially to those women undergoing higher education.

Respondent 7 shared an interesting insight—women tend to find men easier to relate to as role models: "The men actually do support you, and I've felt it myself, going up the ranks, in this firm, my biggest challenge was to get past the women, not the men. They were all vouching for me...women are harder on other women".

This was further supported by respondent 9: "My personal growth has been through largely male managers that... have progressed through delivery and learning the business and, you know, very sort of getting dirty... hands dirty and everything on the ground with people...you learn from those people".

Even so, respondent 10 felt strongly that women need to harness this mentoring role as only women, she believes, can become change agents and truly drive the ‘women agenda’.

Respondent 16 is actively trying to make a difference in this arena: “I had to have a student in my office today who is shadowing me, because again I need to learn how to be a better leader to other women. I mean that’s the one thing that we lack is how to lead other women in a way that is supportive, that is reassuring, but that doesn’t compromise the end goal”.

5.6.3.6 Applied learning projects

Applied learning projects were identified as an area in which delegates of training programmes could apply their learning when back in the office. The key is having delegates working on practical, real implementable projects and to marry them with someone at a certain upper level.

Respondent 15 stressed the need for practicality: “I think one of the things that struck me is the need for leadership development training progress, or leadership development programmes, to have application in your real working environment”. One respondent proposed that delegates be put into “think tanks” and given organisational dilemmas to solve as part of the learning experience.

5.6.3.7 Feedback

The giving and receiving of feedback was also highlighted as a developmental area in which women would benefit from training in order to heighten their skills. Best practice shows that a simulation tool for demonstrating behaviour for facilitating feedback would be useful. The more simulations women are exposed to, the more aware they become of their own behaviours and practices. Simulation, together with behavioural integrators, will successfully train women in the giving and receiving of feedback.

Feedback through 360 degree reviews is also useful in accentuating a woman’s strengths and diminishing her weaknesses. Developmental areas are those that pose a hindrance to a woman’s success. Women are empowered when they acquire the ability to see and assess their developmental areas as if they’re in a shadow, and when they

manage to reveal them to the light, they can then work to convert weaknesses into strengths.

Respondent 7 also felt that post course check-ins with coaches or peers would provide beneficial feedback, as this would encourage the participant to reflect on accomplishments as a result of the programme and to recognise gained ability to implemented knowledge acquired and skills learned back into the business environment.

5.7 Research question 4: How can organisations interact and support women’s development and advancement?

Organisational level factors that influenced women’s development were identified and are depicted in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Research question 4 categorisation and number of responses

Organisational support	Number of respondents
Organisational culture	13
CEO and executive management support and sponsorship	11
Investment in formal training	7
Women-only training programmes	7

5.7.1 Organisational culture

5.7.1.1 Flexibility

Organisational culture was highlighted as the most important requirement for women when considering support for development and advancement—in particular, an organisational culture allowing flexibility. In most cases, corporate culture is not one that accommodates flexibility.

Respondent 7 confirmed this when she admitted, “I do think it will become more challenging as I get children, because I have seen the culture around here, and the culture isn't that you go into a half-day job”.

There is also an unconventional element as to how women progress in organisations.

Respondent 1 said, “The women that you do find who have actually managed to progress have also often done it in a way that isn't the way that men have progressed. They've gone up and then they've stepped sideways and then they've stepped out and then they've stepped in sideways again and then they've gone up, you know, instead of just up, up, up the whole time”.

Respondent 7 stated that the inflexible culture often requires women to off-ramp and then on-ramp at a more suitable time, “The women generally, maybe resign and look after the kids for a while, and then come back to work, and the women that work here work very long hours”.

Another consideration noted is that some women do not choose to climb the corporate ladder, but rather are content to remain where they are.

Respondents felt that the culture must support men and women equally in this regard. But several respondents felt that organisations could be doing much more in support of the female agenda.

Respondent 2 remarked strongly: “To attract women and to retain them, the organisation itself needs to demonstrate that it is committed and actively promoting women”.

Too many organisations refuse to be proactive in charting the career paths of their women and so personal and professional development is often driven by the women themselves.

Respondent 8 affirmed this finding: “This is my view but I haven't seen the organisation being involved in where I'm going in the organisation”.

Other delegates, however, felt that their organisations *were* proactive concerning the leadership development and advancement of women.

Respondent 9 reported, “There are a lot of programmes...developed over the years that are specifically focussed on women and the needs of women and the challenges that women face within the organisation”.

Most women in these positions felt that the organisation needed to provide enough support for them to succeed in their various occupational roles, creating an enabling environment to allow them the space that needed to develop and advance.

As respondent 9 said clearly, “you should have enough support from a work point of view to actually, you know, run with it”.

And respondent 10 concurred that to a large extent, the onus is on the company: “The Company’s *got* to create the enabling environment”.

Respondents commented that a mind shift is necessary from the more traditional-type of organisations in order for this to happen. Respondents confirmed that they want to work in an environment where they are able to deliver on their deliverables in an inclusive, non-restrictive surrounding.

Respondent 19 underscored this same point: “it needs a mind-shift change and the responsibility does lie with those of us who are in positions of power”.

5.7.1.1.1 Role of technology

Changing trends in technology was another area highlighted by respondents as a means for providing women with the flexibility to be proficient in all their roles. Now-a-days women are able to connect to the office remotely using hand-held devices and 3G or broadband connectivity. They no longer need to be office-bound to perform well at their jobs.

As respondent 10 said, “the thing is, with modern technology, computers, cell phones, wifi, everything, you can work from home, and you could probably be much more productive working from home”.

5.7.1.2 Generational differences

Respondents felt strongly that contemporary organisational culture needs to be receptive to the younger generation and their operational mannerisms and abilities.

Respondent 7 reflected on the difficulties that she experienced being a young leader in her organisation. She gained the most benefit from leadership development programmes where she was exposed to women from different professions, as she felt that her peers did not value her worth because of her age. In engaging with other women in various professions, she learnt behavioural techniques for success. She aptly describes her training experiences as “wonderful to learn how people, even in very different environments, had the same challenges, because at that stage I wasn't obviously in the level I'm now in, and I had a lot of challenges convincing my seniors or my peers of my worth, and the lady that was the sangoma had a similar issue, because she was so much younger...and she was trying to tell them about more modern medicine...and they didn't want to listen to her, and similarly, in my environment, I had challenges, but yes, probably we learned from each other, and then obviously later on I got promoted, so now I'm with all the older people, and I'm still the youngest...But you learn behavioural techniques more than anything, which is really important”.

5.7.2 CEO and executive management support and sponsorship

Organisations whose executives have bought into and supported the leadership development and advancement of women were described as key to the success of programmes. Respondents felt that a change in the cultural behaviour in an organisation can only happen from the top, when senior leaders displayed a vested interest in these programmes. Where management was involved with development programmes, participants felt that valuable institutional knowledge was gained. One respondent felt that it was critically important for those in power to acknowledge that women do need some kind of assistance in the area of development. Training partners commented that the most effective interventions have been those where senior managers acted as coaches to delegates. Delegates also appreciated that they were afforded opportunities to engage with different executives in the company and were able to learn different skills, giving the delegates visibility and the opportunity to interact with senior leaders.

Respondent 10 commented, “I think firstly they've got to come to the realisation, you know, that women do need assistance”.

Respondent 3 admitted her “luck” that her boss believes in the development of women: “But I'm particularly lucky because my direct boss, our general manager of MWeb

Business, is awesome with development of women...it's the one thing he is phenomenally good at. So, he's the one that's given me the chances and put me in positions where I've had to stretch myself and...he backs me up on decisions when I make them, whether they're good or bad".

There is a need for sponsors within organisations who will drive the agenda of women, ensuring that they are visible all the time. Two delegates felt that their careers were successful as a result of sponsors who played an instrumental role in their advancement.

Respondent 17 explained how sponsorship in particular has benefitted her career: "People would perceive it as unfair, but really, when you have a sponsorship relationship, people give you opportunities other people would never get, and people give you those opportunities and make sure that you don't fail. So, they invest a lot more time in helping you to build the right people...because I had a sponsor, suddenly there was budget for me to have the right people, so that I could actually do the job".

5.7.3 Investment in formal training

Organisations serious about the leadership development and advancement of women implemented formal training programmes to drive this agenda. Programmes that were successfully designed and monitored assisted in ensuring an even distribution of men and women in senior positions within organisations. In such organisations, women's developmental issues are prioritised with the company's strategic objectives and take centre stage.

Respondent 17 confirmed this need for organisational support: "I think definitely organisational support has a big role to play. I've seen organisations where for example, their training has been mandatory that over 50% is spent on women, and they actually try and expose their technical training, as well as their soft skills training, to make sure that the focus is on women, and in those organisations, you actually see the women moving up".

And respondent 2 also stated, in support of organisational investment in training programmes, "I think that if there is a formalised programme in place and it's properly monitored and measured, you would get at least a better split between men and women at the top ranks".

5.7.3.1 Measuring and monitoring of advancement of women

In order to gain traction for the advancement of women, respondents felt that organisations needed to track record and report the number of women being trained and advanced. Respondent 2 suggested, “I think measurements need to be put in place to immediately detect where women are not being advanced correctly and at the pace that they should be”.

Respondent 14 expressed the reluctance to measure and report however recognises that attention is placed on the imperative when it is tracked and monitored: “Even in the annual reports, the strategic plans...so many men and so many women and so many are coloured and so many...I realise it is important because you’re measuring it and you can see if you’re advancing...So I think it is important, like a lot of the sustainability reports, I think even in corporate annual reports they do have some of it, and how much training they do and reporting the statistics in the company financial statements”.

5.7.3.2 Feedback loop

Respondents felt that a carefully designed feedback process must be designed into the development programmes. This feedback would be provided to the executive of organisations for presentation of the findings at board level, because what too often happens is that feedback pertaining to training programmes is given to line managers and does not, then, permeate to the senior leaders in an organisation.

5.7.4 Women-only training programmes

Respondents felt that generally there was no need for women-only programmes except that they seemed to work better when certain specific topics were discussed.

Respondent 15 commented, “programmes that focus on the softer side, although softer skills, and within a female context within a women’s group bring, is that it creates a safe environment and a sharing environment in which you can explore those areas, understand where your strengths lie in your development, and work with other women in developing those areas...learning from each other”.

Respondent 11, a training provider, admitted, “There is not a huge focus on women leaders’ needs, but rather a more general request at a leadership level”.

5.9 Conclusion

By encoding data and summarising major themes and constructs, certain realisations have ensued. In Chapter 6, the information will be analysed in more depth by comparing the detailed and substantive results of Chapter 5 against the literature review of Chapter 2. This comparison will highlight further gaps in literature as well as future areas for research.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses and evaluates the various themes and constructs that arose out of Chapter 5 in the context of the literature in Chapter 2 and the research questions that arose there in from Chapter 3.

6.2 Research question 1: In what ways are current leadership development programmes beneficial for women and their career advancement?

Research question 1 sought to establish the key benefits of the leadership development programmes designed for women as viewed by female delegates and training providers. It was imperative to establish this at the outset and confirm the theory in chapter 2 and it formed a basis for opening up a conversation with respondents.

Table 3 in section 5.4 indicates that the benefits of current leadership development programmes are that they create a heightened self awareness in women, help boost their confidence and gives them a solid technical base. Attendance on these programmes teaches discipline and exposes women to other areas of business affording them the opportunity to interact with senior leaders.

6.2.1 Self-awareness

Data in section 5.4.1 suggests that the key benefit for the women is a heightened sense of their own leadership style. The programmes require introspection of women with the intention of understanding their inner core, their personality, and their leadership styles— forming a critical step in the process of development. The outcome of this process ensures that the women are comfortable in their own skins, understand their strengths and focus clearly on those weaker aspects that require development.

This finding confirms the view of Riggio (2008) in the literature who found that leadership self-awareness is an important element of development programmes for women. He explained that leaders must be aware of their own leadership strengths and limitations in order to maximise strengths to their benefit and overcome their

shortcomings. Importantly, women must make time to reflect on their leadership style and devote time to their personal development.

6.2.2 Confidence

Data in section 5.4.2 reveals that delegates felt that programmes develop in them a sense of confidence by exposing them to group interactions, classroom presentations and pushing them outside their comfort zone. These programmes also foster teamwork and require delegates to engage with their colleagues in order to maximise their learning. They suggested that by interacting in teams, women were exposed to new ways of thinking and this helped them appreciate different perspectives. As a result of the confidence that is gained delegates feel more comfortable when engaging with senior leaders in their organisations.

The findings support the definition of confidence that Laud and Johnston (2012) suggest as the level of courage, assertiveness and willingness to take initiative in uncertain situations. The willingness to take initiative is visible because the woman learns to step forward instead of adopting the sacrificial role of stepping back. The ability of the women to develop their confidence in a safe environment supports the views of Bonebright et al. (2012) who found that self-confidence is created when women are provided with the space to develop their identities as leaders and engage in discussions with other women.

6.2.3 Technical skills & competence

Data gathered in section 5.4.3 shows that as an essentially academic programme, increasing the knowledge base of the participants is an important component of leadership development programmes. If a programme neglected to impart knowledge about business and society to women, for the career advancement benefit, it would be reasonable to question the purpose and need of such a programme. The success of these programmes is that they in fact use several mediums to impart knowledge to students, ranging from formal classroom lectures, to experiential learning exercises and even to interactions with fellow women and facilitators on the programme. This makes for a very versatile programme, an excellent source of exposure and technical skill and business acumen for any women seeking to expand her view of business and her 'promotability' into senior management positions.

The data confirms the literature by Carmichael and Sutherland (2005) and Baruch (2009) that saw the success of development programmes being its ability to impart knowledge to women in order for them to become more intelligent and effective managers.

The findings also suggested that women make extra efforts to prove their competency and technical skills by educating themselves at their highest level so that there are no grounds to question their abilities. This confirms the findings of Laud and Johnson (2012) and Lyness and Heilman (2006) who found that education aided women in levelling the playing field in male-dominated organisations and forms the evidence for when women are frequently required to prove their competence and subjected to stricter scrutiny of their qualifications.

6.2.4 Discipline and tools

Section 5.4.4 point out several benefits explaining why attending training and development programmes is useful for women. For one, programmes require women to complete tasks over and above all their other responsibilities, instilling the rigorous discipline that is required to function at senior level, where attention is diverted to multiple projects simultaneously and a disciplined approach is essential.

Literature by Furst and Reeves (2008) found that women are scrutinised regarding their ability to multi-task and balance family demands and work demands. The findings of this study contradict this piece of literature reflecting that women are in fact able to develop the discipline that is required to complete additional tasks over and above her usual responsibilities and this actually stands her in good stead to assume senior leadership roles.

6.2.5 Exposure

The data in section 5.4.5 suggests that women who attend leadership development programmes are exposed to different people from divergent backgrounds. The resultant insight that women obtained from a more aggregated and holistic business view provided an advantageous breadth of knowledge necessary to engage comfortably with senior leaders and make more informed decisions. Exposure to various perspectives also encourages women to elevate their stance and operate on a higher level, as there are new opportunities to interact with senior leaders, to become

more visible and respected, and to develop the tools necessary to function more efficiently in the realm of business.

The findings above support Carmichael and Sutherland's (2005) and Kelan and Jones' (2009) propositions that leadership development programmes help women broaden their exposure.

6.2.6 Conclusion

Leadership development programmes place a great deal of emphasis on technical skills and provide women with opportunities to showcase these newfound abilities in front of senior executives. They prepare women with discipline, technical competencies, expanded confidence and more intuitive self-awareness for operating successfully in senior management positions. These results confirm and contradict the benefits of leadership development programmes for women as discovered in the literature.

6.3 Research question 2: What is lacking in current leadership development programmes that could potentially aid in advancing women?

Research question 2 was positioned to identify the areas in which current leadership development programmes fail when addressing the agenda of the development and advancement of women. This question aimed to evaluate the faltering design components of existing leadership development programmes for women.

Table 4 in section 5.5 revealed that leadership development programmes must be designed and positioned to take into account the current environmental context. The legislative requirements of each country must be entrenched within programmes, and companies must enact policies which provide anchorage to development programmes to achieve the required targets of equal representation of women in senior and board positions. The strengths that women bring—soft skills, collaboration and intuitive ability—must underscore the design of leadership development programmes for women.

6.3.1 Environmental context

6.3.1.1 Socialisation of women

Section 5.5.1.1 uncovered a ubiquitous theme concerning the present socialisation of women. The data reveals that the role of women in society is still seen through the traditional caregiver lens. South African society has *not yet* fully transitioned from inability to ability to accept women participating in previously male-dominated spheres of business. The origin of the finding is deeply rooted in this society and is mainly influenced by social interactions. Comments of participants concerning ‘society’s views of men’s and women’s roles’ and ‘people’s beliefs about men’s and women’s roles’ support the literature by Heilman (2001) and Medina and Magnuson (2009) around role expectations. This relates to societal expectations placed on specific genders, congruent with the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

The findings support the definition of proposed by Kliuchko (2011): “Gender stereotypes are socially constructed categories of ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’ that are confirmed by different behavior depending on sex, different distribution of men and women within social roles and statuses, and are supported by a person’s psychological needs to behave in a socially acceptable manner and to feel integral and not discrepant” (Kliuchko, 2011, p. 17). The data confirmed the findings of Foldy (2006); Heilman (2001) and Elacqua et al. (2009) that gender stereotypes of the managerial position serve as a psychological barrier to women’s advancement. In summary, societal origins and continued constructs of gender stereotypes drive the socialisation issues that plague women, as revealed by participants’ views.

Participants felt strongly that leadership development programmes could be a mechanism for challenging society’s pre-ordained assumptions of the roles of women in contemporary society. The design of future leadership development programmes at a non-gender specific level need to incorporate an element of gender neutralisation that can consciously address the ingrained social norms to which society has continued to adhere. The importance of including this element is to eradicate restrictive social perceptions and to highlight to leaders the importance of including more women in senior business positions. Business leaders, then, will act as catalysts spurring the changing behaviours in their workspace and in the communities within which they have

an influence. This finding adds to the body of literature on designing leadership development programmes for women.

6.3.1.2 Legislation

Section 5.5.1.2 of the data revealed that without a firm commitment from the government of South Africa for the inclusion of women in business, marginal change in the area of advancement of women will transpire. The participants felt that in order for leadership development programmes to be successful in preparing women for advancement, a macro-environmental thrust must be evident by government. Chapter 1 put forward that a gender equality bill has been developed by the South African government to this end. The bill seeks to address the slow pace of gender transformation and harness the positive effects that women's economic empowerment and leadership will have on the global economy.

Two imperatives are necessary for the greater advancement of career women. Firstly, the business sector must pro-actively develop policies and procedures for advancing more women within their organisations. Secondly, leadership development programmes of companies must take into account the broad macro-environmental landscape of the country: the company's own succession planning *must* include women. This finding supports the view of Zahidi and Ibarra (2010); Singh et al. (2008) and Ernst and Young Global Limited (2011) who confirm that gender equality and governmental policies *must* be in place for companies to create an ecosystem where the best talent—whether male or female—can and will flourish.

This idea of designing of leadership development programmes by taking into account the strategic imperatives of the country and aligning this with business was not found in literature and therefore seeks to add to the representative literature pertaining to how leadership development programmes should be best designed to aid the career advancement of women.

6.3.2 Organisational context

6.3.2.1 Buy-in of the company

The data supporting this finding in section 5.5.2.1 revealed one major failing of leadership development programmes was lack of support from the company's executives. Key to the success of this development initiative is that the sponsorship for the programme must reside at the highest level within the organisation. Not only must the board and CEO drive the project, but the project must stem from the strategic direction of the company (i.e. to develop women leaders). In order for this initiative to be successful, new and innovative ideas about female leadership development are necessary, particularly as supported by companies themselves.

Literature by Conger and Xin (2000) points to the fact that executive education programmes have become less functional and more strategic to increase benefits to the organisation. Conger and Xin (2000) propose re-focussing executive education by uniting senior leaders, encouraging them to work together and to change and drive organisations rather than focussing solely on the individual executive's education. However, the need to prioritise women's development programmes as a strategic enabler has not gained momentum, largely because senior executives of companies themselves do not realise the outstanding benefits that women bring to management teams in the form of improved profitability and more diligent oversight as discussed in Chapter 1. The leadership of the company must buy into the business benefits of incorporating women in their leadership teams.

Programmes will only be considered once those in power see the impact that they will have on the bottom line for the company supporting the views of O'Neil et al. (2011). As such, women's development programmes must be marketed for the benefits that result for the company. The success of leadership development programmes as contingent upon senior executive buy-in was not covered in literature and thus this seeks to add to the design of leadership development programmes for women. Literature does confirm, however, that companies that do not support the development of women will suffer in attracting and retaining a talented workforce (Evans, 2011).

6.3.3 Individual context

6.3.3.1 Strengths

It is often expressed that women are emotional, weak and timid and suffer from a guilty conscience, especially when faced with the choice of allocating time to their families or their careers. The data in section 5.5.3.1 shows that this negotiation of time, this conflict women face—family vs. work—is actually a core competitive advantage for women in that they are able to multi-task more proficiently than men and women possess a heightened intuitive ability to assess a situation and apply lateral thinking to reach a democratic decision quickly. Women are able to absorb several data points and conclude with an informed decision in a much shorter time than their male colleagues. Women are able to use this ability in boardrooms where a large volume of information is presented and decisions need to be made quite urgently.

This finding contradicts literature that DeArmond et al. (2006) put forward that suggests that women are emotional and unstable. However, data confirms Furst and Reeves' (2008) finding that successful women are preferential candidates for senior positions because they employ a variety of complex behaviours and new approaches to leadership that makes them effective leaders. Furst and Reeves' further suggest that the divergent roles that women play enable them to develop uniquely competitive skills for the work environment. The findings suggest that leadership development programmes for women move toward acknowledging and highlighting these areas of competitive advantage, alerting women to the idea that something perceived as 'negative' can actually be regarded in a much more positive manner.

6.3.3.2 Collaborative management style

Organisations rarely assess the gender, style and effectiveness of its management team as a strategic tool in its business armour. The data in section 5.5.3.2 suggests, though, that perhaps businesses would be wise to consider these elements. Women may be strategically placed in management because they are better at improving employee motivation, morale and performance as they adopt a management style that is engaging, inclusive and collaborative, a style conducive to decision-making. Women realise that this participative, or 'laissez faire', style works well in an era that makes heavy use of the connectedness of the internet, where many voices can contribute,

even if they are ‘speaking’ from the other side of the world. In general, women are most comfortable with a management style that is more collaborative and less concerned with rigid hierarchy and top-down directives confirming similar findings by Evans (2011).

Collaboration becomes vital if the organisation wishes to entertain multiple ideas and opinions to ensure that the best possible course is taken. Women consult more with their peers and teams than men. Showing empathy when people are distraught provides stability in the workplace. Women are better at expressing empathy than men. Similarly, responding to people’s emotional needs will ensure that they continue to perform under pressure – and women are much better at using emotions in a positive way. Women also tend to reduce or avoid hierarchical layers and to short-circuit communication channels, leading to improved trust and better communication. Being less aggressive will ensure that risk is reduced. As women take fewer risks than men, an organisation’s chances of survival are higher.

These communal attributes described by Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and van Engen (2003) as displayed by women are generally viewed somewhat negatively, regarded as contrary to what business leaders *should* be like. The essence, however, is that these communal attributes are not necessarily negative—they in fact may even be strengths. But due to ingrained understanding in the workplace about what leaders are and how leaders lead, communal attributes are still regarded as weaknesses. The findings, though, challenge the norms presented in literature concerning communal attributes and suggest that these characteristics are actually business advantages, strengths that leadership development programmes should accentuate for women.

6.3.3.3 Soft skills and dealing with stress

The data in section 5.5.3.3 suggests that women need to master their soft, feminine skills in order to be successful in the changing landscape of today’s business. Businesses are now removing entire layers of old ‘command-and-control’ management jobs and replacing them with more accountable, matrixed leadership expectations. To be successful during this transition, women must softly influence, collaborate and subtly gain the trust of others. Inherently, women are in a better position to succeed here.

This finding supports Woolley et al. (2010) who found that it is precisely those skills which have been largely marginalised or dismissed as ‘soft’ in the business world that are really powerful for facilitating the emergence of collective intelligence. Such skills are not exclusively held by women, of course. But on average they are more developed in women, and women are generally more willing to apply them.

Leadership and management are clearly changing. Complex problems that companies face today require wisdom coming from many rather than a few. To facilitate the emergence of that wisdom, women need the strong power of all those ‘soft’ skills. In reality, those soft skills are anything but soft; they are complex and require a great deal of intelligence and skill to master.

Section 5.5.3.3 also revealed that there are specific issues that women need to be taught. These relate to their particular lifestyle with particular stress levels, and necessary coping mechanisms. Often women find that the stresses of their jobs and personal lives feel overwhelming and perhaps even insurmountable. It is this finding that suggests that leadership development programmes identify these stresses unique to women, and other specific types of developmental experiences, and teach positive coping mechanisms. This seeks to add to literature around the core components necessary to be addressed in a women’s leadership development programme.

6.3.4 Conclusion

Respondents felt that current leadership development programmes are too theoretical and too technical, lacking the strategic kind of ‘bigger picture’ thinking at which women frequently excel. The programmes concentrate primarily on developing competency, skills and technical abilities, but those are not enough to ensure sustainable success in a senior position. Findings of this research question confirmed, contradicted and in certain instances added to the body of literature on what is required in the design of women’s leadership development programmes to aid their advancement.

Respondent 17 summed this up when she commented “They focus on technical aspects, and then I would definitely invest a lot more money on what we’re doing with the soft skills, which are actually the more important skills, doing the leadership training, where people actually go and really focusing on themselves, to understand firstly what kind of a person they are, what is their value system, how to ensure that it’s in line with the organisation, and really help them to discover the leaders that they are,

and how to actually improve their own management skills, and then I would really focus on one on one skills, that make people better leaders, in terms of you know, skills around negotiation, and skills around building confidence, and being able to articulate your own ideas.”

6.4 Research question 3: What core elements should a leadership development programme contain to maximise impact for senior women?

Research question 3 sought to uncover the key elements that are necessary in a programme to maximise impact for career women.

Table 5 in section 5.6 indicates that there are a host of elements specific to women that need to be considered for a programme to be impactful. These have been themed as addressing the past, addressing the self and leveraging tools for development. Unfortunately, women still need to navigate the waters of historically stereotypical socially constructed barriers, finding ways to overcome these with enough verve and resilience to work in male-dominated organisations.

6.4.1 Addressing the past

6.4.1.1 The barriers

Chapter 5 section 5.6.1.1 makes reference to societal barriers women face in the advancement of their careers. Societal attitudes towards women’s positions and abilities are restrictive on career advancement for women. Participants expressed that traditional cultural values and stereotypes continue to restrain women and that there is strong bias against women in leadership positions as evidenced by the attitudes detected in male co-workers and sometimes even female co-workers. Women are perceived through the prohibitive lens of numerous enduring stereotypes which perpetuate advantages for male co-workers and hinder women’s rise to the top management levels: participants admitted that they had to find ways to challenge these myths. These finding confirm literature by Ely et al. (2011) who made mention of a subtler form of gender bias, one that is unspoken but yet is still hindering women’s advancement.

These findings confirm those of Levitt (2010) who quoted Steiner (2006) commenting on the barriers that women face confirming that the expectations and public image of female leaders may be rooted in traditional concepts of leadership roles. Hoobler et al. (2011) findings confirmed the notion that the glass ceiling results from perceptions of women's expected mannerisms in the workplace, explaining why women attain middle-management but cannot transcend into senior roles despite high education and visibility in the workplace. The data also found that the glass ceiling effect not only restricted career growth but also stifled salaries, as wide disparities were noted in the uneven amount of pay men and women are awarded for the same jobs. This confirmed the findings of Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) that women suffer in terms of both remuneration and career progression.

6.4.1.1.1 Overcoming barriers

Skills and personal characteristics such as assertiveness, confidence, competence, determination and high qualifications were found to be some of the strategies used by women to climb the organisational ladder. This confirms the literature of Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) who presented the strategies mentioned above as necessary for overcoming barriers that women encounter.

This suggests that developing training programmes be targeted to equip women with these skills. And while women require assistance to overcome the reported barrier, there is clearly a need to increase awareness in those who have power to make changes. Women promote their own career advancement through education in order to improve their credentials and show a willingness to work hard.

One respondent in section 5.6.1.1.1 found an alternative method of addressing ingrained stereotypical behaviour: she suggested confronting a person who makes stereotypical comments and by encouraging awareness and reflection, break down the discrimination. The other important finding was that 'gender' is often blamed for business failings, especially when women are at the helm of the organisation. The data suggest that it is primarily 'perception' that feeds this view and thus is an issue that must be addressed pro-actively by women. These findings add to literature on how to overcome barriers.

6.4.1.2 Tools to cope in male dominated environments

Woman working in male-dominated professions find that they must prove their abilities to sceptical bosses, co-workers, friends, family, and even the public. No matter how hard a woman works, no matter how much is accomplished, it seems to never be enough. The data in section 5.6.1.2 refers to the need for leadership development programmes to supply women with a ‘toolkit’ for survival in male-dominated work environments. This etiquette required in the workplace will help women to spot inappropriate behaviour and know how to react to shut it down. It will teach women how to confront an issue in a constructive yet resolute manner so that she is not seen as difficult, but fair. Women also need to learn to diffuse anger because this skill is a valuable asset in any situation or workplace so that women do not get caught into negativity. Women have a tendency to sabotage themselves in the workplace by assuming the martyr complex, placing their needs *after* everyone else. The toolkit must highlight that successful women are fair, articulate, and assertive and let their voices be heard--they will not back down.

The respondents were clear that it is critical to recognise the strengths and skills that both men and women bring to the table in order to create an environment of understanding and appreciation rather than an environment of division and suspicion—collaboration rather than individualism. It was therefore found that women need not only a toolkit to survive in male-dominated environments but also need to educate their male colleagues on the roles that women can play in the success of the organisation. The goal was to diffuse the strong masculine energy and allow the feminine energy to permeate, thereby creating space for women in the organisation.

The findings above confirm literature by Dragoni et al. (2009) who found that career development opportunities must include competencies and on-the-job experiences that will allow a woman to achieve managerial effectiveness. By developing the tools to cope in a male dominated environment women are able to perform their roles more adequately confirming literature by Kraimer et al. (2011).

6.4.1.3 Resilience

Resilience is described as the ability to overcome challenges and turn them into opportunities. For women, this is a vital criterion for professional advancement as it entails the capacity to bounce back from misfortune, disruptive change and failures.

Resilience is driven by intrinsic qualities, attitudes and behaviours. Everyone experiences disappointments and setbacks in their life. But when these occur, it's the 'resilience factor' that gets women back in the game and keeps them pursuing their goals rather than allowing discouragement and fatigue to set in.

The findings in section 5.6.1.3 show that women are often conflicted in their choices, often carrying a great deal of guilt over not being able to satisfy all their responsibilities as both career women and caregivers. On the other hand, women often take criticism quite personally and have difficulty navigating beyond the negative detail. In difficult situations, the need for resilience is amplified. If women are not taught to be resilient, they will wane as leaders.

The data supports the literature of Eagly and Carli (2007) who found that women need to be extraordinarily resilient as people are more resistant to women exerting influence as managers, as this was role is traditionally associated with men.

Leadership development programmes for leading organisations must provide high-performing women with a variety of experiences including training, mentoring and "stretch" roles to increase both their resilience and confidence, thereby more adequately preparing them to succeed in senior leadership positions.

The need to instruct women in resilience building techniques was not found in the literature and therefore seeks to add to the present literature pertaining to the skills required by women for preparation for senior positions.

6.4.2 Addressing the self

6.4.2.1 Self-insight and understanding personal leadership style

Authentic leaders are aware of their strengths, conscious of developmental opportunities and attuned to their motivations. For women, it is important to abandon typical leadership rhetoric in order to fully understand their core strengths, their ability to stretch their own growth capacity, and their ability to foster an environment where people thrive by working collaboratively. When women are authentic, they are wholly present and this allows them to connect passion with conviction and enthusiasm: being themselves, being genuine, and being right where they are when they are there.

The findings in section 5.6.2.1 support the need for women to be authentic, searching within themselves to find the personal style that resonates within them — and wearing it, inside and out, with confidence. Embodying an authentic leadership style sends a powerful statement and commands respect for women. Women are successful because they know their true self, their abilities, and their desire to self-manage their own beliefs, assumptions, and behaviours. The more self-aware women are, the more true to themselves they will be.

This finding is supported in the literature by Riggio (2008) who described leadership self-awareness as an important element of development programmes for women. It is critical that leaders develop an awareness of their own leadership strengths and limitations in order to maximise strengths to their benefit and to overcome their shortcomings. Budworth and Mann (2010) found the necessity to include training in self-promotion in leadership development programmes as confirmed in the data.

The Leadership Continuum Model by Morahan et al. (2011) described the process that most women progress through as they advance to leadership roles with increasingly higher responsibilities. In the four transitional phases, women develop a range of practical leadership and management skills and prepare themselves psychologically for the next phase in life and work. The literature supports the findings that women develop this self-insight as they transition through the various leadership cycles in their careers.

6.4.2.2 Personal branding

Personal branding is the process by which women differentiate themselves by identifying and effectively articulating what makes them unique from their competitors – what makes them stand out from the crowd. Their unique selling proposition allows them to stand out of the crowd and be selected for jobs over other equally qualified women.

Again, women need help with personal branding so this is yet another area in which leadership development programmes can play a role. Essentially, for a woman this is all about learning to better communicate the value that she delivers.

The findings in section 5.6.2.2 are consistent with Laud & Johnson (2012) who identified self-branding as a career advancement strategy that differentiates women

through the creation of a unique personal brand. The definition of personal branding by Labrecque et al. (2011) as promoting an individual's strengths and uniqueness to a target audience was confirmed through the unique brand signature that Respondent 14 developed to stand out from the crowd.

Data also confirms Morton's (2012) finding that authenticity forms the foundation of any personal brand. He commented that it is important to stand out from others, especially when looking to further career development, but he cautioned that a successful personal brand needs to be consistent through all areas of brand management.

6.4.2.3 Skill Building

6.4.2.3.1 Assertiveness, confidence and communication skills

The data gathered in section 5.6.2.3.1 suggests that skills such as assertiveness, confidence and communication are critical to the career development of women. To be successful, a woman must be assertive and confident, but if a woman is aggressive, she is ironically liable to be 'punished' for behaving in ways that are contrary to the feminine stereotype. Being diplomatically assertive doesn't mean backing down. It means women know how to present what they believe in a way that others will hear, understand and hopefully, align with their thinking.

It is not uncommon for women to feel intimidated by the boardroom setting and retreat into a cocoon instead of speaking up and making their presence felt. The data shows that women would like leadership development programmes to expose them to experiences which will enhance such skills. Typically, leadership development programmes foster self-confidence, assertiveness and communication skills through the presentations and dialogue that women have in the closed safe setting.

The finding confirms the work of Beeson and Valerio's (2012) who found that communicating effectively requires poise and polish, as it is a skill that is required to motivate others and articulate a message. Evans (2011) also found that women are considered competent when they exhibit traditionally male-valued leadership behaviours such as assertiveness. O'Neill and O'Reilly III (2011) cautioned that women must simultaneously present themselves as self-confident and dominant while tempering these qualities with displays of communal characteristics to be successful, duly confirmed by the data.

6.4.2.3.2 Listening skills

It is a well-known fact that attentive and purposeful listening is essential to highly effective leadership. Purposeful listening is an advantage that women have over men. However, many women do not recognise the importance of listening, and must make a firm commitment to improve this skill, as benefits include better quality of leadership and improved relationships. Women, whilst acting as role models, should point out just how critical listening is and pro-actively assist their companies to become ‘listening’ companies—companies that listen not only to their clients, but also to their employees. This is a type of transformation best led by women because in this way, listening will make a very important and positive difference to a business.

The data in section 5.6.2.3.2 found that women need to hone their skills of observation and place more effort to listening attentively. Often women get caught up with all the activities that they perform and battle to focus on what is pertinent at the present moment. In a boardroom discussion, poor listening could result in inappropriate arguments, weakening a woman’s credibility.

These findings confirm the assertions by Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) and Bilimoria (2000) who posit that effective listening skills are key skills for success of women and that women enhance boardroom discussions on account of their superior listening skills and enhanced sensitivity towards others.

6.4.2.3.3 Difficult conversations

Section 5.6.2.3.3 found that many of the respondents required focussed training and development for effectively managing the uncomfortable conversations that are necessary with either non-performing subordinates or with their bosses in instances that women felt that they were treated unfairly. Often women shy away from these conversations because it places them in an uncomfortable space, one that society has deemed unpleasant. Such conversations are not easy and understandably something that inspires dread and oftentimes complete avoidance. But not speaking up is not the answer: this robs women of the potential to build strong, quality relationships based on honesty and vulnerability.

Women require tools that can help them overcome these challenges, knowing how to approach such a conversation, knowing how to present facts fairly, and knowing how to

prevent demeaning and accusatory language. Essentially, women want to know how to hold people accountable for the consequences of their behaviour, and particularly in business, when to institute disciplinary procedures.

The findings above confirm that of Eunice et al. (2012) who found that women rate conflict and difficult conversations as key skills that need to be taught on leadership development programmes. As such, simulated workshops were suggested as the tool to facilitate this skill building exercise.

6.4.2.3.4 Negotiation Skills

The findings in section 5.6.2.3.4 show that women often prejudice themselves out of the best deal by their lack of ability to negotiate well. Women fail to negotiate their fullest value, often because they are not fully aware of the facts and do not know how to negotiate hard. Leadership development programmes can help by showing women how to put negotiating skills to work in ways that will advance their careers.

Kulik and Olekalns (2012) confirmed findings that negotiation ability is an obstacle that is faced by women in career advancement. Further confirmation was evident from Kolb (2009) who argued that women can navigate out of this dilemma by negotiating more pro-actively and effectively for wages and opportunities. The findings also confirm literature by Small et al. (2007) who found that women are less likely than men to initiate negotiations, thereby depriving themselves of the opportunity to improve their employment terms.

6.4.3 Leveraging tools for development

6.4.3.1 Stretch assignments

Stretch assignments allow for the rotation of women across functions to ensure they have experience of line assignments. This involves taking risks with women and offering them visible 'stretch' roles for the opportunity to broaden their array of skills through projects out of their comfort zone.

The data in section 5.6.3.1 found that the only way that high-potential women will be able to rise into the executive ranks is through exposure to critical business assignments. Findings also suggest that women need to pro-actively seek out these

opportunities that will allow them to acquire new skills and to collaborate with peers across divisions. These findings confirm what De Pater et al. (2009) and Aryee and Chu (2012) found that suggest that challenging job experiences provide opportunities to learn from unstructured or non-routine situations and the knowledge and skills acquired enhance performance in one's current job. Data also confirmed that women are not always afforded these opportunities, confirming the literature of King et al. (2010).

This study found that caution should be exercised against placing women in roles that are not an appropriate fit for them, citing that they are best placed in roles that accentuate their strengths. The concern was that placing women in a role that she is not intuitively geared for may result in challenges that can cause her some degree of distress. The suggestion was to 'stretch' people by finding ways where they can grow through opportunities that were not previously accessible, and rather transition them in those roles to the benefit the organisation and the individual. This adds to literature on how to select the stretch assignment most suited for a woman.

6.4.3.2 Networking

Women often feel that they need to go at it alone, so to speak, spending hours pondering work-related issues. However, women who managed their own businesses networked with other women because it helped them to share experiences and understand how other women dealt with similar challenges. Likewise, it is important for women to engage in conversations with colleagues so that they understand the culture they are operating within.

The data in section 5.6.3.2 confirmed that networks are vital drivers of career success as positioned by Siebert et al. (2001); Molloy (2005) and Timberlake (2005) who determined that women recognised the power that a solid network can have on their careers. However, women tend to undervalue the importance of building solid relationships, citing family responsibilities as a main reason for not being able to network effectively. Women however do acknowledge the need to work on building strong relationships with other women who can guide them in their careers.

A major finding was that one respondent noted the importance for women to create networks *outside* of their work environment, not just within confirming the literature of Beeson and Valerio (2012) and Harris and Leberman (2012) that networking outside

the organisation provides opportunities to feed their strategic skills. Getting involved in different industry and professional bodies opens opportunities to engage with people from different sectors, gaining knowledge in areas of previous unfamiliarity. This allows women to showcase their abilities and become visible in domains outside of their organisation. This finding confirms the literature on how networking can aid women and should be a component of leadership development programmes.

6.4.3.3 Coaching and mentoring

Coaching and mentorship was seen as a critical component for women in leadership programmes. If women are left on their own to oversee their personal growth and development, there is always the risk that growth may not be as channelled and focussed as it would be if they were under the tutelage of a coach or mentor. Coaches and mentors have been successful in helping women on programmes by guiding them in integrating what they have learned on programmes back into the workplace. Coaching and mentorship is regarded as pivotal in ensuring that women are adequately supported throughout the leadership development process as well as beyond.

Coaches and mentors manage unrealistic expectations of women. Their experience of the real business world helps ground women and through the relationship, they are able to constantly pull women ‘back to reality’ so to speak. Benefits from the relationship can be reciprocal in that coaches and mentors themselves can learn from women. It’s a two way iterative relationship that will evolve and grow with mutual benefit.

What is critical at this stage is that coaches, mentors and women commit and remain committed throughout the process. Women need to acknowledge that this part of the journey is an important one and cannot be taken lightly or overlooked if they are to receive maximum benefits from the leadership development journey.

Finding the right coach and mentor is undeniably important. Respondents felt that the best mentor would be a woman who has been successful at advancing in her career. Such an individual can expedite the learning of current women by guiding and directing them. This is where alumni could play an important role. Alumni understand the pitfalls of advancement for women, and have experienced the pressures and expectations

associated with advancing into senior positions. As such, alumni can give women invaluable advice as to how to tackle some of the challenges they face.

The data in sections 5.6.3.3 and 5.6.3.4 bear testimony to the core attributes of coaching and mentoring proposed by Haggard et al. (2011) which found the benefits of mentoring to include reciprocity, developmental benefits and relational interaction over a period of time. Berg and Karlsen (2012) asserted that the purpose of coaching is for the coach to assist the woman in developing her strengths and achieving both her personal and organisational goals, which data supported. The idea of multiple mentors with different skills in the organisation was suggested by Laud and Johnston (2012) and Siebert et al. (2001) who found that multiple mentors are able to provide distinct insights that are more beneficial than those of a single mentor. This was confirmed in the data; however, it contradicts the work of Molloy (2005) who argued that a single mentor suffices. The differentiator for women is to have access to successful female coaches and mentors who can share their own experiences with others who are travelling the same path. The data also put forward a case for men as mentors, citing their wealth of experience in senior roles as a reason for this as an attractive option and confirming Ely et al (2011) who found that women-only networks remove women from the interactions they need to have with male colleagues. These components confirm literature on the critical components necessary in a leadership development programmes for women.

6.4.3.4 Access to role models

For the most part, the extent to which successful women were actively involved as role models to aspiring women is nowhere near the levels that are required. What the research highlighted was that organisational leadership development programmes did not have a clear plan in terms of the extent to which this pivotal resource could be leveraged. The findings of the study carried out by Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) was confirmed in the data in section 5.6.3.5 which reiterated that there appeared to be only limited commitment from high-achieving women to develop and maintain an advisory relationship. Women felt that this valuable resource had not been fully utilised. Baumgartner and Schneider (2010) and Bonebright et al. (2012) commented on the importance of learning from senior women in the organisation and the benefits associated with it. This was confirmed by the participants through the data gathered.

The research suggests the ‘alumni’ relationship should begin long before women are considered for senior roles. At the inception of the leadership development programme or when the woman is initially flagged as talent, she should be contracted and coached throughout the programme to create a sense of belonging and association. Alumni are familiar with the hurdles that women face, having walked that path themselves, and are a key resource to maintain a collaborative relationship. They can ideally act as the bridge between the programme and businesses.

Several women expressed the need for senior women in their organisations to take up this role; however, many respondents felt that senior women were in many instances threatened by the aspiring women and hence chose to not act as role models. It was suggested by Beeson and Valerio and confirmed in this study that programme designers should seek out female role models from other organisations, as they will not be considered direct competition. This provides insight into how leadership development programmes can attempt to build in the role model aspect whilst considering potential sensitivities around it.

6.4.3.5 Applied learning projects

The strongest critiques of leadership development programmes are that it appears to be far too technical and businesses are not seeing women applying what they have learned on the programme back to the workplace. Programme designers, on the other hand, feel justified in their teaching methods and have quoted several instances where they aim to give women practical and first-hand experience of the subject being taught. Some of these practices include unpacking real-life case studies, inviting industry experts and practitioners to present to classes, and planning field trips which expose students to the topic being presented in a real-world way.

What is clear from the discussions with programme developers and businesses in section 5.6.3.6 is that there is a ‘disconnect’ between the two parties. For as long as women are unable or do not apply what they have learned, a business will not reap any benefits. It is critical, then, to consider what is lacking that could potentially bring the two parties together given that they have a common goal.

This research confirms the views of Lysø et al. (2011) who argued that for action learning projects to be effective in practice, organisations must have decisive reasons for sending managers on management development courses, ensuring that such

managers have the support of their direct superior, and facilitating the participation of other members of the organisation in the action learning projects. Gosling and Mintzberg (2006) suggests that businesses should provide more opportunities for women to apply their learning and to better share, relate and demonstrate what they have learned. This research adds to literature by indicating that there is a need for leadership development programmes to encompass an applied learning project.

6.4.3.6 Feedback

Arguably, section 5.6.3.7 highlights another extremely important finding in terms of development i.e. feedback. Subject matter experts felt that women could learn a great deal from the giving and receiving of feedback, a notion which supported Beeson and Valerio's (2012) finding that constructive feedback between women and their managers would help identify the shortfalls and address the needs for advancement. Frequent and transparent feedback would be essential in highlighting developmental areas for women.

Riggio's (2008) stance that constructive criticism should be accepted graciously for positive change to occur was reiterated by the data. Respondents confirmed that feedback is reciprocal and neither party should be blamed for poor feedback.

The research suggests that programmes should contain a focus on feedback, not only so that the respondents engage in continuous and frequent feedback whilst on the programme, but so that they comfortably begin seeking such feedback from colleagues and sub-ordinates in their respective organisations, perhaps through tools such as 360 degree feedback.

Data confirmed Mattis (2001) revelation that there is reluctance on the part of male managers to have meaningful and strategic career management conversations with women. It is suggested that women be taught to ensure that the feedback loop is functioning effectively, to the benefit of their development. Feedback is thus a fundamental element in the make-up of a women's development programme.

6.4.4 Conclusion

Women require a repertoire of skills that are necessary for them to function at senior levels. Skills are required to overcome challenges that stand in the way of

advancement. A deeper personal introspection and orientation is necessary in the case of women as they need to be fully comfortable in their own skins in order to lead others. Finally, unique tools are necessary for women to confront their developmental areas and emerge as business leaders. All of these components are necessary to groom women effectively for senior roles. Data presented in this question confirmed and added to literature on the components necessary for leadership development programmes to aid women's advancement.

6.5 Research question 4: How can organisations interact and support women's development and advancement?

Research question 4 sought to discover the degree of organisational commitment necessary for women's leadership development to be a credible tool of advancement.

6.5.1 Organisational culture

6.5.1.1 Flexibility

The appreciation for flexibility was identified in acknowledgement of the responsibility that women bear when it comes to rearing children. Often women are presented with a dichotomous choice: either work a reduced portfolio or opt out to care for their families. The data gathered confirms the argument of Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) who found that organisations do not provide opportunities for women to excel in their dual roles as leaders and mothers. The data in section 5.7.1.1 found that some organisations are adequately supporting women while others are not doing enough to support the agenda of women.

Women respondents felt that their organisations needed to provide an enabling environment to allow them space for adequate development and advancement. This was confirmed by Eagly and Carli (2007) who suggested that companies adopt family-friendly resource practices to support women as mother while seeing that they retain their jobs.

In order for this to happen, a contemporary mindset shift is necessary in traditional organisations. Organisational recruitment and retention processes *must* be redesigned to accommodate women and organisations *must* demonstrate that they are committed

to the advancement of women by creating a non-restrictive and inclusive culture. Data confirmed the finding by O'Neil et al. (2011) that in order for women's networks to be successful it must be embedded in a culture that supports gender diversity.

The views were that women are penalised for making use of flexi-time and are regarded as uncommitted to their jobs confirming Rogier and Padgett's (2004) view that even those women who are undoubtedly committed to their careers may be perceived as less committed if they take advantage of flexible work arrangements and work-family policies.

Respondent 7 explained about the culture of her work environment, "I have seen the culture around here, and the culture isn't that you go into a half-day job, and also three... two-thirds day".

6.5.1.1.1 Role of technology

The role that technology plays is important in creating the desired flexibility that women require from organisations. Because of the various roles that women juggle, it is often not feasible that women be office-bound for the completion of all assigned tasks. However, with the advancement in technology, women are now able to work remotely and possibly even more productively. It remains, then, that companies evaluate these changing trends as a means opening possibilities and facilitating flexibility for women.

Respondent 6 agreed: "I think the thing that companies need to realise, with technology as it is now, and with social media being something that we can actually use to build our companies and our brands. It changes the relationship of people, and how they interact with the company. So this, for me, is an important thing that companies need to understand what changing trends are".

Leadership development programme coordinators need to sensitise organisational leaders to these changing trends, especially if they are serious about integrating women into senior positions in their business. This adds to literature on how leadership development programmes for women can be designed successfully.

6.5.1.2 Generational differences

Younger men and women are able to digest information much faster whilst multi-tasking. Their aim is to get the job done in the quickest manner possible. They do not

see their commitment to an organisation spanning over years, as their predecessors did, as they are highly educated and mobile and want career advancement much more quickly than their older colleagues. Organisations should leverage this younger generational thinking style and offer their young aspirant women opportunities to work on projects that accentuate their youthful and vibrant style rather than stifling it. To gain the most value, dynamic teams must provide these women with a safety net while also giving them sufficient room to develop and grow.

As respondent 6 remarked, “they come with some level of knowledge, and then you have to allow them to fly. They can make mistakes but that’s just part of the territory”.

Data found that organisations must change their perceptions of advancement becoming an option only after a woman has climbed the traditional ladder and gained sufficient experience as confirmed in the literature by Hoobler et al. (2011). A mindset shift is necessary to leverage off the younger generation who see advancement through a different lens. Organisations will stand to benefit in that they are creating younger more vibrant leaders who will be able to appeal to the younger target markets.

These generational differences must be considered in the development of leadership programmes, specifically for women. Organisational change is necessary to ensure that these current trends are integrated into the programme. This finding adds to literature on how organisations can offer support for the development and advancement of women.

6.5.2 CEO and executive management support and sponsorship

Another key element that section 5.7.2 found for enhancing the success of programmes concerned the extent to which executives and line managers were actively involved in these programmes. The response of numerous respondents was that without this element in place, the impact of any programme would be significantly reduced. The most successful programmes were ones in which executives and managers committed to setting the strategic direction and purpose of the programme, and spent sufficient time themselves listening to and guiding attendees.

This finding is consistent with the writings of Conger and Xin (2000) who found that the objectives of CEOs and executives with respect to programmes should be to raise

awareness and facilitate organisational change to achieve the strategic objective that is to build a leadership talent pool of strong women.

Leadership development programmes, given their substantial monetary and time costs, are no exception, and the commitment and involvement of executives and managers was necessary to ensure that the programme had the desired impact on business and the woman. By delineating the strategic challenges of the business to delegates, executives and managers give women pertinent direction in terms of what is required to take the business forward. The onus is then on women to use the skills they learned, to research and investigate the challenges, and to develop recommendations for the business to implement. Executives would then need to commit time to listening and further unpacking the results. Even if women are not able to develop completely new solutions, they still can confirm the validity of existing thinking which could be quite useful. An important point to note, in this regard, is the expectations of business. Women are learning and learning is a process, and therefore these women cannot be expected to deliver on projects or challenges which are outside their control or mandate as they learn.

CEO and upper management involvement also has the effect of communicating, either directly or indirectly, that the woman and her development is a priority of the organisation. This data confirms the findings of O'Neil et al. (2011) that found that a women's network will only be successful if senior leadership demonstrates the competitive advantage that it brings and promotes it for the advantage that it will have on the bottom line.

This is a powerful motivational stance, even if the woman leaves the organisation, as the message that is being disseminated is that the development of the company's people is a priority and that the executives are willing to listen to their employees. If the executives and managers are more involved throughout the development process and play a sponsoring role, this will go a long way in bridging the gap between women and the business. Data gathered confirmed the finding of Baruch (2009) who suggested that organisations serious about investing in their people sponsor students on leadership development programmes irrespective of whether the student leaves the company on completion of her studies. Data also confirmed Siebert et al. (2001) and Kraimer et al. (2011) who reported that executive sponsorship improves the likelihood of women returning on their investment to the benefit of both the company and themselves. Data confirmed findings by Berggren and Söderlund (2011) that career

advancement for women is possible when they are visible through strong organisational sponsorship.

6.5.3 Investment in formal training

Organisations that seriously support the development of women implement formal training programmes to advance their women, as per section 5.7.3. There are mandatory quotas of women who are trained in the areas specific to the needs of women, and these women are then fast-tracked through the ranks of the organisation. Tracking and monitoring are important in analysing trends, as section 5.7.3.1 confirmed. Strategic alignment to company targets must be reported at all levels of executive management with tools such as scorecards. The issues facing the advancement of women must be reported to the highest committees in the organisation and in statutory financial reports for this information to be significantly entrenched in the organisation.

Section 5.7.3.2 found that feedback on the efficacy of formal training programmes must be presented to the executives of the company in order for there to be a continuous improvement and re-alignment of the programmes to business objectives.

The findings above confirm Evans (2011) who stated that organisations that chose to remain competitive do so by prioritising programmes that support the development of women. This study confirmed the views of Beeson and Valerio (2012) who found that companies that do not show commitment to developing women executives will suffer a talent shortage as high-potential women leave to take up other opportunities.

Data confirmed the need to track and monitor training in order to analyse trends and manage target objectives. This confirmed the literature by Blume et al. (2010) who found that organisations are unaware of the true yield of training expenditures and therefore cannot link training to improved employee performance when back at work.

6.5.4 Women only training programmes

The data in section 5.7.4 revealed that several respondents felt that having a woman-only programme created a safe space where women could be transparent and honest, a space where they could be vulnerable about their issues and their developmental needs as they could be discussed in a commonly shared space.

This supported the literature by Debebe (2011), Clarke (2011) and Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) who found that the women-only groups put participants at ease for sharing perspectives and hence the discussion was open and effective. Women felt safe and mutually supported as they learned from other women and shared experiences.

6.5.5 Conclusion

The commitment that is required from organisations serious about developing and advancing their women into senior positions includes, first and foremost, commitment to a flexible organisational culture that is inclusive and non-restrictive to women. Secondly, a solid commitment is required from the highest level of executives in the organisation to drive development, support and sponsor women in their journey to success. Lastly, a substantial investment is necessary for the development and roll-out of formal training for women, with targets and measurements against those targets reported to executive committees, as importantly as financial results and organisational strategy. The data gathered with respect to how organisations can better support women's development programmes confirms and adds to literature.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

While legislation is important in updating and upgrading organisational practices, people's attitudes play a much stronger role in either promoting or impeding women's career advancement. Legislation as well as attitudinal changes may both be critical in promoting women career advancement strategies in South Africa. This implies that for women's advancement programs to be effective in South Africa, gender, along with population-specific, culturally-based attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours must be considered in interpersonal and organisational strategies.

The findings of the study also suggest that without the support of senior management in an organisation, an equal opportunity programme is unlikely to be successful. All human resource management policies must have top-level commitment from within the organisation if they are to be effective. Managers and supervisors at *all* levels within an organisation must also make this commitment. Thus, there may be need to develop programmes to sensitise top-level human resource professionals as well as the public at large about the significance of the role played by both men and women in economic development.

7.1 The case for leadership development programmes

In order for organisations to leverage their female talent, leadership development programmes *must* be recognised as a tool that when used effectively, can provide a springboard for women to jump into top management teams. Critically, organisations should look to creating a leadership environment where all employees can grow their leadership skills. This will result in more innovative, initiative-taking and outcome-focussed organisations. It is a prerequisite, then, that line managers gain better awareness and appreciation of their female talent by accelerating the careers of those women that are considered talented.

To gain momentum, organisations should create leadership development programmes that will allow organisations to fast-track women. Key to the success of this initiative is that sponsorship must reside with the highest level within the organisation. Not only must the board and CEO drive the project, but the project must form part of the

strategic direction of the company (i.e. in the direction of developing of women leaders). In order for this initiative to be successful, new and innovative ideas around female leadership development are necessary.

7.2 Program design

The organisation should seek to partner with a service provider that is a market leader in female leadership development and has a shared vision with the company in this regard. The programme must have strong organisational influence and address organisational needs, so that organisation's goals are achieved. Caution should be exercised when accepting a one-size-fits-all type of programme, as this could be the type of programme that does not ascribe to the company's vision; consequently, a more customised solution is preferred. Essentially, it's to be a partnership: the external partner must bring the theoretical backing, facilitation and best-practice knowledge to the relationship whilst senior managers from the company become intimately involved and act as subject matter experts on strategic issues pertaining to the company.

The leadership development programme is a journey, not a once-off training course. The impact of the programme is to be felt at an environmental, organisational and individual level. The delegates on the programme should impart their newly acquired knowledge back to their teams, line managers and senior executives within the organisation. The return on investment will then permeate throughout the organisation.

The biggest considerations when designing and developing such initiatives are the issues identified that prevent women from aspiring to senior levels in the organisation. Why is it that woman opt-out either before or whilst in the top jobs? Or, why do they so often not even qualify for these roles? If a leadership development programme is to build a pool of talented female leaders, then the focus must include long-term career plans, a wide scope of developmental objectives, and address aspects of organisational culture that restrict career progress (i.e. lack of flexibility necessary to maintain a healthy work/life balance).

The delegates that are chosen to participate on this programme must be chosen for their leadership potential and achievements and must be nominated by their line managers via a robust selection process.

Concerns that are raised when executing a programme of such nature include the controversy surrounding the notion of a women-only group, resulting in the project being tainted as one of 'political correctness'. Furthermore, employees who are not nominated to this programme may be resentful of those that are, given that it will provide face-time with the company's top executives.

The leadership development programme would span over a year, with a cohort of women that is not too large to instruct thoroughly and adequately. Modules in the programme must include wide developmental objectives and take into account leadership skills at a personal level, the leadership of others, and the leadership of an organisation. Mentoring and coaching would be essential to the make-up of the programme, as well as stretch assignments. To ensure that the strategic issues facing the organisation are addressed, mentors should include company executives who understand the intricacies of the organisation and are able to impart this knowledge. Coaches, on the other hand, should be external to the company, thereby assuring that independence and objectivity is maintained. Given that the delegates on this programme are the best female talent that the company has, an applied learning programme must be integrated into the programme to extract the learning from participants for the benefit of the business. Stretch assignments in the form of genuine and existing business problems should challenge the participants, perhaps to be solved in teams. These issues must be sponsored and overseen by a member of the company's executive management team. Then, the participants must be given the opportunity to present the solution to the executive team.

The programme content must range from discussion of business strategy, to introspective sessions which examine purpose of life, purpose of work, and personal leadership style. An interactive session with a strong experiential element is also a key component on the design. Resilience-building and wellness are also key themes to be unpacked in such an initiative given that the women are frequently burdened with issues of work/life balance. Women need to be exposed to situations that extricate them from their comfort zones, where they are restricted by organisational boundaries and roles. Tools to cope with these challenges must be shared so that the performance of the woman and the organisation do not suffer.

The mentoring relationship between the executives and the women is a complementary relationship. The organisation's executives get to know and work with the participants

and are exposed to talent from all areas within the organisation whilst allowing for 'reverse mentoring' to take place, as executives are exposed to the views of women pertaining to the challenges of being a female leader within the organisation.

7.3 Programme outcomes

A successful programme will develop a cohort of 'change agents' within the organisation who will continue to grow and shape the organisation. These women represent a cohesive pipeline of future leaders who will be equipped with the tools required to perform effectively in the right organisational culture. The programme will aid in changing the culture of organisations based, as mentioned, on the level of sponsorship from the executive team. Executive team commitment will provide the momentum needed to break down organisational barriers and drive change.

A strong network of highly talented and skilled women will result from this dedicated focus on empowering women. Women will not only have a safe space in which to share their experiences, challenges and successes but will have the opportunity to tap into wider networks through relationships with fellow participants.

The return on investment for the executive who has invested heavily in this programme will see the fruits of time, money and energy when the projects that he had sponsored are accepted by his team and implemented within the organisation. The return to the participant is a deeper understanding of herself as a leader, deeper insight into organisational practices, and deeper involvement with organisations leadership and their strategic intent for the company. Armed with better insights, confidence and business knowledge, these women will positively navigate the challenges on both personal and professional levels and fast-track themselves through the organisation into senior leadership roles.

7.4 Facilitating on-ramping

So what then of the women who choose to off-ramp, perhaps even temporarily, for various reasons? How can the organisation aid in bringing back successful women, retaining them, and even fast-tracking them through the organisation?

Training programmes must be designed to facilitate the transition back into the workforce for those women who choose to take an off-ramp in their careers. With the

assistance of executive guidance and coaching, an organisation can use a development programme to regain talented women who are seeking to restart their careers after a prolonged absence.

Such training programmes must provide on-rampers the opportunity to sharpen their skills and re-acclimatise to a work environment that most likely is quite different to that of her previous employment. The women who return are exposed to new projects, new experience, an awareness of new firm life and new organisational culture. This will allay any concerns and fears that on-rampers might have around their ability to take on a new area of expertise and eliminate the assumption that they were unable to perform well at their jobs and hence the 'off-ramping'. In providing these individuals with an opportunity to strengthen skills and demonstrate capabilities and enhance confidence, such a programme could offer a window into the responsibilities and demands that may come with new roles in contemporary organisations.

Organisations are likely apprehensive about hiring these women, questioning their commitment given that they have off-ramped before, and wondering if these women have the requisite technical abilities as they have been 'out of the game' for so long. Managers are thus afforded the opportunity to assess whether they can help someone 'on-ramp', and on-rampers are given the chance to make an informed decision as to whether or not they can really make that transition back into the workforce. It's a win-win consideration.

Training through leadership development programmes on topics such as emotional intelligence, the art of self-promotion, and curriculum vitae writing is vital. Networking opportunities are built into the programme, with participants pairing up with mentors from within organisations. The aim is to build the support structure that helps the participants create more opportunities, navigate the firm and add value to their team.

7.5 Recommendations to organisations

7.5.1 Development of a model

A holistic model informed by the data collected from senior women and subject matter experts has emerged through the process of this research. The model positions women's leadership development programmes within the organisational context in which women function. It further identifies core components that need to be present in

the design of these programmes for them to address the unique developmental requirement of women into senior positions.

Figure 3: Designing & Positioning Women’s Leadership Development Programmes to achieve Advancement



7.5.1.1 Organisational context

Data gathered for research question 4 formed the basis for identifying the organisational factors necessary for women's developmental programmes to be successful.

7.5.1.1.1 Strategy

It is critical for an organisation to identify and highly prioritise women's advancement on the strategic agenda. Data from section 5.7.3 supported this strongly and literature from Hofmeyer & Mzobe (2012) reinforced that the lack of strategy from businesses was one of the main reasons for women not advancing in their careers. Conger and Xin (2000) commented on the successful companies that have embraced executive education as a tool to align their organisations to strategic goals.

7.5.1.1.2 CEO and senior executives commitment

Implementing such a programme is a major change event for the organisation and requires full and visible commitment from the CEO and senior leaders in the organisation. Data gathered in section 5.7.2 supports the statement that the development and promotion of women to senior levels can *only* be successful with the support of the senior executives of the company. Section 5.5.2.1 highlighted that the failure of women's development programmes is often related to the CEO and senior management not committing to changing the culture of the organisation and not appreciating the benefits of employing women in their managerial teams.

7.5.1.1.3 Enablers

The data then revealed that in order for gender diversity to become mainstream within an organisation, certain enablers are required from the organisation.

7.5.1.1.3.1 Gender diversity indicators and measures

The CEO and executive management team's visible commitment and ability to track and monitor indicators of progress on gender-diversity programmes were found to be the most important drivers for increasing the number of women in senior positions. The

data in section 5.7.3.1 confirmed this. The indicators and measures are a diagnostic tool used to perform a gap-analysis to identify the priority actions and measure progress (i.e. the ratio of women promoted as a percentage of those promotable). These indicators help to maintain positive momentum around gender-diversity programmes.

7.5.1.1.3.2 HR processes and policies

The data revealed that in order for companies to obtain gender-diversity, policies and processes must be in place to drive this priority. This was supported by Beeson and Valerio (2012) who asserted that organisations should amend their attraction and retention practices so that they are able to retain future women leaders. However, a company's recruitment, evaluation and promotion systems should not be biased toward women and should be linked to the overall strategy of the company.

7.5.1.1.3.3 Inclusive organisational culture

The data in section 5.7.1 found that women required working conditions that allow mobility and encourage work/life balance. Contemporary, progressive working conditions allow for remote work, flexi-time, and tailored working hours to achieve a productive work/life balance. The data found that the advancement of technology also supports women in their quest for work/life balance. It is also a fact that women's careers often include necessary breaks, during which an organisation can offer support to women so as to limit any negative impact that this will have on either salary and job progression. Organisations could further address the most critical needs of women by providing imperative services such as child care, domestic and laundry services.

7.5.1.2 Women's leadership development programmes

For programmes to be effective, they must address the ingrained stereotypes of the past, allow women to examine themselves and their leadership styles, use the available developmental tools to help them become aware of their potential and their value, and teach women how to manage careers in a heavily male-dominated environment. Further to this is the need for women to consider her impact at a broader environmental level.

7.5.1.3 Environmental context

The data gathered for research question 2 provided insight into the necessity for women's leadership development programmes to be grounded within the present global and country context. This ensures that the programme takes into account current global and economic trends and impacts not only the woman and her respective organisation, but at broader societal and regulatory environment. The data in section 5.5.1 found that the 'women agenda' is still not attainable as a result of society's traditional and stereotypical views of women that 'box' women into non-managerial roles.

The second component was that women's leadership development programmes are not prioritised with other strategic imperatives for the country. The passing of legislation regarding gender diversity seeking to correct the imbalance of men and women in senior business positions is permeating through all economies of the world. The model suggests that once women have successfully navigated their careers and attained senior roles they have a responsibility to mentor, socially and organisationally, in ways that can hopefully effect the change in mindset necessary to see more women advance into senior roles. It is for the reasons stated above that women's leadership development programmes must be designed by taking into account the wider macro-environmental picture.

7.5.1.3.1 Addressing the past

Women need help in overcoming the barriers they encounter en route to the top positions. Programmes must identify tools and techniques that women can apply to overcome the numerous challenges they experience. Data in section 5.6.1 explained the barriers and identified the need for programmes to provide tools to overcome them. There was a strong need, for example, for programmes to instruct women how to develop resilience in their developmental phases.

7.5.1.3.2 Addressing the self

The data in section 5.6.2 identified that during the journey of development, women should reflect on their personal areas of development and uncover and embrace their authentic leadership style. Only once a woman is comfortable with herself can she

lead others effectively and advance in her career. The data also indicated the need for a woman to develop a personal brand that allows her to stand out in the crowd and be noticed, giving her an employment edge. This phase also involves the identification of skills that need developing to be effective as a leader.

7.5.1.3.3 Leveraging the development tools

The data in section 5.6.3 identified several tools that should be available to women to develop the necessary competence required for senior roles.

Stretch assignments provide women with the opportunity to broaden their array of skills through projects outside of their normal comfort zone.

Networks increase women's awareness of the importance of contacts and communication for career advancement whilst also raising the profile of women in the organisation. This is an essential step to help women identify with role models within an organisation.

Coaching and mentoring help women overcome obstacles and bring about the personal change necessary to achieve employment goals.

Applied learning projects help women apply what they have learned on the programme back to the workplace. Lysø et al. (2011) suggested that management learning is more likely to have an organisational impact if action learning projects are collaborative. Konkola et al. (2007) refers to this as 'developmental transfer' and suggests establishing a team of teachers, students and practitioners to address challenges faced by business. The team would benefit from the theoretic and practical experience of the group and developmental transfer would take place. Schilling and Klamma (2010) made a similar suggestion that projects should occur at participating business and that these projects should include collaboration between students and company experts. They saw group coaching in these projects as a vital part of the reflection and suggested that lecturers should be more involved in project work.

Constructive feedback between women and their managers helps identify shortfalls and considers how shortfalls need to be addressed and rectified for advancement. As suggested by Gosling and Mintzberg (2006), reflection is also a critical component for women to link programmes and work. They suggested that women need to take

sufficient time to digest what they have learned and consider how it can be applied to their work. By taking time to reflect, developmental progress is enhanced.

All of these elements combined will ensure that the pool of female talent within organisations grows as more and more talented women will be available and prepared for senior positions.

7.6 Recommendations for future research

The recommendations for future research include:

A longitudinal study where the impact of leadership development programmes is assessed as a core contributor to women's advancement.

A qualitative study that statistically tests the core elements necessary in a designing a women's leadership development programme.

A quantitative study that makes use of a survey to diagnose the status of women's development in organisations.

A study that investigates how to build leadership development programmes for men and women allowing them to co-exist in a new model of leadership.

7.7 Conclusion

This research concludes that career advancement via leadership development programmes can be achieved through a combination of organisational support and enablement as well as the desire of women to develop and advance on an individual level through the challenging work, the supplemental programming, and the camaraderie that makes the above mentioned programmes beneficial for the woman and organisations who are intentional about fast-tracking their female talent.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Introduction

1.1. I am Prisha Surajlall. GIBS MBA research.

1.2. Purpose of study – to gain in depth understanding of the how training programmes can be enhanced to support the development of women for senior leadership roles.

1.3. Explain how data from the interview data will be used. Reiterate that confidentiality of all interview data will be maintained and request consent to proceed with the interview and data usage.

1.4. Explain process of data collection and analysis.

1.5. Explain how many other respondents have been interviewed.

2. Demographic Information

2.1. Name.

2.2. Life stage info – Age, marital status, children and ages.

2.3. Gender.

2.4. Race.

2.5. Career history.

2.6. Academic qualification.

3. Open ended questions

3.1. Can you detail your career progression?

3.2. What is your experience of training and development programmes?

3.3. What are your expectations from training programmes?

- 3.4. How has your attendance on executive training and development programmes equipped you to take on a more senior role?
- 3.5. Did you experience fast tracking as a result of your attendance on an executive training programme? Do you think you were fully developed?
- 3.6. What were the positive aspects from your training and development programme that made the difference?
- 3.7. What are the current shortcomings of training programmes in respect of key skills required by women?
- 3.8. How are training programmes and executive leadership programmes currently structured to take into account the training needs of women?
- 3.9. In your opinion, what is required from development programmes to develop a woman on a holistic level?
- 3.10. How does your organisation support women in their careers?
- 3.11. What other insights would you like to share with me regarding the development of women?
4. Closing comments
 - 4.1. Thank respondent for his time and the willingness to participate in the research.
 - 4.2. Follow up with an e-mail to thank respondent.
 - 4.3. Create space for further sharing if need be.
5. Notes – Post the interview
 - 5.1. Body language (arms folded; maintains eye contact; sits back/forward; turns away, etc).
 - 5.2. Language used (victim; swearing; etc).
 - 5.3. Emotional state (nervous; aggressive; etc).
 - 5.4. General impression.

Interview guide and questionnaire adapted from Clark (2006b)