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HOW WOMEN PRINCIPALS NEGOTIATE SCHOOL CULTURE

by

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DECLARATION

STUDENT NUMBER: 25383214

I, Mapula Rebecca Mabusela, hereby certify that this study, entitled “How women principals negotiate school culture”, a case study of three women, is the result of my own work. I have acknowledged all the literary work that I have used.

Signature: ……. Date: …….....

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my mother, who is my key mentor, and who, even though she is not well-read, for circumstances forced her to leave school after she passed the then Standard Six to seek employment at that tender age, had impressed on us, her children, the importance of education and had rallied us, through hardships, to stand on our feet, academically.

Thank you, Ma, you are a shining star. God bless you. You gave us a legacy that we will always cherish, and we promise to pass it on from generation to generation.

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Lastly, I wish to extend my appreciation to the three wonderful women principals who voluntarily agreed to participate in my research study. I greatly respect and thank you for your professionalism. May God bless you and your families.

ABSTRACT

HOW DO WOMEN PRINCIPALS NEGOTIATE SCHOOL CULTURE?

by

Mapula R. Mabusela

School leadership remains a male-dominated position in many schools. This is largely the reason why few women, who happen to be principals, find it difficult to command respect as core partners within the educational arena, and, they, therefore, need to negotiate school culture.

This research intends to explore how women principals negotiate school culture in the rural schools of the North-West Province of South Africa. The purpose is to understand how women handle this leadership role as they handle the business of the day in a school setting.

The research took the form of a case study to provide detailed descriptive information of each participant. The case study used semi-structured interviews, observation and document analysis to collect data. I purposefully selected three women principals to participate in this research. Selection was made from the three categories of schools: primary school, middle school and high school. The multiple setting was deliberate, in order to explore the differences and commonalities that might occur amongst the women principals in their leadership role.

A consent form covering all the ethical issues of voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity was sent to the participants.

The use of qualitative research methods helped me to understand how women, as leaders, navigate the way things are done, given the demands of school-based management in the midst of adversity, discrimination, marginalisation and lack of support.

The study is based on the data drawn from two semi-structured interviews of one hour each, a one-day shadowing session and the analysis of one artefact of each woman.

The study is significant in that the findings might add to the growing body of information about women in leadership.

Dominant concepts that emerged from the study:

Participative leadership
Open communication
Collaborative decision-making
Cooperative governance
Lack of resources
Challenges experienced
Need for support structures

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATIONS

SC	School culture
SBM	School Based Management
SASA	South African Schools Act
SMT	School Management Team
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SGB	School Governing Body
APO	Area Project Office
MAPO	Mabopane Area Project Office
NW	North West
HOD	Head of Department

CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Education in South Africa has undergone a dramatic change since 1994. The principal's task has also changed significantly since then. Decision making is no longer solely dependent on the principal. Legislation has put up structures to govern schools (Grant, 2006:513). These structures are: a school governing body (SGB), a school management team (SMT) and a representative council of learners (RCL), which implies that the principal is not the sole decision maker nor can he or she act in an autocratic manner. The principal, therefore, has to consult with all these stakeholders to reach an agreement on the decisions taken regarding the management and governance matters of the school.

The concept of a school-based management (SBM) system, which has spread all over the world, has put new demands on the role of the modern-day school principal (Botha, 2004; Mcinerney, 2003). SBM is a collaborative approach to a more effective decision-making model, a way of redesigning decision-making processes, a process that delegates much decision-making power to the local school building or site level (Herman and Herman, 1998:6). Mcinerney (2003:58) adds that it is about gaining the freedom to make decisions at the grass-root level for parents, teachers, and administrators alike, and promises greater participation, empowerment and local control. With the increasing autonomy brought about by the SBM system, the modern-day principal is expected to negotiate with other stakeholders, the school culture, for effective teaching and learning.

Due to the increasing demands on the principals' work, one wonders if the gender of the principal is a determining factor in the successful execution of the complexities of this role. Principalship is a male-dominated field, locally and

worldwide (Stelter, 2002:89). Women have historically been excluded from leadership positions and continue to be dramatically underrepresented (Trigg, 2006:22). Women principals are an exception rather that the rule and they face yet another struggle to have their ways of working accepted (Ozga, 1993:3). It is thus difficult for women principals to command respect as core partners.

Women play a highly valuable role in society and their role should be studied through their own experiences. This can be achieved through the feminist approach that validates personal experience and is theoretically informed by an understanding of marginality, given women's history of social and cultural subordination (Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan, 2000:32). The deconstruction and analysis of women's own socially constructed realities and multiple identities can help them to understand their struggles and location in society and empower them to reposition and rename their contributions to personal and public worlds (Gardiner *et al.*, 2000:31). Women leadership can transform the face of educational leadership for both leaders and subordinates (Gardiner *et al.*, 2000:185).

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The political change, including the broad legal framework encompassing women's rights entrenched in the Constitution of South Africa, has failed to bring much expected change in most educational institutions, where men still hold the majority of leadership positions. Historically, women have been oppressed, marginalised and excluded from meaningful participation in social, cultural, economic and political leadership roles (Simelane, 2005:1). This is solely due to the stereotypes that men and the society have about women, and this, in turn, is largely the reason why few women who happen to be principals find it difficult to command respect as core partners within the educational arena, and they, therefore, need to negotiate the way things should be done at their institutions, the culture of the school.

Culture is a mix of values, beliefs, assumptions, meanings and expectations that members of a group hold in common and guides their behaviour and decision-making (Hodge and Anthony, 1991:473). It can be seen and felt through observation of ceremonies, rituals, symbols, slogans, language, myths, stories and even the physical environment that forms the core identity of an organisation (Hodge and Anthony 1991:449; Rooney 2005:86). School culture is a context in which everything else takes place: “the way things are done around here,” (Rooney 2005:86). It is the “glue” that holds everyone together (Stoll 1999: 34). It unifies and provides meaning and direction for school members in the form of artefacts and behavioural norms (Prosser 1999:14).

The South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA) promotes a shift from centralised control and decision making to a school-based system of management (Grant, 2006:12). Leadership is a critical issue in the transformation of South African schools and a different understanding of leadership is needed, a shift from leadership as headship to a distributed form of leadership (Grant, 2006:512). Women leadership is critical in the transformation of South African schools, and, given the inequalities that remain pervasive in the school system, coupled with the range of new policies that require radical change in every one of its systems, schools can no longer be led by lone figures at the top of the hierarchy (Grant, 2006:514). The education system needs to tap the potential of women as leaders to meet present challenges. Women, at this moment in time, bring new perspectives and values that can revitalise and transform debates and options in the globe, which is threatened by self-destruction based on past predominantly male leadership (Trigg, 2006:26).

The majority of South African women live in poor rural areas (Statistics, South Africa, census 2001). These are the women who are looked down upon and although they are undermined, they have as much potential as their male counterparts to contribute to the country, economically, socially, politically and educationally. It is important to explore the constraints and opportunities that

women principals are exposed to in their efforts to get an equal stake in the South African education system. Those who prevented women from making a meaningful contribution to the total development of society had denied the world at large an enormous opportunity.

This is an effort to learn how women manage to navigate their way, how business is done at their various institutions in the midst of adversity, discrimination, marginalisation and lack of support. In this research project, I will examine the ways women, as school leaders, struggle to influence stakeholders on the way things are done, and on creating a cohesive environment that is conducive to teaching and learning.

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study is important in that it seeks to explore and understand how women principals negotiate school culture in this era of SBM systems, which requires the involvement of parents, teachers and principals in decision-making processes at local school sites for effective learning and teaching to take place (Herman and Herman, 1998:6). The purpose is to explore how women navigate the manner of doing things, given the demand brought about by SBM, in the midst of adversity, discrimination, marginalisation and lack of support.

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To investigate the factors that influence women principals in their efforts to negotiate school culture.
- To explore the leadership styles women principals display as they negotiate school culture.
- To understand the barriers that women principals experience in their endeavours to negotiate school culture.
- To investigate the possibilities of support systems that women principals need in order to be successful as they negotiate school culture.

This research builds on previous studies, which examined women's experience in educational leadership (Shakeshaft 1989; Ozga, 1993; Hall, 1996; Phendla, 2000; Doherty, 2002; Varley, 2004). These women's accounts, individually and collectively, will contribute to the emerging literature base, which seeks to understand how women leaders actually think and work (Doherty, 2002:5). The study emphasises the experience of women and the qualitative method to be used, will provide deep data that is scarce in much of the educational leadership literature (Heck and Hallinger, 1999) (cited in Doherty, 2002:6).

The findings of this research may have relevance for other principals, both male and female, and possibly other practitioners. It will also provoke further research regarding principals in different settings and contexts. The results of this study will also add to the growing body of information about women in leadership.

1.4 ASSUMPTIONS

This study is based on the assumption that women are undermined because of their gender and that women have the same potential as men in leadership positions.

Transformation in relation to the participation of women in leadership positions is slow in rural areas due to their marginalisation. My observation as a woman is that certain posts, such as deputy principals, principals of secondary schools and circuit managers, are not destined for women. This is due to the general perception that women leaders are likely to fail in such posts and those women in such posts are undermined.

I, therefore, hold the assumption that –

- School culture does not support women;
- women were never given opportunity to be school leaders;
- women's skills are grossly undermined;
- society does not understand the power and knowledge that women possess;
- there are inadequate support structures to assist women to walk the fine line;
- seemingly women experience leadership challenges due to poverty, traditional expectations, race, class and gender; and
- some women undermine the power they have and fail to reach their full potential.

I agree with Ozga (1993:16) and Bush and Coleman (2000:30) that women bring about a nurturing leadership principle, which reflects their unique style of bringing out the best in people, and that they have the potential to create other leaders.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research study will focus on this main question: "How do women principals negotiate school culture?"

The sub-questions are as follows:

1. What factors influence women principals in negotiating school culture?
2. What leadership style do woman principals display in negotiating school culture?
3. What barriers do women principals experience when negotiating school culture?
4. What support do women principals need in negotiating school culture?

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

The literature review will draw from the following concepts: feminism, leadership, organisational or school culture.

1.6.1 Feminism

Feminism emerged from being a political protest to the exploration of what it means to be human, to be alive. It is about awareness, about getting in touch with oneself, about touching life (Higgs and Smith, 2002:48).

Higgs and Smith (2002:48) indicate that there are many forms of feminism, each of which adds to and builds on other philosophies. Whelehan (1995:49) adds that the major differences between feminists lie in their defining the term, “oppressor”, and their locating of the source of oppression. Whelehan further indicates that the position of all feminists is founded on the belief that women suffer from systematic social injustices because of their gender and that any feminist is therefore, at the very least, committed to some form of reappraisal of the position of women in society. Higgs and Smith (2002:48) agree that feminism encourages us to question the view that other people are obliged to adopt certain narrow social roles, and add that it is therefore a powerful tool of critique for all human beings.

Feminism refers to gender as a basic binary opposition between masculine and feminine, in which “masculine” always has a privileged position over “feminine”, and that this has the direct effect of enabling men to occupy positions of social power more often than women. Such a view is wrong and needs to be changed (McManus, 1997:1). Feminism is “a moral and political struggle of opposition to the social relations of male domination structured around the principle that only men count as human, and a struggle for a genuine status of women outside male definition and control” (Thompson, 2001:7).

According to Gardiner *et al.* (2000:29) the feminist approach is used to represent women thinking from their own experiences and perspectives and that woman learn from other women's voices and experiences. She further indicates that deconstruction and analysis of our own socially constructed realities and multiple identities can help us understand our struggles and location in society and empower us to reposition and rename our contributions to personal and public works, and to understand their intersection.

Feminist research validates personal experiences and it is theoretically informed by understanding marginality, given women's history of social and cultural subordination in the public world (Gardiner *et al.*, 2000:32). Socially, women are politically, materially, and ideologically subordinate to men (Whelehan, 1995:51). The study will focus on liberal, radical and black feminist theories.

Liberal feminists argue that there are constraints in society that discriminate against women due to their gender and thus prevent women from exercising their right to freedom of choice (Schemerhorn, 2001; Friedman, Meterkamp and Posel, 1986:6). Radical feminists argue that women's fundamental problem is male power over women, men and women belonging to different classes and women being the oppressed class (Higgs and Smith, 2002:50). Black feminists argue that women experience a triple layer of oppression namely race, class and gender (Schemerhorn, 2001:1; Macmanus, 1997:1; and Collins, 1990: 22). Black feminists disproved women stereotypes as matriarchs and superwomen, and spearheaded movements to gain economic and political clout for women (Schemerhorn, 2001:4).

Feminism is the belief that women should have economic, political and social equality with men. I will approach the phenomenon from the feminist point of view for I want to represent the women principals' thinking from their own experiences and perspectives of how they lead school culture, because women learn from other women's voices and experiences (Gardiner *et al.*, 2000:29).

Education leadership has been male dominated. The contradictions arising from this bias are best exposed by implementing feminist post-structuralism (Gardiner *et al*., 2000:30). The rationale for using feminist post-structuralism is to correct the imbalanced male-biased perspective held about educational leadership by offering a feminist orientation and scrutinising the alternative premises suggested about leadership (Gardiner *et al.*, 2000:33).

1.6.2 Leadership

The concept of leadership is complex and evolving (Bush and Coleman, 2000:118). There is a need to redefine leadership to include women as leaders, since redefining leadership will be beneficial for everyone, those in leadership, as well as those who are led. There are as many definitions of leadership as there are authors (Dimmock and Walker, 2005:11).

Sergiovanni (2005:118) regards leadership as helping people understand the problems that they face, helping them manage those problems and even helping them learn to live with them. Gardiner *et al.* (2000:29) maintain that leadership is having power, influence and control over subordinates, while Ohm (2006:15) regards leadership as “influence”.

Seifert and Vonberg (2002:30) define leadership as an influence relationship among leaders and followers who intend to effect real changes that reflect their mutual purpose. Varley (2004:45) regards leadership as a process by which members of a group are empowered to work together synergistically towards a common goal or vision that will create change.

In the above definitions, one finds the following essential elements: influence, goal, people, activities, empowerment, and change.

In this study, my working definition will be “leadership is a process of influencing group activities and behaviour through communication with the intention of developing and achieving common goals in a school as an organisation”.

I will look at how women principals influence the behaviour, attitudes, values and beliefs of the individual members, as well as the whole organisation, to achieve set goals in a male dominated environment.

1.6.3 School culture

The concept of culture is not easy to define (van Deventer and Kruger, 2003.19; Altrichter and Elliott, 2000:88). Deal and Peterson (1999:3) contend that there is no universal acceptance of the definition of culture. Matthews and Crow (2003:143) agree that the field of education lacks a clear and consistent definition of culture. The concept of school culture is primarily based on the definition of organisational culture and organisational culture is a difficult concept to define. The two concepts will be used interchangeably in this study.

Gerber, Nel and van Dyk (1995:345) define organisational culture as the normative glue that keeps the organisation together, based on shared beliefs, norms and values of employees, which creates feelings of homogeneity and identification with the organisation and what it stands for in individuals. Organisational culture refers to shared perceptions of organisational work practices within organisational units that may differ from other organisational units (van den Berg and Wilderom, 2004:571).

According to de Bruyn, Erasmus, Jansen, Mentz, Steyn and Theron (2002:125), school culture is the manner in which all the tasks in the school are embarked upon and executed, including the product of the manner employed. Swanwick (2005:119) defines organisational culture as “the way we do things around here” and thinks it incorporates something about shared norms, values, assumptions and beliefs, and, therefore, practices. Organisational culture refers to the

internalised assumptions, values, beliefs, meanings and expectations that employees of a particular organisation, work unit, group or team hold in common (Mauno, Kinnunen and Piitulainen 2005:117).

1.6.4 Negotiation

Negotiation is a verbal interactive process involving two or more parties who wish to reach an agreement on a problem or conflict of interest, seeking, as far as possible, to preserve their own interests, but adjusting their views and positions in their joint effort to reach an agreement (Anstey, 1999:68).

Pienaar and Spoelstra (1991:3) (cited in Mampuru and Spoelstra, 1994:3) regard negotiation as a process of interaction between parties directed at reaching some form of agreement that will hold and that is based upon common interests, with the purpose of resolving conflict, despite widely dividing differences. This is achieved through the establishment of common ground and the creation of alternatives (Mampuru and Spoelstra, 1994:28).

The above definitions are an oversimplification of what I regard as negotiation in this study. For this study, I regard negotiation as the struggles, obstacles, barriers, and the adversity that women go through as leaders to influence educators, parents and learners on how to do business around the school.

1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:166) regard research design as a “plan for the selection of subjects, research sites and data collection procedure to answer the research question(s)”. The design shows which individuals will be studied, where and when, and under which circumstances they will be studied. Most literature distinguish between two broad categories of research design – qualitative and quantitative (Brink 1996:12).

Qualitative research is a term that denotes the type of inquiry in which qualities, characteristics or properties of a phenomenon are examined for better understanding and explanation (Henning, van Rensburg and Smit, 2004:5). It is through this type of investigation that understanding how women principals negotiate school culture will contribute to theory, educational practice, policy making and social consciousness (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:393).

Henning *et al.* (2004:3) maintain that, through qualitative research, the researcher finds out what happens, how it happens and why it happens the way it does. This will enable me as a researcher to capture the participants' perspectives accurately. As a researcher, I am interested in the actions of the participants and will also try to find out how they represent their feelings and thoughts in their action of leading.

Qualitative research describes and analyses people and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions and helps the researcher to interpret phenomenon in terms of the meaning people bring to them (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:395). I will be able to give a clear, detailed account of actions and the presentation of actions to gain better understanding of these women's world.

Through qualitative study, according to Henning *et al.* (2004:3), I wish to capture the freedom and natural development of participants' actions as they present themselves in their endeavours to negotiate school culture. I want to develop and explain, in argument, by using evidence from data and from literature, how women negotiate school culture. In qualitative study, participants have a more open-ended way of giving their views and demonstrating their actions (Henning *et al.*, 2004:5).

In qualitative study, the researcher is the main instrument of research and makes meaning out of her engagement in the project (Henning *et al.*, 2004:7). Much will depend on what I hear and see, including my ability to observe and listen. The researcher becomes “immersed” in the situation and phenomenon studied (McMillan and Schumacher, 2005: 396).

The study will adopt qualitative design, for it focuses on qualitative aspects, which are: meaning, experience and understanding. I am concerned with how participants relate to the problem by focusing on their spoken words and their observable behaviour (Hoberg, 1999:76). This research is based on a constructivist philosophy that assumes reality as a multilayered, interactive and shared social experience interpreted by individuals, meaning reality is a social construct (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:396). I intend to use a case study as a research method in order to use interactive strategies to obtain valid data.

1.7.1 Case study

A case study is the most appropriate type for this study, since I seek to provide a significant amount of descriptive information of a single subject through detailed in-depth data collection methods involving multiple sources, such as interviews, shadowing and document analysis (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:36; Brink, 1996:116).

Hughes (1995:317) (as cited in Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2005:181) regards case study as valuable in that it focuses on individual actors and seeks to understand their perception of events, highlights and specific events that are relevant to the case; hence, I will interview individual women principals to find out about their actions, ideas and the other attributes of a single individual.

Case study necessitates an in-depth investigation. Further contexts are unique and dynamic, and it investigates and reports the complex dynamic and unfolding interaction of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance

(Cohen *et al.*, 2005:181). As a result, I will employ a case study as I seek to understand the uniqueness and the idiosyncrasy of women principals in all their complexity.

1.7.2 Data collection strategies

For the purpose of this study, I will explore a variety of data collection sources, such as interviews, shadowing and document analysis.

1.7.2.1 Interview

The study will use semi-structured interviews in order to gain a detailed picture of participants' beliefs and perceptions of their experience, of how women principals negotiate school culture (Devos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport, 2005: 296). I will ask questions to obtain meaningful information, and to find out what is on the participants' minds, since this cannot be directly observed or measured. According to Merriam (1998) (cited in Varley, 2004:40), interviews bring new discoveries, broaden experiences and confirm previous knowledge.

The semi-structured interview will give the researcher and the participants much more flexibility, because I will prepare an interview schedule to guide the interview, and open-ended questions will be asked to allow the participants to express themselves freely (Devos *et al*., 2005:297). I will tape-record the interviews because the tape recorder allows for a fuller record than taking notes and it will enable me to concentrate on the proceedings of the interview, including non-verbal communication (Smit *et al.*, 1995:17) (cited in Devos *et al.*, 2005:298).

1.7.2.2 Document analysis

According to Yin (2003:87) the use of documents is also an appropriate form of data when constructing case studies: documents "corroborate and augment evidence from other sources".

McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 42) regard artefacts as material objects and symbols of a current or past event, group, person or organisation. These objects are tangible entities that reveal social processes, meanings and values. Symbols are logos, mascots of schools and teams, while objects are diplomas, award plaques, and students' products of artwork, papers and posters. A qualitative researcher is less interested in the artefact itself and is more interested in the meaning assigned to the artefact and the social processes that produced the artefact.

I will request each of the participants to produce an artefact of her choice for analysis and will make field notes on the meaning that the participants attach to the artefacts.

1.7.2.3 Shadowing

Shadowing is an observation technique for collecting descriptive data on behaviour, events and situations (Phendla, 2000:32; Brink, 1996:150). It will help me, as a researcher, to observe behaviour as it occurs and describe events or behaviours as they occur, with no preconceived ideas of what I will see; furthermore, this will enable me to compile field notes that tend to be much broader than the simple listing of events (Brink, 1996:151).

Brink (1996:150) distinguishes between structured observation and unstructured observation. Structured observation specifies, in advance, what behaviours or events are to be observed and is commonly used in quantitative studies, while unstructured observation involves the collection of descriptive information that is analysed qualitatively rather that quantitatively.

Observation can also be categorised according to the degree of researcher involvement. Spradly (1980) (as cited in Brink, 1996:151) identifies five types of participation, ranging from non-participation, where there is no involvement with

the research subjects, to complete participation, where there is total involvement with subjects and environment.

Complete participant – Researcher participates actively without the knowledge or consent of the participants

Active participant – Researcher participates actively and discloses his or her identity and purpose to the participants

Moderate participant – Researcher interacts with participants but is less involved with the actual activities

Passive participant – Researcher studies the activities merely as an observer with little interaction or involvement with participants

Non-participant – No interaction or involvement, only direct observation

Observation is an active process, which includes non-verbal cues – facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, body movements and other non-verbalised social interactions that suggest the subtle meaning of language (Phendla, 2000:32; McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:439). I seek different views of events from participants for accuracy and confirmation (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:439). This will enable me to elicit data in a manner which is nearly impossible with other approaches, and to have access to some unique kinds of information (Wilson, 1977:256) (as cited in McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:440).

In this study, I will shadow each of the participants for a day at their respective schools, according to an arrangement and will disclose my identity and purpose to the participants. According to Phendla (2000:32), a shadowing session will give me a chance to observe, understand and question the meaning of some

subtle actions that may not have surfaced in the interview. I will compile field notes for analysis.

1.8 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

I will employ non-probability sampling, since it deals with samples from smaller groups, and will purposively select only three women due to the characteristic of their being principals (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001: 174). The women principals must be working in schools in a rural area, where women are mostly disadvantaged and marginalised.

However, I will take into consideration the two major limitations of non-probability sampling, in that I cannot generalise the findings and that my sample may be biased on account of the fact that I am a woman principal as well, who works at a rural school.

1.9 SITE SELECTION

I will conduct my study in the Mabopane Area Project Office (MAPO), which forms part of the Bojanala East Region of the North-West Province of South Africa. This area consists of schools in both urban and rural areas but I prefer to conduct my research in schools in the rural area where transformation, in relation to the participation of women in leadership positions, could possibly be slow due to the marginalisation of women, as compared to urban areas.

1.10 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis refers to the organising, analysing and interpretation of data (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:466). Qualitative data analysis is a process of selecting, categorising, comparing and synthesising and interpreting data to

provide explanations of a single phenomenon of interest (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:462).

I will analyse data through coding, categorising, and comparing and contrasting each category, looking for patterns among categories, to develop themes (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:462-476).

I will ensure credibility by taking the transcripts and the field notes back to the participants for an accuracy check.

1.11 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

Limitations

Because I intend to employ the case study method, I cannot generalise the findings for all women principals. The findings will be most applicable to women principals at rural schools.

Another limitation might be my subjectivity as a woman principal who has worked at a rural school for 14 years and has experience of what it feels to be a woman principal in a rural area. As Phendla (2000:36) indicates, it would be difficult for me, as a researcher, not to interpret some of these women's revelations as reflected in my own experiences.

One other limitation is that the research lacks comparison between male and female principals, and that it would call for a cross-sectional study, which would enable me, as a researcher, to compare and contrast how men and women negotiate school culture. My study is also limited to three women principals within the MAPO.

Delimitations

The MAPO has more than three women principals, but this research focuses on three women principals purposively selected from the rest – women principals from multiple settings. The study will focus on how three women principals negotiate school culture. Only the selected women principals will be interviewed and shadowed, and each woman will be requested to present an artefact to be analysed, since that will enable me, as a researcher, to conclude the findings according to the data collected.

The research focuses on multiple sites within one MAPO to construct the case study.

1.12 CHAPTER DIVISION

1.12.1 Chapter 1: Introduction and overview of the study
1.12.2 Chapter 2: Literature review
1.12.3 Chapter 3: Research design and methodology
1.12.4 Chapter 4: Presentation of findings
1.12.5 Chapter 5: Discussions, conclusion and recommendations

1.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the background on the development of the problem statement, the resulting research questions, the rationale for the research design, the method used, the data collection strategies, the limitations and delimitations of the study, and the definition of the concepts. The reasons for choosing the particular research methodologies and the specific area where the research will be conducted have been outlined.

The study takes the form of a case study in order to supply rich descriptions in response to the research questions. The concepts that are frequently used in the study have been defined for understanding and insight. The research design and methodology will be explicitly outlined in Chapter 3. In summary, this chapter has indicated the what, the where and the how of the research study.

The next chapter will present the extensive background of the literature review conducted for the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter gave an overview of the problem statement of the study; significance of the study; assumptions, research questions, clarification of concepts, theories, research design and methodology; limitations and delimitations; and division of chapters.

This chapter is about conceptualisation of the study. I am going to talk about feminism, leadership and school culture. Feminism focuses on liberal, radical and black feminism and leadership covers transactional and transformational leadership debates while school culture covers aspects like, common culture problems and survival strategies.

2.2 FEMINISM

Feminism has emerged from being a political protest to the exploration of what it means to be human and to be alive. It talks to both women and men in its poetry, its struggle, its painstaking analysis (Higgs and Smith, 2002:48). These authors further indicate that feminism is about awareness, about getting in touch with ourselves, about touching life.

Higgs and Smith (2002:48) say that there are many forms of feminism, each of which adds to and builds on other philosophies. Whelehan (1995:49) adds that the major differences between feminists lie in their defining of the term, “oppressor”, and their locating of the source of oppression.

According to Whelehan (1995:49), the position of all feminists is founded on the belief that women suffer from systematic social injustices because of their gender and that any feminist is therefore, at the very least, committed to some form of

reappraisal of the position of women in society. Higgs and Smith (2002:48) agree that feminism encourages us to question the view that other people are obliged to adopt certain narrow social roles, and add that it is therefore a powerful tool of critique for all human beings.

Thompson (2001:7) defines feminism as “a moral and political struggle of opposition to the social relations of male domination structured around the principle that only men count as human, and struggle for a genuine status of women outside male definition and control”.

All feminist theorists are of the opinion that “women have had and continue to have a rough deal due to their sex” (Beasley, 1999:28). They seek change in control over society through the transformation of social institutions which perpetuate the inequality of sexes and values genders differently (Schemerhorn, 2001:1). This study focuses on liberal, radical and black feminist theories.

2.2.1 Liberal feminism

According to Higgs and Smith (2002:50), liberal feminism is a specifically Western version of feminism that accepts capitalist ideology. They are “mainstream” and argue that women are as intelligent and competent as men and are concerned with women’s rights to be socially successful, that is, to run their own businesses, become lawyers, judges, financiers, etc.

Liberal feminists stress the importance of freedom of choice (Schemerhorn, 2001:2; Friedman *et al.*, 1986:6). This choice will enable women to compete with men on equal terms in the professional, political worlds and in the labour market. They argue that women, like men, have the capacity to reason and that their capacity to choose therefore has the same worth as that of men (Friedman *et al.*, 1986:6). They maintain that there are constraints in society that discriminate against women solely based on their gender and thus prevent the exercising of

this free choice. Liberal feminists mobilise against the elimination of these constraints (Friedman *et al.*, 1986:6).

According to (Friedman *et al*., 1986:6), women are experiencing formal and informal constraints. Formal constraints are the laws of the country which discriminate against women as women, and informal constraints are the wildly held beliefs that women are not suited for certain kinds of jobs, such as engineering. For the women to overcome these constraints, governments have to repeal discriminatory laws and practices, and the way to effect such legislation include reasoned arguments, educative programmes, lobbying and, if necessary, civil disobedience (Friedman *et al.*, 1986:7).

Warren and O'Connor (1999:6) maintain that liberal feminism generally aims at establishing equality of opportunity not necessarily of outcome. This approach argues that, once overt barriers are removed, any further differences are due to free choices. They see stereotypically masculine or feminine traits as culturally imposed and seek control over social circumstance (Schemerhorn, 2001:4).

Liberals do not reject the capitalist system; they believe it provides an opportunity for the realisation of choice of any person who makes the necessary effort, although they admit that women have to try harder than men (Friedman *et al.*, 1986:6). Equality for liberals means equality of opportunity and that it is up to the individual effort. Liberals are not critical about the way men and women are characterised in society (Friedman *et al.*, 1998:7).

Liberal feminists also mobilise around schemes devoted to the provision of opportunities for women to improve and develop skills to equip them for competition in the job market. They argue that women are considered to be suitable for one particular job namely housework and that women need to be freed from their traditional task as housewives in order to be free to realise their full potential as women (Friedman *et al.*, 1998:7). For liberal feminists, the

liberation of women will ensure that human resources of society are utilised more productively and more efficiently. This means that men will no longer be the sole custodians of the well-being of society and, in particular, their families.

Liberal feminists desire to free women from the oppressive patriarchal gender roles, they stress that patriarchy defines women's lives by placing them in "women-acceptable roles" that are in line with feminine ideas. Liberal feminists argue that all people are created equal and thus advocate for women equality in the workplace and by law. They are of the opinion that women's demands will be achieved through reason; meaning education is the means to change. Liberal feminists embarked primarily on the discussion of social structures and the unequal position within women themselves.

Women, like men, in society must have the choice to develop their potential. Women can achieve equality only if they accept the challenges and responsibilities they share with men in society as part of the decision-making mainstream of political, economic and social life (Friedman *et al.*, 1986:6).

2.2.2 Radical feminism

The word "radical" is often associated with the word "root", which means radical feminists will first seek to uncover the root cause of women's oppression and, secondly, would argue that the oppression of women is the root of all other forms of oppression and domination (Friedman *et al.*, 1986:9). Radical feminism is a tendency which chooses to concentrate exclusively on the oppression of women as women (Whelehan, 1995:52).

Radical feminists have the idea that by separating women from men, they would begin to take control over their own lives; hence, the call for separation and the re-evaluation of female attributes, which calls for a "break" from men and male values. They try to reinforce this intuitive knowledge by actively creating a safe space for women (Friedman *et al.*, 1986:9).

Radical feminists are of the opinion that the violence of the heterosexual male has led to the patriarchal and hierarchal cultures of today (Schemerhorn, 2001:51). They are in favour of creating space for women to lay claim to – to write, to think or to speak as their feelings and personal experiences dictated (Whelehan, 1995:51). According to Warren and O'Connor (1999:6), radical feminists attempt to analyse power relations in organisations and the impact of such power relations on the overall structure. The goal is not just equality of opportunity and access, but also equality of outcomes. They focus on power relations in organisations and social pressures that affect the careers of women (Warren and O'Connor, 1999:11).

Radical feminists' central concern is the oppression of women. They focus on patriarchy as a social system that functions in a hierarchical and dominating way and regard society as functioning in such a hierarchical and dominating way that women are subordinate to men. They regard society as operating according to male-defined values that organise their economic system in a way that primarily benefits and favours men and does not value women (Friedman *et al.*, 1986:9). This simply means patriarchy, and its male-centredness perpetuates all other forms of oppression, such as racism or economic exploitation.

Radical feminists regard gender as a social construct from which permeates all other forms of material and ideological female oppression, and, to explore the nature of such oppression, radicals concentrate on the experiences of individual women in society, often using writing as a vehicle to communicate their own narratives of pain, and to convey their passionate belief that sexism lies at the heart of women's oppression (Whelehan, 1995:52). Radical feminists argue that the fundamental problem for women is male power over women. They see men and women as belonging to two different classes, with women as the oppressed class which is forced to work for men (Higgs and Smith, 2002:50). Radicals argue that male domination is a problem and call for the total restructuring of

society. They advocate the creation of an institution for women only, that is, the need for separatism.

2.2.3 Black feminism

Hooks (1999:9) indicates that black women were forced to choose between a black movement that primarily serves the interest of black male patriarchs, and a women's movement that primarily serves the interests of white women. Black feminists argue that women experience a triple layer of oppression, namely race, class and gender (Schemerhorn, 2001:3; Hooks, 1999:1; McManus, 1997:1; and Collins, 1990:22). According to Whelehan (1995:51), socially, women are politically, materially, and ideologically subordinated to men. Black feminists disprove stereotypes of black women as matriarchs and superwomen, and have spearheaded movements to gain economic and political clout for women of colour (Schemerhorn, 2001:4).

Collins (1990: 227) maintains that black women feminists are critical of the oppression by black culture. She argues that black culture oppresses women, e.g. the physical abuse that women are subjected to by their fathers, lovers and husbands, that silence exists concerning domestic abuse, and that this silence is encouraged by black culture. Black women's ideas have been suppressed and this has stimulated women into creating knowledge that empowers women to resist domination (McManus, 1990:229).

Black feminist thinking is an emancipatory praxis and, as a result, connected to Marxist feminism, because it reconsiders redressing the issues of women subordination (Strachan, 1999:310). This thinking shows women appearing as self-defiant, self-reliant individuals who challenge race, gender and class oppression, which they regard as an interlocking system of domination (Collins, 1990:221). Black feminist thinking is a form of critical theory that accepts gender as a social construct that needs to be deconstructed (Collins, 1990:223).

McManus (1997:1) agrees with Collins that gender is a construct and that, since it is created, it is therefore alterable.

Collins (1990:221) maintains that Afro-centric feminism allows women to bring women's standpoint to a larger epistemological dialogue, insists that thought is validated from a particular set of historical conditions, emphasises that there are subjective ways of knowing, and seeks to reveal new ways of knowing that allow subordinate groups to define their own reality.

McManus (1997:1) argues that there is a political side to feminism that calls for the analysis of social systems to advocate for its change ultimately. She indicates that family and community are characterised by male domination, i.e. patriarchal homes and societies. McManus (1997) argues that women do not have the voice and that this needs to be challenged. She identifies primary discrimination as race and sex, which normally happens in the field of employment. Collins (1990:224) stresses that there is a need for women to resist oppression, both individually and institutionally. A person may be an oppressor or a member of the oppressed group or become an oppressor and an oppressed at the same time, depending on the context (Collins, 1990:223).

It is important that the marginalised (women) acquire knowledge to empower themselves, and present and use this knowledge to make sure it is not surpassed by the privileged groups' so-called specialised thinking. This would mean challenging the masculine aspects of leadership, which stress control, competition and compliance, and replacing them with feminine behaviours of collegiality and collaboration (Bush, 2003:30). Women who have successfully achieved positions in educational leadership can offer ways to negotiate the difficulties along this path, since they have developed the necessary skills to walk the "fine line" as women (Gardiner *et al.*, 2000:185).

Gardiner *et al.* (2000:31) contends that the dominant perspective in educational administration has been male biased and that the contradiction arising from these biases can best be exposed through the utilisation of feminist post-structuralism. The stereotypes that marginalised women from making strides in leadership positions in educational institutions should take in consideration the type of leadership competencies that women possess, which, in turn, can contribute positively to the school culture if women and their male counterparts are given equal opportunities.

The study aims at understanding the way in which women principals are located in their struggle to construct their own lives and meaning against the structural constraints of patriarchy, class, racism and gender (Gardiner *et al*., 2000:30).

2.3 LEADERSHIP

The rapid changing educational landscape, globally and in South Africa, in particular, contributes to the complexity of the principals' position (Botha, 2004: 329). In recent years, the national attention on educational leadership has escalated (Peterson and Young, 2002:1). Like many issues confronting our nation today, the challenges facing educational leadership are complex and interconnected (Peterson and Young, 2002:13). In order to meet the needs of the twenty-first century, public schools are pressurised to change and to address the demands currently placed on schools; principals are frequently involved in leading change efforts in collaboration with others (Zimmerman, 2005:29).

The principal is the key leader at school level and the primary liaison between different stakeholder groups of the school: learners, parents, staff, and the school governing body, district officials and the provincial Department of Education (Smith, Sparkes and Thurlow, 2000:1).This role description reflects policy and practice in jurisdiction around the world, especially in the context of the increased

autonomy of schools in various forms of site-based management (Smith *et al.*, 2000:1).

Matthews and Crow (2003:132) contend that the principals' leadership is influenced by both external and internal sources, as well as their own leadership style. The external sources are categorised into three sources, namely policy makers, other administrators and constituents. Other administrators in the education system refer to directors, superintendents and other school principals. They exercise leadership by influencing the vision of the district, and setting the direction for policies and procedures, because schools are nested in districts and are therefore nurtured and constrained by them.

Policy makers offer leadership that affects schools through the policies that they establish, which guide the school in what they can and cannot do. State legislature receives wide-spread media attention, which increases the attention of the public on issues. School constituencies, such as individuals, groups of parents, business people, religious groups, media and the community, also affect the leadership of the principal. Parents influence schools in such issues as curriculum offerings, teacher and principal selection. Choosing schools for their children affects the leadership of the principal and decision making at school level (Matthews and Crow, 2003:132).

Matthews and Crow (2003:133) maintain that, within schools, several individuals and groups play leadership roles. These stakeholders can affect the decision making of the school leader in subtle but powerful ways. The presence of students in leadership roles is greater now than ever and principals need to work with these internal groups to carry their school vision forward.

Traditionally, leadership meant having power, influence and control over subordinates (Gardiner *et al.*, 2000:29). What makes a good leader is not so much what that leader accomplishes but how she makes people feel (Beaudoin

and Taylor, 2004:132). The principal's own leadership practice and development is also important. Knowing how to influence and develop leadership capacity in others is a significant and important endeavour (Matthews and Crow, 2003:133).

2.3.1 Gender and leadership

Historically, women have been excluded from formal leadership positions and they continue to be dramatically underrepresented (Trigg, 2006:26). Explanations for women's absence from leadership positions range from those that stress women's inadequacy or incapacity to the more structural ones that stress the issue of power and control and the patriarchal construction of society (Ozga, 1993:4). The traditional inequity between men and woman may be traced throughout history, where it is has been cloaked in andocentric philosophies that have contributed to the traditional stereotyping of gender roles and sex role socialisation, which affect the relative position of women compared to that of men in education and in society (Greyvenstein, 1996:75).

Women form the majority of the workforce in education, yet they are underrepresented in leadership positions. Women are more visible in primary schools and their numbers reduces at secondary school level, as the age of learners' increase, the proportion of women diminishes (Ozga, 1993:4). Wilson (1997:4) agrees that teaching represents one of the most highly feminised of all professions and, in many countries, has been one of the few traditional avenues for female advancement. Wilson further adds that there are two things that are clear in this career:

- the higher the educational level and age of the student the fewer the women
- the higher the job level, the fewer the women who are represented, thus replicating the uneven patterns of participation seen in the wider workforce

There are various legislative frameworks that create an enabling environment for gender relations to be addressed in the country, but the trend of excluding women from leadership positions is still prevalent. Phendla (2000:54) indicates that the trend of excluding women from senior positions is still visible in the new era of democracy in South Africa. She further argues that there are still major imbalances in gender composition in school leadership in South Africa.

Mathipa and Tsoka (2001:324) agree that women in South Africa continue to be dominated, exploited and discriminated against and further indicate that such experiences lead to poor self image, lack of confidence, poor performance, discrimination, less career orientation and demotivation. Steyn (2003:329) adds that women, in general, are underrepresented in senior management posts due to the perception that women are not fit to hold such posts.

Table 1: Indicates Mabopane APO Educators according to post level as on the 10th day of the 2006 academic year. SOURCE: Mabopane APO Snap Survey

POST LEVEL	**MALE**	**FEMALE**	**TOTAL**
1 EDUCATOR	460	1 291	1 751
2 HEAD OF DEPARTMENT	54	103	157
3 DEPUTY PRINCIPAL	46	20	66
3 PRINCIPAL	43	19	62
4 PRINCIPAL	51	11	62
TOTAL	654	1 444	2 098

The above information reflects persistent disparities in educational leadership and management in the Mabopane APO in terms of female representation in educational spheres, despite significant efforts made in SA in issues of equity. The information is indicative of the fact that leadership in schools is still a male-dominated field, particularly in the MAPO.

The table below indicates the principals' gender in the Mabopane APO, one of the APOs in the Bojanala East Region of the North-West Province of South Africa, as on the 10th day of the 2006 academic year.

Table 2: Indicates number of principals according to gender and type of schools at Mabopane APO. SOURCE: Mabopane APO Snap Survey

Type of school	Number of schools	Male	Female	Total
Primary	68	51	17	68
Middle	28	18	10	28
High	28	25	3	28
Total	124	94	30	124

Of the 124 principals, 94 are male and only 30 are female. The above statistics show clearly that there are still major imbalances in gender composition regarding women in leadership positions in schools, particularly in SA, with specific reference to the MAPO in the North-West Department of Education.

The percentages for the principals are as follows:
MALE = 76%
FEMALE = 24%

Empirical work with female principals and other female senior managers indicates that females tend to practise a participative and transformational management style (Bush and Coleman, 2000:31). They argue that women display a collaborative and people-orientated style, recognise good work, have good relationships with stakeholders, are cooperative, empower their colleagues and make use of teamwork. They regard women as participative and consultative.

Bush and Coleman (2000:32) say that women display the following feminine traits: caring, intuitive, tolerant, creative and informal.

- Women tend to have more contact with superiors, and subordinates.
- Women spend more time with their communities.
- Women are concerned with individual differences within the group.
- Women see their job as a service to the community.

Women leadership styles are less hierarchical and more democratic, run closely knit schools, emphasise cohesiveness, are much less individualistic, spend time in fostering an integrative culture and climate, and value group activities. Ozga (1993:11) suggests that such flexible, supportive and integrative approaches are of particular value in education. There is a need for management that is value driven, to nurture and support staff to enhance their self-worth (Ozga, 1993:12).

Despite many changes that took place in education in recent years, women in management posts are still a minority (Ozga, 1993:16). Due to this minority, certain specific pressures can be identified as having an effect on their performance, including –

- a feeling of isolation
- the strain of coping with sex stereotyping
- being discriminated against by colleagues
- pressure from institutional culture

There is a significant amount of literature about women's preferences for more democratic and collegial forms of leadership, about the interpersonal skills and sharing approaches in education (Shakeshaft, 1989; Dunlap and Schmuck, 1995) (cited in Sachs and Blackmore, 1998:274). Feminine characteristics include "caring", creative and intuitive dimensions (Bush, 2003:30). Aurora and Cooper (2005) (cited in Trigg, 2006:26) conducted a study on executive women and concluded that women's style of leadership is inclusive, open, consensus building, collaborative and collegial.

Al-khalifa (1989:89) (cited in Bush, 2003:80) claims that women adopt a management style that differs from men's management style, in that it has a much greater emphasis on collaboration, co-operation and other "feminism" behaviours, and that these styles are compatible with collegiality. Women emphasise negotiation and collaboration; they pursue shared problem-solving techniques (Bush, 2003:80). Coleman (1994) (cited in Bush, 2003:80) presents evidence that women leaders in education tend to be more democratic than men, they demonstrate qualities of warmth, empathy, and cooperation. Women are characterised as sensitive, warm, tactful, expressive including nurturing of interpersonal relationships (van Engen, van der Leeden and Willemsen, 2001:582). Women leadership has also been characterised as more "communal" (Gibson, 1995, in Stelter 2002:94).

Ogawa and Bossert (1995) (cited in Matthews and Crow, 2003:139) suggest that principals' roles are changing because of reforms that emphasise the empowering of teachers and others associated with the organisation. As a result, this advocates change in the leadership terrain; hence, Burns (1978:20) (cited in Bush, 2003:30) brings in the concept of transformational leadership in which leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of morality and motivation. Burns distinguishes between the concept of transformational leadership and that of transactional leadership.

2.3.2 Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership is characterised by an interaction between the leader and the followers (Burns, 1978) (cited in Bush, 2003:30). It involves an exchange process between leaders and followers, where leadership becomes a series of transactions to achieve specific goals (Matthews and Crow, 2003:140).

Harris, Hopkins, Hatfield, Heargrieves and Chapman (2003:18) regard the following as characteristics of transactional leadership:

- It is mainly about the management of systems and processes rather than people and relationships
- In approaching development and improvement, the emphasis is on structural rather than cultural changes
- Leadership is equated with management
- A leader is regarded as someone on top of the forefront of all the others
- Tasks are delegated to followers for them to do
- Leadership is largely concerned with structures and emphasises institutional purpose rather that people
- Hard data are emphasised to inform rational decision making
- Followers are dependent on the leader, since the leader is superior and is crudely abstracted

2.3.3 Transformational leadership

According to Burns (1978) (cited in Bush, 2003:30), transformational leadership is characterised by an engagement between leaders and followers bound by a common purpose, and Burns further argues that transformational leaders are individuals who appeal to higher ideas and moral values, such as justice and equality. Transformational leadership is based on personal values, beliefs, and the quality of the leader rather than the exchange process (Mathews and Crow, 2003:140).

Emerging information on female leaders suggests that the characteristics of female leadership mirror those of transformational leaders (Bush, 2003:80). Transformational leadership is argued to be more feminine than other leadership styles, and this might be influenced by the approach women brought to organisations when they started gaining entry to leadership (Bush, 2003: 80). Transformational leadership is depicted as a feminine style because of its emphasis on the managers' stimulation of an individual consideration given to employees – these characteristics of leadership are attributed to women (Deaux

and Lewis, 1984, in van Engen *et al.*, 2001:582). Transformational leaders focus on problem finding, problem solving and collaboration with stakeholders (Hallinger, 1992, in Marks and Printy, 2003:372).

Oackley (2000) (in Stelter, 2002:94) describes women's leadership style as more transformational in both the traditional and non-traditional organisational context. Oackley further argues that this potential gender difference is important in the light of any organisational trends that may favour flat, organisational, team-based management and increased globalisation, since the more interactive leadership style of women may end up being more valued than they may be, currently, as cooperate diversity and networking needs increase between and within organisations (Stelter, 2002:94).

A study by Carless (1998, cited in Stelter, 2002:94) describes leadership styles within the confines of the definition of transformational leadership. In that study, both men and women reported that women leaders exhibited a more transformational style, including interpersonally-orientated behaviours, such as participative decision making, charisma, consideration, praising and nurturing behaviours. Carless found that, in general, women leaders were described as participative and inclusive.

Transformational leaders endeavour to empower staff and share leadership functions (Bush and Coleman, 2000:23). Transformational leadership fits best in the way in which schools are organised, and works due to its ability to tap higher levels of women potential (Sergiovanni, 2007:72). Transformational leadership bonds followers and leaders together (Sergiovanni, 2007:78). It aims at innovating within the organisation, while empowering and supporting teachers and partners in decision making (Leithwood, 1994, in Marks and Printy, 2003:371). Transformative leadership appears to have the potential to tap greater depths of human potential (Sergiovanni, 2007:78).

Transformational leaders seek to raise participants' level of commitment to develop the collective capacity of the organisation and its members to achieve these results (Burns, 1978, in Marks and Printy, 2003:372). Transformational leadership affirms the centrality of the principals' reform role, particularly in introducing innovation and shaping organisational culture (Leithwood, 1994, in Marks and Printy, 2003:37). These leaders articulate a vision, use lateral or non-traditional thinking, encourage individual development, give regular feedback, use participative decision making and promote a cooperative and trusting work environment (Carless, 1998:888) (cited in van Engen *et al.*, 2001:582).

Transformative leaders know the difference between "power over" and "power to" – "power over" emphasises controlling people and events so that things turn out the way the leader wants; it is concerned with dominance, control and hierarchy, the striking of bargains and the making of psychological deals in the form of transactional leadership (Sergiovanni, 2007:76). Transformational leaders recognise that people do not like "power over" and will resist it, formally and informally, for it is not very successful for bringing about sustained involvement (Sergiovanni, 2007:76). Transformative leaders are more concerned with the concept of "power to". These leaders are concerned with how the power of leadership can help people to become more successful and experience a greater sense of efficacy; they are less concerned with what people are doing and more concerned with what they are accomplishing (Sergiovanni, 2007:76).

Transformational leaders motivate their followers by raising their consciousness about the importance of the organisational goals and inspiring them to transcend their own self- interest for the sake of the organisation (Marks and Printy, 2003:375). In their relationship with followers, this these leaders exhibit at least one of the following leadership factors: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Marks and Printy, 2003:375). Transformative leaders view empowerment, delegating, sharing and other values with a target frame of reference (Sergiovanni, 2007:77).

Transformational leadership requires the capacity to create and communicate a compelling vision that clarifies the current situation and induces commitment to the future (Sergiovanni, 2007:75). Transformative leaders help shape culture, work to design ways and means to transmit this culture to others, but, more importantly, act as guardians of the values that define the culture (Sergiovanni, 1984) (cited in Sergiovanni, 2007:77). Transformational leaders help staff members develop and maintain a collaborative, professional school culture, foster teacher development, help teachers solve problems together more effectively (Leithwood, 1992, in Bush and Coleman 2000:23). In transformational cultures, leadership is likely to be devolved (Bush and Coleman, 2000:34).

A transformational leader motivates others beyond self-interest for the benefit of the group or organisation (Bass and Avalio, 1994) (cited in Zimmerman, 2005:35). A transformational leader seeks to elicit higher levels of commitment from all school staff and to develop organisational capacity for school improvement (Marks and Printy, 2003:377). According to Matthews and Crow (2003:140), such leadership examines what principals do to build and maintain a school culture that reinforces the values, norms and beliefs and adds meaning to the educational work, which goes beyond the accomplishment of work. Both democratic and transformational leaders emphasise active participation and the intellectual stimulation of employees and encourage their enrolment in decision making (van Engen *et al.*, 2001:582).

Zimmerman (2005:35) maintains that the effects of transformational leadership in an organisation are to stimulate others to view their work from new perspectives; create awareness of the organisation's mission and vision; and develop others' abilities to higher levels of performance.

Transformational leadership is an accepted, effective way of leading and its characteristics match those of the female leadership style; still, women are less visible in leadership positions (Bush and Coleman, 2000:33). This might be because, historically, management and leadership have been defined and dominated by males (Gardiner *et al.*, 2000:376).

From the above discussion about the subject, as found in literature, it is evident that women adopt a democratic style of leadership versus the more autocratic style of leadership that men follow.

2.4 SCHOOL CULTURE

According to Matthews and Crow (2003:143), school culture is a relatively new concept in education, is somewhat ambiguous, and came in due to recent school reform. Stolp (1994) (cited in Matthews and Crow, 2003:143) reports that the term came to education from the corporate world with the idea that it would give direction to a more efficient and stable learning environment. The concept of culture is not easy to define (van Deventer and Kruger, 2003.19; Altrichter and Elliott, 2000:88). Deal and Peterson (1999:3) contend that there is no universal acceptance of the definition of culture. Matthews and Crow (2003:143) agree that the field of education lacks a clear and consistent definition of culture.

Organisational culture may be defined as the shared beliefs, expectations, values and norms of conduct of its members, “the way things are done around here”. It is the glue that binds people and groups together (Palestini, 2003:53). Culture refers to things that people “agree to be true” and “agree to be right” (Fullan, 2005:57). School culture is concerned with values, beliefs, and expectations that administrators, teachers, students and others share (Sergiovanni, 2007:77).

Some people refer to culture as “how we do things around here” (Goldring, 2002:33; Barth, 2002:6; van Deventer and Kruger, 2003:19; Rooney, 2005:86). Others regard it as the “glue that holds members together” (Hodge and Anthony, 1991: 444; Prosser, 1999:34). Culture may also be defined as the shared beliefs, expectations, values and norms of conduct for members (Palestini, 2003:53). Armstrong (1991: 198) regards culture as a pattern of shared beliefs, attitudes, assumptions and values that shape the way people act and interact and influence the way things get done.

De Bruyn *et al.* (2002:125) define school culture as the manner in which all tasks in a school are embarked upon and executed. They further indicate that this manner later becomes a pattern of traditions supported by artefacts, myths, stories, metaphors, humour, play, heroes and heroines. Ohm (2006:15) regards school culture as set of unspoken interactions, relationships and expectations that spells out “how we do business around here”, while Patterson and Patterson (2004:74) define it as “what we say we believe in, say and do”. School culture is a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organisation (Barth, 2002:7). It is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act (Goldring, 2002:33).

Culture surrounds us and nurtures us even if we cannot see it; it protects people from the unknown and gives answers to that which would otherwise be unanswerable, it restricts objectivity, shapes judgment of what is good, beautiful and valuable (Schein, 1992 and Evans, 1996) (cited in Altrichter and Elliott, 2000:88). It is an example of what is called “unspoken norms”, which direct the things people do and the way they act (Goldring, 2002:33).

Every school has its own unique culture, some are hospitable, others toxic (van Deventer and Kruger, 2003.19; Barth, 2002:6). Culture can work for or against improvement and reform (Barth, 2002:7). The school leader has to be aware of the culture, the way things are done there. What she sees, hears and experiences in the school. School culture describes both the sameness and the uniqueness of each school. It accounts for the reason it feels, looks, sounds and smells different from any other school. School is a place for teaching and learning (Altrichter and Elliott, 2000:87).

School culture is both conservative and ever changing, adapting to influences from other cultures and from changes in the physical, social and political environment (Altrichter and Elliott, 2000:88). It accommodates a continuous flux of new people (administrators, faculty, students, and parents), new directives from the district and from the state, new directions recommended by professional organisations, institutions of higher education and unions (Altrichter and Elliott, 2000:90). In schools, there are mini-changes that take place every day and larger ones that take place over time; for example, the new school principal shifting the school from one in which teachers take part in decision-making processes to one in which the principal make all the decisions (Altrichter and Elliott, 2000:90).

Schools face unique political realities where stakeholders do not always agree, and it takes a high level of political skill for leaders to bring about the necessary consensus and commitment to make schools work well for everyone (Sergiovanni, 2007:1).

2.4.1 How does culture develop?

Hodge and Anthony (1991: 443) maintain that theorists have differing opinions as to how exactly culture is formed, and that culture formation is a very complicated process that is not very predictable or discernible, but, nevertheless, organisations do possess culture that can be formed in a variety of ways as a result of a particular organisation's internal and external circumstances (Hodge

and Anthony, 1991:447). Culture gives meaning to our world and is constantly being constructed through our interaction with others and through our reflections on life and our world (Altrichter and Elliott, 2000:88).

Culture develops as a group of educators work together, solve problems, develop policy, set curricula and schedules, involve community members, and resolve conflict. These slowly solidify into school culture (Goldring, 2002:33). People create culture and thereafter it shapes them. School leaders can nudge the process along through their actions, conversations, decisions and public pronouncements (Deal and Peterson, 1999:85).

2.4.2 Aspects of culture

Matthews and Crow (2003:144) maintain that school culture is a combination of many aspects that teachers, principals, students, staff members, parents and the community members construct to make sense of the school's organisation. Hodge and Anthony (1991:453) distinguish between the following aspects of culture: ceremonies, rituals, symbols and slogans, language, myths and stories, physical environment, artefacts and gesture. Culture can be expressed through the organisation's myths, heroes, legends, stories, jargon, rites and rituals (Armstrong, 1991:198).

Janson (in de Bruyn *et al.*, 2002:125-134) classifies aspects of culture under the following headings:

- Philosophical aspects that include mission, goals, ethos, norms, values, hidden curriculum
- Traditional aspects that include traditions, symbols, ceremonies, rituals, school uniform, school buildings, school grounds
- General aspects that include; discipline, extra-curriculum activities, academic matters, management

Goldring (2002:33) contends that culture guides people at the following three levels:

The first level refers to things that can be observed, such as the way time and space are arranged at a school, meetings are organised, the budget decided, communication and conflict managed and celebrations held.

The second level refers to the values we believe in that support all the elements at first level. These can be felt in the behaviours and relationships of staff members and are seen in the symbols that represent the school.

The third level refers to the collected assumptions gathered by the group, over time, which organise who is accepted in a group, the extent of sharing between the members, and many other aspects of the school life. This is the most powerful level that dictates everything that is seen and spoken at the first level.

According to Palestini (2003:54), tangible aspects of school culture include trophies, classrooms, desks, a clean and attractive campus, while intangible aspects include the attitude of staff, how they perceive their environment.

School leaders who care and pay attention to what is important weave the cultural elements together using their actions and reflections (Deal and Peterson, 1999:116). School leaders need to shape school culture that reaches out and touches everyone: students, teachers, staff, administrators, parents and the community (Deal and Peterson, 1999:135). Leaders should negotiate school culture in such a way that it creates a cohesive environment that helps teachers to teach and students to learn; they have to read, shape and continuously transform school culture together with teachers, parents and students (Deal and Peterson, 1999:10).

According to Goldring (2002:33), many influences in a culture can be thought of as having the following key traits:

Shared values: The vision of the school is a powerful picture for the future generated by all members. It offers staff members direction and purpose for their work. A vision statement is simple, reflecting the shared meaning developed through the history of the group. A vision statement is based on values. It speaks about what the school considers it's most important work, the environment that will be created, and the relationship shared by the members. This trait includes leadership with a strong organisational quality, such as shared leadership.

Traditions: Traditions make the values and the assumptions of a school visible through actions, metaphor, symbols, rituals and ceremonies. Each of these enactments transmits what is important about the school, both internally to members and externally to constituents, daily and in annual events.

Collaboration: Collaboration is demonstrated when organisational members work together to accomplish a task. This may be as small groups, teams, or the entire staff. In order for teamwork to occur, members should deal with the stated and unspoken expectations for behaviour norms in each group.

Shared decision making: Decision making is described as the moral fibre of culture. Both formal and informal decisions made by the group translate the values of a group into actions. Site-based decision making is an example of lateral leadership, offering members an opportunity to contribute to solving site issues and building a sense of community.

Innovation: Innovation is demonstrated when a new element is introduced into a group for their benefit. This trait includes dealing with change, which challenges the existing assumptions and beliefs of the culture and introduces uncertainty.

Communication: A culture expresses itself through communication. This includes the emotions of its members. Communication patterns exist internally between staff members and externally between them and the parents and stakeholders.

Women communicate better with educators and use different, less dominating body language, and different language and procedures. Women appear more flexible and sensitive and act less distant from subordinates (Ozga, 1993:11). Bush and Coleman (2000:32) argue that women appear to be more polite and tentative, use qualifiers to simple statements, use body language indicating a comer status for women, tend to use more participatory styles and use collaborative styles to resolve conflict.

Ramsey (1999:171) indicates that, of all the essential tools of leadership, communication is the most important by far and that women tend to communicate openly, honestly and often. A culture of mutual trust and respect is a prerequisite for effective communication and creates a trusting and supportive environment (Palestini, 2003:67). For a transformational leader to be effective, she must master the skill of effective communication. Feedback is the most important aspect of the communication process (Palestini, 2003:65).

Solid communication is at the core of every successful organisation (Ramsey, 1999:171). Communication is what schools are about and the school leader has a primary responsibility to ensure effective communication throughout the organisation between the school and its multiple audiences. Communication has to have a two-way flow and should be carefully planned, systematically managed and continuously monitored and refined (Ramsey, 1999:172). Communication is every leader's basic responsibility, and to become a better leader, one has to work on becoming a better communicator (Ramsey, 1999:175). Keep communicating for, when you stop communicating, you stop leading (Ramsey, 1999:186).

Law and Glover (2000:96) and Brown (2000:11) (cited in Morrison, 2002:143) identify five communication networks in schools: the chain, the Y-shape, the star, the circle and the all-channel. They regard the all-channel as the most suitable for schools because it allows knowledge to be completely distributed and also allows shared communication. It suggests democracy and sharing of the free and complete flow of information where all parties are regarded as equals in the communication processes (Morrison, 2002:146).

Saphier and King (in Barth, 2002:8) identify collegiality, experimentation, high expectations, trust and confidence, tangible support, reaching out to the knowledge bases, appreciation and recognition, caring, celebration and humour, involvement in decision making, protection of what is important, traditions, and honest and open communication as healthy cultural norms that affect the capacity of the school to improve and promote learning. These elements support the school's purpose, which is to promote learning in schools for all their inhabitants (Barth 2002:9).

2.4.3 Common culture problems

Beaudoin and Taylor (2004:62) maintain that the following issues contribute to common school culture problems:

Gossip

Gossip is about spreading rumours about someone, usually in a covert manner. Gossip gets teachers to spread stories about the principal, when a genuine relationship does not exist between the principal and the staff. The gossip habit fuels more isolation for the principal, for staff can become distrustful and ambivalent about sharing personal information. This can interfere with the principal's credibility and with staff cohesiveness. It also reduces the staff's willingness to follow the principal as a leader. This problem causes a division among staff. The principal may develop a problem story about staff and may

resort to gestures of power that may increase the distrust, as opposed to solving the misinterpretation.

A gossip habit that is seriously being spread in a school reduces the likelihood of collaboration, increases isolation, creates a judgmental and distrustful environment and generates misrepresentations and resentments

Problem-saturated conversation

Problem-saturated conversations particularly thrive in the staff-room when teachers accumulate frustrations or become exhausted because of all the responsibilities and demands on their time. Conversations between teacher and teacher, principal and teacher, parent and teacher, principal and parent, parent and parent are predominantly problem-based.

Cliques

Cliques essentially develop in a context of differences. Cliques are toxic to the school environment for they prevent collaboration and the sharing of ideas. Cliques thwart the richness of diversity, stifle creativity and make it particularly hard for new teachers to feel welcome and become contributing members of the team.

Us–them attitude

The “us–them” attitude can often target principals and promote a belief that they are responsible for educators’ dissatisfaction and frustration, especially where principals are experienced as making too many decisions on their own. Principals are overworked, isolated, have a limited support system. Many principals want to collaborate with staff to minimise workloads.

This process can once again create a vicious cycle where staff members distrust the principal and the principal is constantly walking on eggshells and defending herself. The “us–them” attitude makes educators invest energy in conflicts and

suspicions instead of focusing on exciting educational practices and professional growth.

Resentment and negativity

Educators in schools struggle with resentment and negativity. Resentment pushes teachers from their preferred selves and gets them to make sarcastic remarks, rolling their eyes or comment negatively in response to suggestions. Resentment and negativity is a problem when their main effects are to undermine others. Negativity that is expressed directly to others as criticism and a judgment of their opinions make staff gatherings becomes unsafe and less productive.

In such a situation, educators refrain from contributing creative ideas or expressing their opinions for fear of receiving sarcastic comments. Negativity leads to protest against any new or creative efforts to improve or modify traditional practices. In such schools, the majority of staff, as well as the principal, become resentful because of the limitations imposed by the negativity-afflicted teachers. Because of the above, staff members become completely divided by negativity and cliques.

Community disrespect

Educators feel disrespected when their intentions, efforts and the complexities of their situation do not seem valuable to the community. Teachers are expected to be superhuman to see to all students' needs, the curriculum and committee meetings, and to balance their own personal lives. Teachers cannot succeed when they are put under too much pressure; they will always be vulnerable to disrespect, especially from an observer who is unaware of the bigger picture of the teachers' life.

Community disrespect can unfortunately get teachers to do more to prove their expertise, become more drained from over-giving, and, in some instances develop antagonistic attitudes towards parents. This problem is less common in

under-privileged and multi-ethnic communities where families are often grateful for educators' assistance and less influenced by a problem story.

The rushed feeling and scarcity of time

Merrow (in Beaudoin and Taylor, 2001:78) indicates that teachers are feeling rushed, crunched and isolated. Educators report that they are running on borrowed time, and this pushes educators to act based on speed, as opposed to based on their values. The cost of rushed feelings is that it causes teachers and principals to sacrifice their own needs, experience guilt, frustration, and resentment, and be drained of energy to the point of facing professional burnout. It can also reduce the quality of the education students receive.

In such a situation, there is no time to solve the problems democratically. Teachers end up having to deal with similar issues repetitively. These get teachers to fall into a survival mode where they are just trying to get things done and keep their heads above water.

Hierarchy

Schools are typically organised in a hierarchical fashion where the principal governs a group of staff. When principals lead mainly in a hierarchical way, they risk becoming disconnected from the realities of their teachers, making unreasonable decisions and losing the cooperation, trust and respect of their staff. Hierarchy can lead to responsibilities being shared unequally and ineffectively. In this situation, people can easily fall into the trap of always expecting the leader to solve the problems and not solve them themselves. An example is when the teachers refer students to the office when a problem arises in class or at the playground. This puts the principal in an endless disciplinary role, while the teachers lose the respect of the students.

Competition

The assumption is that competition will create motivation, performance and generate the best positive outcome. Competition goes with cost. It honours one winner and makes the large number of losers invisible. It can cause teachers to experience resentment, jealousy, discouragement, a sense of inadequacy, and working in isolation with their ideas as opposed to collaborating. Competition trifles the creativity and sharing that comes with genuine collaboration. When competition dominates a community, it can easily become a problem. Competition can also recruit staff to compete for a principal's attention, parental respect, career gains, student appreciation, status and popularity, among other things.

2.4.4 Survival strategies

Beaudoin and Taylor (2004:139) regard the following as survival strategies that the principal can use in the face of contextual pressures:

Connect, connect, and connect: The principal is pressurised to answer demands from the district, parents and teachers, which can easily push her to isolate herself. The principal should not allow the pressure of power, efficiency and availability to push her into isolation. Principals need to network in a meaningful way with stakeholders to survive. Principals have to know the names of the learners, should have personal conversations with staff, and use some of their precious and scarce time to nurture, in order to enrich themselves and to yield greater unity and collaboration in the whole school.

Networking is also critical among principals; consulting actively with the vice-principal, other principals, a mentor, or a buddy regarding school problems will make the principal feel much more confident, enable her to make better decisions and make her feel less isolated.

Name that pressure: Pressures are most oppressive when they are invisible and unquestioned; therefore, principals need to talk about their experience to colleagues that they trust. The easiest way is to externalise the problematic pressure and map its effects. Once one is aware of and clear about the situation, one can make a choice as to other ways of being and explore one's comfort zone. In some cases, the principal can invite the whole staff to explore the effects of a certain pressure and list strategies used by everyone to minimise its harmful effects.

You are a principal, a person, a friend, maybe an intimate partner and a parent. Make a choice as to when you can let go of pressures and when you have to meet them. Be clear with yourself and even with employees that, as a principal, it is your responsibility to take specific actions, even if, as a person, you really dislike the action

Refrain from getting your finger on everything: If the District Office makes controversial decisions or the staff members are divided by educational differences, engage a mediator or facilitate the discussion in a neutral way, so that each perspective can be heard. Ultimately, if the principal favours an educational practice but no one else does, she has to be ready to be patient or to let go. Find your own personal standards for what counts as "having accomplished something" at the end of the day. Know that unfinished paperwork will remain just that, while an unattended relationship will swell with resentment.

Delegate: Many responsibilities can be trusted to others. Staff and parents may appreciate an opportunity to be in charge of a specific assignment or to be an administrator for an hour while the principal attends to other necessities .Give yourself permission to think and be in touch with the school community and your role as a leader. Collaboration in decision making takes longer and, generally, there are decisions that can be postponed.

Keep breathing and stay present. Take a quiet walk every morning before you come to school. Notice positive encounters with students. Question your colleagues to find out where they really are. Remember, everyone has a story of feeling out of place. You are not alone.

2.5 CONCLUSION

Leaders have a responsibility to invest in the development of organisational members, to take a chance that they will learn, and to create an environment where people will take risks, tackle difficult problems and be supported in that endeavour (Fullan, 2003:67).

Women, as leaders, have a challenge to build school cultures in which every child can grow and every teacher can make a difference. Such sentiments flourish in a culture where learning and caring are valued and where stories, rituals and ceremonies provide zest and buoyancy to the world's most sacred profession.

As leaders, women can make a difference by restoring hope, faith and a shared spirit to the school. Strong cultures produce dense leadership where every member becomes a champion. When teachers and parents become leaders, cultural icons for the deeper values of the school, the school becomes more than a building with instructional materials. It becomes an institution with history, values, purpose and pride (Deal and Peterson, 1999:141).

Women may be more likely to learn and practise skills that lend themselves to cooperation, accommodation and collaboration through socialisation and traditional social concepts (Stelter, 2002:94). Women, as leaders, can serve to transform school culture with their transformational leadership practices.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:166) regard research design as a "plan for the selection of subjects, research sites and data collection procedure to answer the research question(s)." The design shows which individuals will be studied, where and when, and under what circumstances they will be studied. Most literature distinguishes between two broad categories of research design: qualitative and quantitative (Brink, 1996:12). According to Babbie and Mouton (2002:270), qualitative research differs from quantitative research in terms of the following key features: conducting research in a natural setting of participants, emphasising the participants' perspective, in-depth description (thick), and understanding of participants' actions and events. These features make qualitative research more relevant for this study.

3.1.1 Qualitative approach

"Qualitative research" is a term that denotes the type of inquiry in which qualities, characteristics or properties of a phenomenon are examined for better understanding and explanation (Henning *et al.*, 2004:5). Henning *et al.* (2004: 3) maintain that, through qualitative research, the researcher finds out what happens, how it happens and why it happens the way it does. As a researcher, I was not only interested in the actions of the women principals, but also tried to find out how they represented their feelings and thoughts in their actions as they navigated their way on that path.

Qualitative research describes and analyses people and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions and will help me to interpret how these women negotiate school culture in terms of the meaning they bring (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:395). It gives a clear, detailed account of actions and the presentation of actions to gain a better understanding of the world in which

school culture is negotiated. Through qualitative study, according to Henning *et al.* (2004:3), I was able to capture the freedom and natural development of the women's actions and presentations. I want to develop and explain, in argument, by using evidence from data and from literature, how women negotiate school culture.

In a qualitative study, participants have a more open-ended way of giving their views and demonstrating their actions (Henning *et al.*, 2004:5). I became the main instrument of research, making meaning out of my engagement in the project (Henning *et al.*, 2004:7). I became "immersed" in the situation and phenomenon studied, that is, how women influence others as they navigate their way through school culture (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001: 396).

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:396), qualitative research is first concerned with understanding the social phenomena from the participants' perspective (point of view), which Brink (1996:12) regards as the emic perspective. I studied the participants' perspective with interactive strategies to obtain valid data, e.g. interviews, shadowing and document analysis.

This study adopted a qualitative design, for it focuses on qualitative aspects, which are meaning, experience and understanding. This research was based on a constructivist philosophy that assumes reality as a multilayered, interactive and shared social experience, interpreted by individuals, meaning reality is a social construct (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:396).

3.2 THE CASE STUDY METHOD

3.2.1 What is a case study?

According to Yin (1989) (cited in Phendla, 1995:34), a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident

and for which multiple sources of evidence are used. Yin further indicates that a case study is used because –

- it gives explanations to the causal links in real life;
- it gives meaning to contemporary phenomenon researches that are too complex for a survey or experimental strategies;
- it is able to describe or even predict the contemporary phenomenon in the real-life context in which an intervention has occurred;
- it illustrates the intervention itself; and
- it is used to explore the situations and outcomes.

Creswell (1994:12) defines case study as a type of qualitative research in which a researcher explores a single entity or phenomenon ("the case") by time and activity (a programme, event, process, institution or social group), and collects detailed information by using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time.

Gall, Borg and Gall (1996:549) contend that researchers generally do case studies for one of the following three purposes:

- To provide a detailed description of a phenomenon.
- To develop possible explanations of a phenomenon.
- To evaluate a phenomenon.

Case study has advantages, even though Yin (1989) (cited in Phendla, 1995:35) indicates the main four traditional prejudices against using a case study as a strategy for conducting research as follows:

- Case studies lack rigour. They are sloppy and allow equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of findings and the conclusion.
- They provide very little basis for scientific generalisation; for example, from a single case to a loner population or inverse. However, they are generalised to theoretical proposition.

- Case studies are time consuming and result in immense, unreadable documents.
- Good case studies are very difficult to do, as skills for doing good case studies have not been defined yet.

Case study necessitates in-depth investigation. Further contexts are unique and dynamic, and it investigates and reports the complex dynamic and unfolding interaction of events, human relationships and other factors in a unique instance (Cohen *et al.*, 2005:181). Hughes (1995:317) (cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2005:181) regards case studies as valuable in that they focus on individual actors and seek to understand their perception of events, and highlight specific events that are relevant to the case.

A case study is more appropriate for this study, since I seek to provide a significant amount of descriptive information of a single subject through detailed in-depth data collection methods involving multiple sources, such as interviews, shadowing and document analysis (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:36; Brink 1996:116).

3.2.2 Advantages and disadvantages of a case study

Nisbet and Watt (in Cohen *et al.*, 2005:184) mention the following advantages of case studies:

- The results are more easily understood by a wide audience (including non-academics), since they are frequently written in everyday, non-professional language.
- They are immediately intelligible; that is, they speak for themselves.
- They catch unique features that may otherwise be lost in larger scale data (e.g. surveys), and these unique features might hold the key to understanding the situation.
- They are strong on reality.

- They provide insight into other, similar situations and cases, thereby assisting the interpretation of other, similar cases.
- A case study can be undertaken by a single researcher, without needing a full research team.
- The research is confined to a small number of subjects (Brink, 1996:116).

Case studies are disadvantageous in that they are time consuming and may be costly. Subjects may drop out if a case study is carried out over an extended period (Brink, 1996:116). Results may not be generalised, except where other researchers see their applicability; they are not easily open to cross-checking and may thus be selective, biased, personal and subjective; and, they are prone to problems of observer bias, despite efforts to address reflexivity (Nisbet and Watt, 1984) (cited in Cohen *et al.*, 2005:184).

3.3 SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

I employed non-probability sampling, since it deals with samples from smaller groups, and will, therefore, select three women principals on the basis of their characteristics, e.g. knowledge of the subject being studied and the fact that they are rich in information (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001: 174).

However, I took into consideration the two major limitations of non-probability sampling, namely that one cannot generalise the findings and that the sample may be biased.

3.3.1 Population

A population is the sum total of all the cases that meet my definition of the unit of analysis (White, 2003:57), i.e. all women principals in rural schools. It is a collection of objects, events or individuals having some common characteristics that the researcher is interested in studying, e.g. principals of schools (de Vos *et*

al., 1998:190). These individuals or units have to share a common set of characteristics, e.g. women principals working in rural schools

3.3.2 Sampling

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:400) maintain that purposeful sampling is "selecting information-rich, key informants for study in-depth. It is when one wants to understand something about the cases without needing or desiring to generalise to all such cases (Patton, 1990:169) (cited in McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:400). Purposeful sampling is done to increase the utility of information obtained from small samples. The researcher searches for information-rich key informants, because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena being researched, (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:401). The power and logic of purposeful sampling is that few cases studied in-depth yield many insights about the topic.

I purposively selected three women principals from the three categories of schools found in the Mabopane Area Project Office (MAPO) of the North-West Province of South Africa, i.e. primary school (Grades R-6), middle school (Grades 7-9), and high school (Grades 10-12). I deliberately selected multiple settings to explore the differences that might occur amongst the women principals and to ascertain whether there were commonalities.

I personally contacted the participants, since I knew them well.

3.3.3 Sampling criteria

Simelane (1998:22) maintains that there are certain characteristics that should be taken into consideration in a target group. In this study, the participants should meet the following criteria:

- Women principals
- Working in the rural schools of the MAPO
- Agree to participate in the study

3.4 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

For the purpose of this study, I explored a variety of sources, such as interviews, shadowing session and document analysis.

I developed an interview schedule for principals as a framework to use during the study. In order to develop the interview schedule, I used interview protocols developed by Phendla (2000) and Beaudoin and Taylor (2004), and adapted them for use with women principals. I used the interview schedule as an instrument to generate evidence from the principals. To enhance the evidence, I also shadowed each principal for a day and prepared field notes, as well as an artefact analysis for triangulation. I ensured that ethical measures for conducting interviews were observed throughout, e.g. getting permission to tape-record the interview. I encouraged participants to be open, became empathetic, sensitive and sincere.

The data collection methods that I used described each participant's understanding of how she leads within her own setting, hence three settings.

3.4.1 Interviews

The study used semi-structured interviews, in order to obtain a detailed picture of participants' beliefs and perceptions of their experiences, of how women principals negotiate school culture (Devos *et al.*, 2005: 296). I asked questions to obtain meaningful information and to find out what is on each participant's mind, since this could not be directly observed or measured. According to Merriam (1998) (cited in Varley, 2004:40), interviews bring new discoveries, broaden experiences and confirm previous knowledge.

The semi-structured interview gave me and the participants much greater flexibility, because I prepared an interview schedule to guide the interview and asked open-ended questions to allow the participants to express themselves freely (Devos *et al.*, 2005:297).

I tape-recorded the interviews because the tape recorder gives a fuller record than taking notes and enabled me to concentrate on the proceedings of the interview, including non-verbal communication (Smit *et al.*, 1995:17) (cited in Devos *et al*., 2005:298).

I conducted two interviews of an hour with each of the women principals. The initial interview with each participant was to collect baseline data. The second interview took place after transcribing the first interviews and preparing the field notes for shadowing and artefact analysis for clarification of the issues that emerged.

Advantages and disadvantages of interviews

The interview is advantageous in that it is flexible, the interviewer can probe for answers that are more specific, and can repeat a question when the response indicates that the respondent misunderstood. The interviewer can observe non-verbal behaviour and can assess the validity of the respondents. The interviewer can make sure that all the questions are answered. She has control over the order of questions, and can make sure that the respondent does not answer questions out of context (White, 2003:76). Cohen *et al*. (2005:269) maintains that interviews have a higher response rate and that the researcher has an opportunity to probe.

I acknowledge the advantages of using a tape recorder, since it is an effective way of obtaining depth in data and a useful way to get large amounts of data quickly (Devos *et al.*, 2005:299).I was aware that I had to obtain permission from

the participants to use a tape recorder, because they might feel uncomfortable being tape-recorded and might even withdraw (Devos *et al.*, 2005: 299).

I acknowledge that interview studies can be costly, they may require more time and there is less anonymity in that the interviewer knows the participant's name and address and often his or her telephone number (White, 2003:77).

3.4.2 Shadowing

Shadowing is an observation technique for collecting descriptive data on behaviour, events and situations (Brink, 1996:150; Phendla 2000:32). It helped me, as a researcher, to observe behaviour as it occurs (Brink, 1996:150). I used shadowing to observe each participant for a day at their various institutions, as arranged with them.

Brink (1996:150) distinguishes between structured observation and unstructured observation. Structured observation specifies, in advance, what behaviours or events are to be observed and is commonly used in quantitative studies. Unstructured observation involves the collection of descriptive information that is analysed qualitatively rather that quantitatively. This enabled me to describe events or behaviours as they occurred. Common record-keeping in unstructured observation studies are logs and field notes. A log is a daily record of events and conversations that took place, while field notes tend to be much broader than the simple listing of occurrences (Brink, 1996:151). I therefore made use of field notes.

Observation may also be categorised according to the degree of researcher involvement. Spradly (1980) (cited in Brink, 1996:151) identifies five types of participation, ranging from non-participation, where there is no involvement with the research subjects, to complete participation, where there is total involvement with the subjects and the environment.

Complete participant – Researcher participate actively without the knowledge or consent of the participants

Active participant – Researcher participates actively and discloses his or her identity and purpose to the participants

Moderate participant – Researcher interacts with participants but is less involved with the actual activities

Passive participant – Researcher studies the activities merely as an observer with little interaction or involvement with participants

Non-participant – No interaction or involvement, only direct observation

Observation is an active process, which includes non-verbal cues – facial expressions, gestures and tone of voice, body movements and other non-verbalised, social interactions that suggest the subtle meaning of language. I sought different views of events from the participants for accuracy and confirmation (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:439). I elicited data that were nearly impossible with other approaches and had access to some unique kinds of information (Wilson, 1977:256) (cited in McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:440).

Phendla (2000:32) maintains that a shadowing session is important because –

- it enables the researcher to understand verbal and non-verbal messages through their activities;
- it provides an opportunity to observe, understand and question the meaning of subtle actions, which may not have surfaced in face-to-face interviews; and
- it is a valuable episode that enriches data and helps to fill gaps that may not have been obvious in face-to-face interviews.

In this study, I disclosed my identity and purpose to the participants. I shadowed each of the participants for a day at their respective schools, as arranged with them, where I observed and took note of how they interacted with learners, educators, parents and the community at large (Phendla, 2000:32).I shadowed the three women on separate days. I had an opportunity to attend a farewell function organised by one school to bid farewell to their Grade 6 learners, since they were about to complete their junior phase and were, therefore, supposed to move on to the senior phase, which is middle school, with Grades 7-9.

3.4.3 Document analysis

According to Yin (2003:87) the use of documents is also an appropriate form of data gathering when constructing case studies – documents "corroborate and augment evidence from other sources".

McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 42) regard artefacts as material objects and symbolic of a current or past event, group, person or organisation. These objects are tangible entities that reveal social processes, meanings and values. Symbols are logos, mascots of schools and teams, while objects are diplomas, award plaques, and students' products of artwork, papers and posters. As a qualitative researcher, I am not interested in the artefact itself but rather in the meaning assigned to the artefact and the social processes that produced the artefact.

I requested each of the participants to provide and explain one artefact, which depicted the culture of the school, for analysis and made some notes on the meaning the participants attached to the artefacts regarding their school culture. The women presented artefacts, such as a picture, vision and mission statement, and a bar graph of results.

According to Phendla (2000:33), lessons from the meaning depicted in such artefacts indicate that we need to look beyond the obvious to derive meaningful existence and that however small and insignificant, symbols and artefacts do

have more meaning for different people and help them survive the challenges of life.

Advantages and disadvantages of document analysis

According to de Vos *et al.* (2005:318), the following are advantages of document analysis:

- Document study is relatively more affordable than, for instance, a comprehensive survey.
- Unlike surveys and experiments where respondents are aware of the fact that they are being studied, producers of documents do not necessarily anticipate analysis of the documents at a later stage. The contents of the documents are therefore not affected by the activities of the researcher.
- Document analysis is the only method in which the researcher does not have to make personal contact with the participant.
- A person may be more likely to make confessions in a document than in an interview or mailed questionnaire.

Bailey (1994:296-298) and Monette *et al.* (1994:205-206) (cited in de Vos *et al.*, 2005:318-319) identify the following disadvantages:

- Documents may often be incomplete, which means that there are gaps in the database that cannot be filled in any other way. Some personal documents are not written for research purposes and often assume specific knowledge that researchers who are unfamiliar with certain events will not possess.
- Since documents are not intended for research purposes, there are factors that can influence the objectivity of documents; for example, autobiographies may be written with a view to making money.
- The preservation of documents may be a problem; for example, written documents may be destroyed by the elements, such as a fire, flood or storm, and ordinary letters, diaries or reports may become illegible over time.

- In some fields of study, documents are simply not available because no records have ever been kept, while, in other cases, records have been kept but are classified or inaccessible for security reasons.
- Lack of linguistic skill may negatively influence the contents of documents and their researchability, since the researcher is dependent on the ability of respondents to write and formulate clearly and meaningfully, for those documents are the only data available to her.
- It is often impossible to ascertain critical factors, such as the origin or the date of a document.
- Official documents are stored in great volume over a certain period in a particular place, and such documents are often incomplete, unorganised, or in various stages of deterioration, a situation that encumbers research or even makes it impossible.

3.5 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data analysis refers to the organising, analysing and interpretation of data (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:466). Qualitative data analysis is a process of selecting, categorising, comparing and synthesising and interpreting to provide explanations for a single phenomenon of interest (McMillan and Schumacher 2001:462).

I used two interviews, shadowing and artefacts, to collect data. To make sense out of data, I read the transcripts over and over, to see what emerged from the text as important (Phendla, 2000:34). Barrit (1989) (cited in Phendla, 2000:34) contends that the researcher is charged with the task of trying to go to the core of the matter by looking for themes that lie concealed in the unexamined events of everyday life to find meaningful shared themes in different people's descriptions of common experiences.

I analysed data through coding, categorising, comparing and contrasting each category, looking for patterns among categories (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001:462-476). I constantly compared the information by going through the data over and over again to identify, revise, modify and amend new categories until they could be placed in suitable themes (Phendla, 2000:34).

I ensured credibility by taking the transcripts and field notes back to the participants for an accuracy check.

3.6 LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Limitations

Due to the method I employed, which is the case study, I cannot generalise the findings for all women principals.

My subjectivity, on account of my experience as a woman principal for 13 years in a rural area, has made it difficult not to interpret some of the participants' revelations as being reflected in my own experience (Phendla, 2000:36).

Delimitations

The MAPO has more than three women principals, but this research focused on three women principals purposively selected from the rest, women principals from each of the category of schools found in the North-West Province of SA, namely primary school, middle school and high school. The study focuses on how those women principals negotiate school culture. Only the selected women principals were interviewed and shadowed, and an analysis was made of one artefact from each school. I was thus able to conclude the findings according to the data collected.

The research focused on multiple sites of one Area Project Office to construct the case study.

3.7 VALIDITY OF THE STUDY

According to McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 407), validity answers these questions:

- Do researchers actually observe what they think they observe?
- Do researchers actually hear the meanings they think they hear?

The validity of qualitative design means the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings for the participant and the researcher. The researcher and the participants agree on the description or composition of events, especially, the meanings of those events (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001: 407). Claims of validity rest on the data collection and analysis techniques and also involve issues of ethics and feasibility, because of the variety of designs, research questions and situations (McMillan and Schumacher, 2001: 407-408).

McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 407-410) maintain that the researcher should use a combination of any of the following strategies to enhance validity in qualitative design:
Multi-method strategies, prolonged and persistent field work, low-inference descriptor, multiple researchers, mechanically recorded data, participant researcher, member checking, participant review, negative cases.

I considered the following strategies to enhance the validity of my study:

- Multi-method strategies: I employed several data collection strategies, such as interviews, shadowing and artefact analysis for triangulation.

- Participant language and verbatim accounts: Using informant interviews phrased in the participants' language, verbatim accounts of conversations

- Mechanically recorded data: I used a tape recorder to capture an accurate and relatively complete record.

- Member checking: I went back to the participants for an accuracy check and probed my interview to obtain a more complete and subtle meaning.

- Participant review: I asked the participants to review their transcripts and to modify any information or interpretation of the interview data.

- Acknowledgement of biases: I acknowledged that my biases as a woman, teacher, and head of department, principal, wife and mother might influence the study.

3.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to de Vos *et al.* (2005: 57), ethical issues serve as standards and a basis upon which each researcher ought to evaluate his or her own conduct and they should, therefore, be continuously borne in mind and be internalised in the researcher's personality.

For the purpose of this research, I considered the following ethical issues as mentioned by de Vos *et al.* (2005:58-65), Mouton (2001:243-245) and Cohen *et al.* (2000:60-63).

Informed consent

I convened a meeting with each of the possible participants, where I informed them about the purpose, procedures, confidentiality and anonymity before I invited them to give their consent to participate. I then wrote a letter to each of the participants to invite them to participate in the research project. I laid down all the ethical issues on the invitation letter. I included my contacts in case the participants needed greater clarity. I also included my supervisor's contact numbers for further enquiries.

Voluntary participation

I informed the participants in the invitation letter that their participation in the research project is voluntarily and that they may choose to withdraw their participation at any time without penalty.

Privacy, confidentiality and anonymity

I protected the identity of the participants to the best of my ability. I used pseudonyms to hide the participants' identities and the identity of their schools. All the data and tape recordings are kept confidential and the participants' identity will remain anonymous.

Honesty and trust

I observed the principle of trust, at all times, and I did not expose the participants to any risk or harm due to this research project. All the information collected was reported as honestly as possible and will be used for the research project only. Participants will not be exposed to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes. This research is to be used by the University of Pretoria for examination purposes only, but should the question of publication arise at a later stage, I will seek permission from the participants.

Harm and risk

I promised participants that they would not be exposed or placed at any risk or be harmed due to their participation in this research project, and that all the information collected would be used for this study only. I promised to subscribe to the research culture of respect for the human dignity and welfare of the participants, in that the participants would not be placed at any risk or be harmed in any manner, and that privacy, confidentiality and the anonymity of participants would be protected at all times.

Benefits for and advantages to participants

The participants will gain valuable knowledge, experience and skills by participating in the research project. Participants will be empowered.

3.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter gave the importance of a qualitative design, the case study method, its advantages and disadvantages, including procedures for data collection. The case study is about how three women principals negotiate school culture in the Department of Education of the North-West Province. Three women were purposively selected based on their position as principals of schools in rural areas.

The chapter outlined the type of research design I used. I also gave the reasons why I used the chosen research methods. I stated the area where this research was conducted, the sampling method used, the data collection strategies, and the procedure for data analysis.

In summing-up, this chapter gave information about the what, the where and the how of the research project.

Chapter 4 will present the research findings.

CHAPTER 4: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The findings of this study are based on the semi-structured interviews, field notes from shadowing the women, and the meaning derived from the artefacts provided in an effort to understand how these women lead and how things are done at their various institutions. The shadowing session gave me a chance to observe the behaviour of the participants as it occurred and I was able to observe verbal and non-verbal messages through their activities (Brink, 1996:150; Phendla, 2000:32).

I drew on the experiences of three women in principal posts in primary, middle and high schools from one Area Project Office (district) of the North-West Province of South Africa, since they led the way of doing things at their various institutions. Leading the school culture is traditionally a male domain, and, since women are still underrepresented in that leadership role, their leadership is in adverse of male domination and their own marginalisation, subordination, oppression and lack of power and voice (Phendla, 2000:56). It has therefore become important to pay attention to the way women act out their leadership role.

There is a need to understand the complexity of how women leaders in this study are negotiating activities in the environment where school culture takes place. I argue that women, as the marginalised group due to their gender, have to overcome obstacles in order to lead the way when doing things that need to be done in this time of school reform, where stakeholders need to be included in decision-making processes at school level. This has important results in terms of how they act out their leadership role. In the midst of coping with the trials and tribulations of their everyday life, women in leadership positions are in various ways involved in leading the activities at their schools successfully.

4.2 PSEUDONYMS

I used pseudonyms to mask and protect the identities of the participants and their schools. I derived the pseudonyms from my discussion with the participants. I called the first participant, “Early-bird”, because she constantly referred to herself as an early-bird who was always the first person at work each day. She indicated that she preferred to be the first person and attributed this to her late father’s habit of waking her up in the morning when she was young and constantly reminding her that, if she woke up early, she would catch the fattest worm. Early-bird is the principal of School A and holds a post at Post Level 3.

The second participant I called, “Multipurpose”, because she reported that the school had only five staff members and that she, consequently, did everything herself. She is a principal, deputy, head of department (HOD), a register educator, an all-rounder. She is the principal of School B and also holds a post at Post Level 3.

The third and last participant I called, “Screwdriver”, for she indicated that she was very kind and likened herself to a loose screw that needs to be tightened up, since the educators, parents and learners are taking advantage of her kindness. Screwdriver is the principal of School C and holds a post at the same post level as the other participants.

The table below indicates the profiles of the participants, e.g. Pseudonym, school, age, marital status, qualification, experience as a teacher, and experience as a principal.

PSEUDONYM	SCHOOL	AGE	MARITAL STATUS	QUALIFICATION	YEARS IN TEACHING	YEARS AS PRINCIPAL
Early-bird	A	57	Married	Matric PTC SEC SED BA BEd: Management ACE	33	5
Multipurpose	B	47	Divorcee	Matric UDES BA	15	8
Screwdriver	C	55	Widow	Matric PTC SED HED FED BEd: Management	33	11

Table3: Model adopted from Phendla (2000:57)

All the participants became educators during the apartheid era and thus experienced both systems of education, that in the apartheid era and that in the post-apartheid era, even though Multipurpose only served for a year in the old educational system. This has given them a good opportunity to compare the two systems, that is, the autocratic versus the democratic way of doing things (Phendla, 2000:60).

PRESENTATION OF THE WOMEN PRINCIPALS

4.2.1 Early-bird

Early-bird is 57 years old and has been teaching for 33 years. Early-bird is petite, very neat and her non-verbal communication wraps it all up. She calls herself “Jolly Early-bird”, and regards herself as very strict when it comes to work. Naturally, Early-bird is a jolly person. She is very flexible and talkative. She is pleasant to deal with. She is a progressive person, academically, which is evident from her academic record. She is married but does not have children of her own. She is a stepmother to her husband’s daughter who has four children and, therefore, enjoys looking after her four grandchildren.

School A is a primary school built in 1955 and situated in a rural village north of Mabopane. It offers Grades 1-6 and is a section 21 school with a total number of 253 learners. It has a staff complement of 9, including the participant: two males and seven females. The buildings look old but are kept clean and neat. It has four blocks of four classrooms each, and the fifth block is the administration block, which has a kitchen, a strong room, an HOD office, and the principal’s office. The school has one dilapidated block of pit toilets for girls, boys and educators and does not have running water. It does have a borehole and uses a water pump.

As I entered the school yard, I realised that the school was unique. There was an atmosphere that made me feel that this was a school. Learners were in the classrooms, none were roaming about, and the day's business was going well. The noise was moderate, learning and teaching were going on. It was a serious business. On my first appointment for the interview, I found the school gate closed, but as I approached the gate, one of the vendors at the school greeted me and opened the gate for me. There were no signposts, but I could easily identify a small block of three classrooms as the administration block.

At the principal's office, I was ushered in by one male educator who immediately informed me that the principal was around and that he would call her. The educator told me that he knew that I was coming. The principal's office was very small and compact but very clean with curtains and built-in cupboards, files neatly covered, marked and arranged. Photos of events and activities that took place in the past were displayed on the walls.

Early-bird came in, greeted me with a smile. She took me around the school before we started with the interview. Teachers were busy in the classrooms; therefore, we did not disturb them and it was near knock-off time. We returned to the office and, immediately, one of the educators organised refreshments for us. The participant closed the door and we started with the interview. At knock-off time, the educators came in to sign the time register and, as they left, they reminded Early-bird that we should not stay too long as the place was not safe.

On the day of my first interview, I happened to meet the chairperson of the SGB who came to finalise the arrangements for fixing the principal's office ceiling and cupboards that were vandalised a week before, and I realised that the two worked together harmoniously. Later that day, an elderly woman came to the office to request Early-bird to make photocopies of their group's identities, since the group was going to participate in some sporting activities in Brits. Early-bird agreed and the old lady was asked to collect all the identities for photocopying

the following day. She later reported that she usually offered this kind of service to the community for free, in particular, the senior citizens in the village. When we left that day, there were two boys standing outside the schoolyard and Early-bird called one of them and she gave them food to eat. She indicated that they used to attend school there and that she knew their background.

I was invited to that farewell function and it gave me an opportunity to observe how Early-bird interacted with the stakeholders. At the function, educators were awarded presents for their effort in making the school a better place for learning. Learners who had been performing well throughout the year got certificates and, to my surprise, I also got a pen as a token of appreciation for attending the function. The parents and learners received a meal for the day. It was exciting to see the cooperation between the stakeholders at that function. Learners presented items with the help of the educators, and the participant gave a moving speech, thanking the parents for their effort in making a contribution to the school. She reminded the stakeholders about the name of the school and its meaning, and used the school's name to motivate learners, educators and parents.

As motivation, she mentioned former learners from the community who were now successful and making the school proud. She also touched on the issue of HIV/AIDS. Finally, she wished Grade 6 learners good luck in their examinations and ordered them to behave themselves the following year at their various institutions where they were going to pursue their studies.

Early-bird reported that she had been an HOD at the same school for over ten years before she became the principal, that she was the fourth principal of the school but the first woman principal since the inception of the school, and that she had been the principal for five years.

She reported that she liked singing and currently sang in a church choir, played netball to keep healthy, watched television and went to church. At the time of the interview, she was following a course in flower arrangement. She furthermore reported that she was an Abet educator, had a certificate to that effect, and that she used to teach adults in the past when adults used to attend in the evening. She had since left Abet because Abet students now attended during the day, no longer in the evening, as before.

The participant indicated that she was the first to arrive at school every morning; she opened the office and the classrooms and started with her day's work. She said she took after her former principal who was male and very strict and conservative. She indicated that she had organised a donation of R20 000 for the computer centre at the school and had converted one classroom into a computer laboratory. She further indicated that she had organised a donation of 30 computers for the school and that the learners now had an opportunity to become computer-literate.

She reported that she did not have support staff and did all the administration herself, taught one class of Mathematics, Grade 6, and shared the learning area with one of the educators. She further indicated that she did not have a free period and that she, sometimes, even forgot to eat during break. She said the educators sometimes asked her: "Where is your food? Did you have your lunch?", because she was very busy attending to parents and visitors as they came to the school.

Early-bird regarded leadership as a process of helping others or empowering subordinates. She indicated that, as a leader, one should have self confidence in order to influence staff and further indicated that it was important that a leader should be assertive, because that would encourage teachers to take her advice and understand her.

She further indicated that, as a principal, one should show the teachers love and sympathy. She went on to say that one had to know one's team. Her words were: "Know your teachers, so that when they are not well, you can easily recognise that, and, if you see them sulk, ask them what the problem is". She gave an example of an educator whom we found asleep in the staffroom when she took me around and indicated that that teacher was not well; she had spoken to the teacher earlier on and the teacher had indicated that she would consult the doctor after work. She reported that this was one of the reasons why she came early, to see to the well-being of both learners and educators, so that, if there was a problem, she could sort it out before school started.

She reported that she had a good relationship with stakeholders, gave them clear direction, and acted in an exemplary manner. She said that one should have the interest of the stakeholders at heart and went on to say that she gave herself time to study and know her people. She indicated that she knew how to manoeuvre her group and that she was approachable but firm. She reported that she believed in developing staff, giving them a chance to grow by allowing them a chance to chair meetings in their departments and to go out and seek information on certain things that they did not understand. She indicated that she encouraged educators to share information.

She said that she was democratic and consultative. Her words were: "I consult even for a small thing". She indicated that she could not do without consultation, and further indicated that she consulted but knew deep down in her heart that she had an idea or an answer, that if stakeholders gave her ideas, she scrutinised them, but, if it they did not suit her, she used her own. She indicated that she, sometimes, accepted their ideas, e.g. the curtains in the office and the flowers on the office table. She acknowledged that she only agreed with ideas that were in line with policy. She emphasised that she followed policy. Her words were: "I agree with the stakeholders only if what they say is according to the rules and regulations".

Early-bird reported that, on account of their small number, there was no communication structure, which made it possible for everybody to communicate directly with her. She said that she had an open-door policy, in that stakeholders were free to talk to her directly. She furthermore indicated that there was two-way communication, that, whoever had anything that he or she wished to bring to the fore was free to do so. She emphasised that, as a leader, one had to learn to communicate with stakeholders. Her words were: “Have a listening ear”. She indicated that it was very important to communicate with all the stakeholders in order to share information. She reported that one had to be open in communicating with stakeholders and admit it when one was at fault. Her words were: “Do not be afraid to tell your subordinates that you are wrong”.

She reported that there were structures such as the SGB and the SMT that worked together to govern the school according to SASA. She reported that the SGB developed policies and that the SMT had to see to their implementation. She indicated that stakeholders were involved in the formulation of the policies. Even though most of the SGB members were not literate, they were cooperative.

Early-bird reported that they worked together as a team, that, whatever they did, they did together. She said that delegation was part of the game, meaning that she used delegation to empower educators. She further reported that there were different committees, such as finance, sport, condolence, culture, etc., and that each had its chairperson, own policy and action plan. At the time of the interview, she reported that they were busy with the farewell function and the awards, and that she served in the awards committee. She further reported that they gave one another mandates and later met for feedback in their preparations for the function.

She reported that they shared information, as well, and gave an example of the portrait in her office, which she presented as an artefact. She indicated that she got it from one of the educators. Her words were: “If you have information, share with us, so that we can help one another; let’s work together to develop one another”.

She reported that they were engaged in a number of activities that promoted teamwork among the staff, such as morning briefings, celebrating birthdays, a staff club and others, in addition to formal monthly staff meetings. She reported that those briefings were held every morning before they started to work in order to check if all the educators were present and to set the tone for the day. They celebrated staff birthdays, when they bought a cake and card and sang a birthday song for the member, had a staff club where they contributed money which they saved for a period of a year and shared the money with each other in January of every year to help them pay for their children's school fees. They also supported one another, morally and financially, in the bereavement of immediate family members, as well as contributed money to buy flowers, fruit and a card if one of the staff members became ill. She further indicated that such activities bound the staff together.

She reported that she encouraged her educators to further their studies, and boasted that some of her educators were studying further, while the rest had graduated already. She further indicated that some educators who used to work at her school had been promoted, because she always encouraged her educators to apply for promotional posts and felt proud when they got appointed because she had served as their mentor.

Early-bird reported that she had a good relationship with stakeholders and the community at large to the extent that they called her “Mother” from the youngest to the oldest in the community. She indicated that she felt proud one day, when one of the former learners, who were at the Pretoria University at that time,

indicated that one of his lecturers had commended his handwriting. He came to thank the participant for that legacy.

She reported that she planned alone and thereafter consulted educators who were then given a chance to make inputs to modify the initial plans, and further indicated that she did not involve her HOD in the initial planning, because she knew she dominated him. She said that there was flexibility, in that educators could hold meetings with the parents without her being present, but that she received reports of the meetings, afterwards. She further indicated that her plans failed due to outside plans that clashed with her own, e.g. meetings, workshops arranged by her superiors. She reported that one other serious challenge was the fact that the union's activities took place during teaching time.

She indicated that there were no procedures to follow in decision making, so the stakeholders could talk directly to her. She reported that they all took part in decision making, in that any educator, who had a point, could put it forward and then the point was discussed until they reached an agreement.

Early-bird reported that the area where the school was situated was not developing and thus not growing, that people were relocating, which affected the learner numbers. The declining school numbers impacted on the number of educators and the money the school received from the Department. She further reported that the majority of the parents were unemployed and poor and that they ended up being unable to pay school fees, which made it hard to manage the school. She reported that, due to a lack of funds, the resources were a serious challenge. She indicated that the school had one computer and a small photocopier. She further indicated that the use of technology was a problem, since there were no telephones, and the cellular network was a problem as well.

She reported that she failed to change or renovate the old buildings due to lack of funds. She also indicated that the school was experiencing a high rate of

burglary and vandalism, that people even stole the groceries meant for the feeding scheme for the learners, and that they vandalised the school records as well. She showed me a big hole on the office ceiling, broken cupboard doors, and window panes that were recently replaced as a result of a burglary that took place the previous week. She further indicated that, as a school, they had to fix the same things again and again due to burglary and vandalism.

Early-bird reported that she had a hectic schedule, and that she experienced pressure from her seniors that made her work under duress, at all times, in that she received information today that should have been submitted yesterday. She indicated that she received no formal support and, therefore, had to find people who could help her. Her words were: “I have to fend for myself; I read books on leadership and meet with other principals like you to share my frustrations”. She furthermore indicated that she networked with other women principals to minimise her frustrations and admitted to using her husband as a support system.

Early-bird indicated that, despite the challenges that she experienced, she did not feel any pressure to go on pension. She indicated that, although there were lots of changes taking place in the system, she did not feel threatened, was coping and would only leave the system at the age of sixty years.

REFLECTIONS ON THE MEANING OF THE ARTEFACT

For an artefact, Early-bird presented a portrait of a well-dressed lady who held a book in her left hand and used her right hand to stress a point. Around this lady there were arrows pointing at key words, such as “plans thoroughly, has a positive attitude towards stakeholders, is flexible, keeps stakeholders’ individual differences in mind” and others. She indicated that she got the portrait from one of her female educators. She further reported that the original portrait was about an effective educator and she modified and adapted it to that of an effective leader.

Early-bird indicated that the portrait spoke to her in many ways; it asked her whether she had planned and prepared thoroughly for her work; it motivated her always to become a better leader from whom people could always benefit, a leader who was exemplary and empowered others. She reported that the portrait encouraged her to have a positive attitude towards the stakeholders; it worked on her morals, emotions and values, which helped her a lot. She further reported that it was like having her immediate superior around her who always monitored her progress and kept her on track and focused.

She indicated that, every day, the portrait talked to her. Her words were: “It asks as to whether I am ready for the day, it gives me direction for the day on a weekly basis, monthly, quarterly and, finally, for the whole year; it just keeps me going”.

4.2.2 Multi-purpose

Multi-purpose is 47 years old, a divorcee, a mother of three and a grandmother. She was the principal of School B. She has been teaching for fifteen years, had been a school principal for eight years, and had not previously been an HOD or a deputy principal. She was the third principal of School B and took over after two male principals.

School B was established in 1993. It consists of two blocks of three classes each, is situated in a village north-west of Mabopane and was built by the community. Multipurpose indicated that the school was named after the first chieftain of the community where the school was built. It is a high school offering Grades 10–12. It is a section 21 school and, at the time of the interview, had 128 learners. The school consists of five classrooms, and there are five educators, meaning that the principal is also a register educator. There are two classes of Grade 10, two classes of Grade11 and one class of Grade 12. The staff establishment of School B consists of one male and four females, including the participant.

The two interviews that I conducted with Multipurpose were held in the privacy of her own home. She explained that, due to her tight schedule, we might be disturbed if we held the interviews at the school, and that it was not safe to be at the school, after hours, because its situation was remote and there were no houses around the school.

Multipurpose reported that she liked listening to music, staying indoors and singing in church. She teaches three learning areas: Afrikaans, Life Science and Mathematics Literacy. She further reported that she spent much of her time in the classroom. She reported that because there are only five educators, they re-group the learners so as to be able to teach, if one educator is absent. She further reported that the learners moved to the educators from one class to the other and that the educators did not go to the learners.

Multipurpose regards leadership as being empowering, being exemplary and influencing stakeholders of a particular institution. She attributed her leadership skills to her adoptive parents who always encouraged her from a young age to stand her ground and be firm when confronted by challenges. She also indicated that she had acquired leadership skills at high school where she had been head prefect, and that she regarded leadership as having numerous challenges. She further indicated that, currently, the concept of leadership differed from the previous concept, due to democracy, and that there were lots of challenges in practising democracy, because it was difficult to please everybody.

She reported that, as a leader, she practised participative leadership, involving stakeholders in whatever she did, and that she used the bottom–up approach rather than the top–down approach. She furthermore indicated that she embraced others' views and opinions in dealing with stakeholders, in an effort to be collaborative. She indicated that she preferred participative leadership. It

reduced conflict, because stakeholders agreed on what should to be done, and, finally, owned the decision.

She indicated that she was a quiet person and did not like talking a lot but that, if there was a problem, she talked to and reprimanded stakeholders. She regarded herself as a disciplinarian and boasted that there was discipline at her school; teachers and learners were punctual, learners wore the school uniform and there was mutual respect among teachers and learners. She reported that when she was wrong, she admitted it and apologised, and furthermore indicated that she had changed a lot since the new dispensation came in. She acknowledged that she came from the old school of thought, which was autocratic, but that she had now changed into being more democratic in her dealings with stakeholders.
She indicated that, as a principal, she had power and that she used her power to influence educators to do their work, monitor progress and, at the same time, lead by example. She further indicated that she used her position and power to supervise educators in order to empower them.

Multipurpose admitted that there were no structures for communication and that there was no need for them because of their small number. Everyone was free to talk directly to her, even the learners. She was of the opinion that communication had to be a two-way traffic. She indicated that she communicated a lot, to the extent that people joined her. She further indicated that she made people feel comfortable to talk to her for she was simple and very open. She said that everyone was at a liberty to talk to her, because she had an open-door policy and was approachable. She regarded listening skills as one of the most important aspects of communication.
Multipurpose acknowledged that, even though she tried her level best to involve stakeholders in the communication process, she was not happy about the degree of stakeholders' commitment, because stakeholders agreed on certain issues, but failed to implement their decisions, because they lacked the will to do so. She indicated that, because she employed the concept of free and open

communication, stakeholders could discuss anything with her, and that confidentiality was guaranteed when anyone communicated with her. She further indicated that she always acted as a mediator between the parents and their children and gave an example of a parent who came to the school furious because her child had misbehaved at home and she wanted to chase the child away. She reported that she intervened and pleaded with the parent to give the child another chance and that the parent agreed.

She reported that she did not spend a lot of time with parents due to her heavy workload, and that the only time she spent with parents was at parents' meetings or when a parent had a complaint and visited the school. She indicated that learners took her as their mother. She reported that she is taking care of some of the needy learners, buys them food, pay for their school fees and buy them school uniform. She reported that she visited their homes to check on their wellbeing. She further indicated that she knows where each of the learners stays. She boasted about one learner who did the school proud in 2006 by obtaining good grade 12 results and got a bursary to further his studies at university and indicated that such a learner becomes a role model to other learners at the school.

Multipurpose reported that the SGB was one of her biggest problems, because there was lot of in-fighting among the members of the SGB, and that this hampered progress. She reported that the SGB failed to be a body of "self-starters," they had to be pushed every time something had to be done. She indicated that the SGB was not helpful and that she had realised that they only wanted to be involved if money was involved. Her words were: "If there is no money, they do not help or offer their services, so I have resorted to using influential parents, and I sometimes wish those parents were SGB members".

Multipurpose reported that the SGB kept on postponing their responsibility of developing policies or rather amending those that already existed. Her words

were: “I use force, power to get them to work; I write them letters and phone them, because I have realised that they are not self-starters and that you have to push them to do their job”. She attested that there was lot of “lip service” by the SGB. They agreed on issues but failed to implement their decisions. Her words were: “I force them to implement agreements, because they hold themselves back”. She indicated that sometimes it was as if the SGB did not understand the importance of its role. She indicated that most of the SGB members were guardians because the parents were not staying at home; the children were staying alone. Multipurpose indicated that most of the SGB members were her products and acted on behalf of the parents because the latter were working far from home.

Multipurpose said that she encouraged stakeholders to work together as a team, in particular, the educators. She indicated that they always came together so as to agree on whatever had to be done because there were only a few of them. She further said that such a small number made it easy for them to work together; all had a chance to say something and this reduced resistance, for people ended up owning whatever decision they made. She further indicated that it was not easy, because they were all overloaded and, as a result, never took part in extra-curricular activities.

Multipurpose reported that she involved stakeholders in decision making. Her words were: “I do not decide alone, I involve stakeholders, in particular, educators, so that they can own the decisions taken”. She acknowledged that, due to the time factor, they did not always include learners when making decisions. Her words were: “We just inform them. You know, in our culture, children are not always taken on board when making decisions”.

Multipurpose indicated that she experienced many problems both inside and outside the school. There were problems with the stakeholders, who did not want to get involved in school matters; so, she ended up forcing them to assume their

responsibilities. She reported that she had experienced a lot of disrespect from some stakeholders, in particular, males among the staff, SGB and the parents. Her words were:" Initially, I experienced resistance; disrespect and isolation, but later they realised that I was there to stay and that I can stand my ground". She indicated that educators did not want to help her with office work. Their reason was that they did not get paid for it. She furthermore said that educators had tried to isolate her but had then realised that isolating her did not help, because if she was not in, due to meetings and workshops, it was up to them to see to it that things were done.

Multipurpose reported that the school received funds from the Department of Education, because it was a section 21school, but that the funds were not enough due to the low number of learners, and that the parents failed to augment the funds allocated by the Department because they had heard from the media that education was free and that others who were unable to pay due to poverty had to be exempted from paying. This made it difficult to manage the school. She reported that there was a lack of resources, human and physical, in particular, funds. She further indicated that there was no electricity in the classrooms. Only the administration block was electrified and the school did not even have a computer. She indicated that the school had struggled to buy a photocopier, which, for security reasons, was accommodated at a parent's house.

Multipurpose reported that she received no formal support as a woman principal from the system. She further indicated that there were only two women high-school principals in their circuit and that she was feeling isolated because the majority of the principals were male and the structures were predominantly male, as well; that other the principals looked down on her. She indicated that she drew strength from her previous experience at Correctional Services where she worked for five years before she trained as a teacher. That experience helped her to cope with the problems she experienced with stakeholders.

Multipurpose indicated that she was disillusioned about the system and felt like resigning. She alluded to the fact that there were many changes going on in the system but that there was no support for managing those changes. She acknowledged that she usually shared her problems with associates, other women principals at other school levels, and that she did this, casually, as she attended meetings or if she happened to meet them elsewhere. She further indicated that sharing with other women principals relieved her a lot. Her words were: “Sharing is very important and therapeutic”. She admitted that she sometimes shared her frustrations with her eldest daughter who was her pillar of strength.

REFLECTION ON THE MEANING OF THE ARTEFACT

Multipurpose presented a bar graph of Grade 12 results from 1996 to 2006. She indicated that she had developed this graph with the help of the educators to see where the school came from and where it was going in terms of results. When one entered the school office, the graph is so conspicuous that one cannot miss it. It is very colourful, and she indicated that the colours had a certain meaning: bright colours showed good performance, and dark colours bad performance.

She reported that she wanted people to admire the results and explained that the bar graph spoke to all the stakeholders, in particular, educators, learners and parents. She further indicated that she always talked to the teachers and learners about the graph to encourage them to work hard to achieve their goal. She indicated that at the beginning of the academic year, stakeholders agreed on the target for the results and that, in 2006, their target was 100%. Unfortunately, they got 86%. She furthermore reported that individual educators understood the graph well; they revisited it from time to time and discussed it with the learners in order to encourage them to work hard to achieve the set target.

4.2.3 Screwdriver

Screwdriver is 55 years old, a widow and a mother of two. Academically, she is very progressive. This is evident from her academic record. Screwdriver is well groomed and looks much younger than her age. She has a strong personality and attributes this to the fact that she lost a husband at a very young age and had to be strong for her two children. She is very confident and one can notice that from the way she moves, for it says all.

She was the founder principal of school C and it was established in 1996. School C is a middle school offering Grades7–9 and is situated in a village north of Mabopane. It is a section 21 school with a total of 410 learners and a staff of fourteen educators, including the participant: nine female and five male. The school was built by the Department of Education.

The school is built with face bricks and it looks beautiful compared to Schools A and B. It consists of five blocks, two of which are the classrooms. One block has seven classrooms and the other four classrooms: in total, eleven classrooms. The school has running water and flush toilets, and is well fenced and electrified. The third block is a recreational facility for learners. It has change rooms, and the learners use it to change for sporting activities. There is a corridor which leads to both the classrooms and the recreational facility.

The fourth block is the administration block, with offices for the SMT and administrator, staff room, sick room, storeroom and flush toilets for staff members. When one enters the administration block, there is a bench where visitors sit and wait and, next to the bench, a flower bed with flowers. The place looks beautiful with those green plants. The fifth block is the toilets for both girls and boys and, although they are in one block, the genders are separated.

The principal’s office is spacious and neat with a notice board, and important information, such as the school’s timetable, the vision and mission statement,

learning area allocation and other important information, is conspicuously displayed.

The school was clean, there were no broken windows. Screwdriver indicated that the school was experiencing a serious problem of vandalism. She reported that, at the time of the interview, there had already been five burglaries, the strong room door had to be replaced twice to the extent that they had run out of strategies as to how to secure the school. She furthermore reported that she had even lost some important departmental records because of burglary and vandalism.

During my shadowing session, I was able to talk to one of the male educators admiring the school security, in particular the fencing, and he indicated that the people around the school were stealing the fence, particularly at the back of the school, and that it cost them a lot because they had to replace it often instead of spending the money on other things. I also observed that learners who were late in the morning did some campus care during break as a form of punishment and that one educator supervised them. When they returned the garden tools to the store room, the educator counted the tools before putting them back in the storeroom. I was impressed to see how careful and responsible the educator was with school property.

The first interview that I had with Screwdriver was conducted in the privacy of her home to avoid disturbance, since she had a tight schedule and we might have been interrupted at the school. The second interview was held at the school where I happened to meet one of the parent members of the SGB who came to check on the arrangement of the meeting to be held that weekend. The principal introduced me and we conversed on the issue of how we could improve the standard of education at our institutions. He was worried about vandalism to school property and I realised that this parent was also concerned about safety and security at the school.

Screwdriver reported that she had been teaching for 33 years, had been a principal for 11 years. She indicated that, before she became a principal, she had served as an HOD for more that six years at a school in the same village where she now was a principal, and had been mentored by a male principal. She furthermore reported that she taught Arts and Culture to three classes did not have a deputy and that the deputy post had been vacant for some time. She indicated that she did not have support staff and did all the clerical work herself, including photocopying.

Screwdriver regards leadership as a challenge. A lot is expected of her as a person and people forget that she is human. She indicated that she exercised a lot of patience because people assumed that she understood because she was a woman and a mother. Her words were: “I act as a mother figure, I am patient, I am empathetic, I sympathise with those that need it, I am a good listener, I let people open up, I have an open-door policy so that people can feel free to talk to me, and I welcome inputs and suggestion”.

She reported that she was accommodating and regarded herself as firm, empathetic and very understanding. She indicated that she was not a difficult person. Her words were: “I am not tough (autocratic), I am not the kind of a person who would just say: “No, no, no, I don’t want to hear this” She indicated that she led by example and that she was always punctual; that she preached punctuality to both learners and educators. She also indicated that she encouraged educators to further their studies and to apply for promotional posts. She also said that she always called parents of learners who had problems and encouraged them to help their children do their work. Her words were: “Educating these learners become a joint effort, kgetse ya tsie e kgonwa ke go tshwaraganelwa”.

Screwdriver reported that she did not have support staff and, therefore, also did administrative work with the help of other educators, and that she did not have a deputy. The post had been vacant for a long time. She also indicated that she taught three classes of Arts and Culture, and monitored the work of the HOD's. She did all this work, typed, attended to visitors, attended meetings and workshops, and attended to the finances; that was why she said her day was hectic. She further indicated that she sometimes supervised the learners when they cleaned the campus, toilets, and emptied the dustbins, making sure they burnt the rubbish – more items added to a hectic schedule.

Screwdriver reported that there were no structures for communication, since she had a staff of 15 members and regarded this number as small. She reported that she had an open-door policy allowing educators, parents and learners to communicate directly with her. Screwdriver further reported that, if she was wrong and the stakeholders made her aware of it, she admitted to it, for she knew she was human and capable of making mistakes. She indicated that stakeholders had a right to correct her if she was wrong and that she accepted it. She further admitted that she was not a "know-all" type of a person.

Screwdriver regards SBM as decision making at school level. She regards it as a drive to change the way things have been done in the past. She agrees that the SBM approach has changed the way things have been done in the past. She further indicated that systems were different, that the top–down approach no longer worked, that "democracy" was the buzz word and that the emphasis was on doing things together. She indicated that, through SBM, principals had been stripped of their power and that leading schools had become difficult, because stakeholders did not understand democracy. She was afraid that schools would collapse, because, in most cases, stakeholders pushed their own interests rather than that of the learners.

She reported that the SGB did not do its part and relied on her for decision making. She reported that she always had to come in and guide them. She further indicated that it was rare for the SGB to make a decision and to implement that decision to the latter, and that it frustrated her, since she constantly had to remind them of their role. She indicated that the SGB failed to take decisions for they did not want to be accountable and did not want to take up responsibility. She complained that the SGB had held only one meeting and that it hampered her progress.

Screwdriver indicated that she practised teamwork, always shared ideas with stakeholders and accepted their inputs. She reported that she involved and accommodated everybody at the meetings they held and managed together with stakeholders. She emphasised that she encouraged team spirit and that this was evident from the different committees that were responsible for the organisation of certain activities, such as sport, examinations, campus care, entertainment, and others. She believes that deciding things together is good because people own the decision; they know and understand what is expected of them.

She alluded to the fact that, in the past, a principal would sit in her office and decide alone, but that, today, one had to decide with the team, one had to engage stakeholders in the process of negotiation to avoid being challenged. Her words were: “Nowadays people ask: Why? Why? Why?” Screwdriver indicated that anyone could come with an input – educators, SMT, parents, learners or community members – everybody was at a liberty to give input.

She indicated that she experienced gossip that threatened the team spirit. She blamed the SMT members in that they lacked professionalism and leaked the information before they met with the staff members. She further indicated that she experienced the “us–them” attitude of educators who felt that they were not part of the SMT, and the “pull-her-down” syndrome (PHDS). She indicated that women naturally had a PHDS, and that staff members undermined one another

to the extent that their school culture was destroyed because they no longer did things that used to hold them together, such as closing parties, due to differences and problems they had experienced in the past of pulling one another down.

Screwdriver reported that she experienced pressure from both inside and outside the institution, because a lot was expected of her as a leader and people forgot that she was human. She further indicated that people expected too much from her and that she ended up frustrated. She reported that stakeholders failed to adhere to agreements and had to be constantly reminded of agreements. Her words were: “I always remind them: ‘People, we agreed on this and please let us adhere to it”. She said that she was not going to allow challenges to pull her down, she faced them head on.

She reported that the gender issue was still a problem and emphasised that stakeholders, in particular, males, sometimes took advantage of her because of her gender. She reported that, at meetings, parents took it for granted that she would understand. Her words were: “You know that we have other responsibilities, you are a person (human), and you have to understand”. She indicated that she experienced problems with her staff, in particular, the men. She reported that men were a minority in her staff but she had realised that they had this attitude that she was a woman and they took advantage of that.

She alluded to the fact that society still had the idea that women should be submissive in nature and that men were leaders. She indicated that the community was surprised that she was a principal and was asking itself how a woman could possibly tell a man what to do. This made things difficult for her. She further reported that she kept on reminding them that, although she was undeniably a woman, the bottom line was she was their leader. Her words were: “I am the manager, you’re the senior”. She reported that, as a woman leader, she had to go that extra mile constantly to show and remind people that she was their leader.

She reported that she experienced negative attitudes on the part of the educators, but that she was patient and accommodating. She indicated that educators only saw their own rights and forgot that learners had rights as well. Her words were: “I study a person and accommodate him or her because I know that the society they live in make them regard me the way they do”. She reported that, at meetings, men disagreed a lot with her and women would humble themselves and would say: ‘Do not worry, we will do it’. She further indicated that old men who attended parents’ meetings regarded her as a young girl, and they talked as they wish. Her words were: “I exercise patience and accommodate them; I have to go that extra mile to convince them that I am knowledgeable and capable”.

Screwdriver reported that she got frustrated when she came up with a brilliant idea and stakeholders disagreed or saw it differently from they way she saw it or brought it forth. In most cases, that brilliant idea fell flat or vanished into thin air. She further indicated that, as a woman leader, she did not cope well, since she experienced a lot of obstacles along her way. She reported that she did not receive any form of formal support, in particular, as a woman. She reported that, if there were any forms of support for women principals, she had never seen, heard of or experienced them. If she had frustrations, she talked to other colleagues, like me, the researcher, even males. She indicated that there was a school next door and that she sometimes talked to the principal of that school, even if he was a male. Sometimes, she even shared her frustrations with her children at home. She admitted that if she talked to somebody it made her feel better.

REFLECTION ON THE MEANING OF THE ARTEFACT

In an effort to drive the activities of the school, Screwdriver sat down with stakeholders and came up with the idea of formulating the vision and mission

statement of the school. She indicated that she was looking at what they wanted as a school, what kind of learners they taught and what kind of product they wanted. She further reported that they were looking at what they had to do to be able to offer their learners top-quality education. She indicated that she came up with a draft and discussed it with the educators, the SGB, learners and, finally, the parents. The vision and mission statement serve as their yardstick in their daily endeavours. They always check themselves against the mission, to check whether what they are doing is right or not.

She indicated that, normally, when they reviewed their work, they went back to the mission statement and used it to judge themselves against it. She reported that it gave them the directive for what they were expected to do, and reminded them of things they forgot. She alluded to the fact that, because they were human, they did forget about certain important things, taking them for granted, and that the mission statement reminded them. She indicated that the mission statement motivated and encouraged them to do their work to the best of their ability. She reported that she had a feeling that they were not doing enough regarding their work and was very much concerned. Her other concern was that not all stakeholders were so committed, in particular, the SGB.

4.4 CONCLUSION

The women in this study shared their experiences of their leadership style, communication style, and manner of communication, ethic of care, sources of influence, frustrations and support in their role as principals. They used these to create a caring atmosphere where stakeholders felt free to participate in activities that promoted a positive school culture. The participants worked tirelessly to create an environment where learners would experience positive learning and teachers could teach freely and successfully.

These women principals see themselves as having to negotiate a series of obstacles on their way of leading in doing the things that needed to be done at their various institutions. It is evident from the participants' discussions that they do have hectic schedules. They indicated that, amidst challenges, they also experienced successes.

All the women encouraged teamwork and collaboration. They displayed an ethic of care to stakeholders. They all felt isolated in their workplaces. They were frustrated by lack of resources, in particular, funds. They expressed their frustrations about a lack of support from staff, parents and immediate superiors. They acknowledged that networking with colleagues was therapeutic.

This gave me an opportunity to understand the reason behind the few numbers of women in leadership positions. Most literature research is done on males and those male orientated models of leadership are used to study women as managers and are regarded to be a yardstick in the female leadership approach.

Women's style of leading is consultative, interactive and participative, and, at the same time, there is evidence of similarities and differences between participants' experiences.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This study sought to understand how women principals negotiated school culture in the MAPO in the North-West Province of South Africa. This chapter of the study gives answers to the research questions posed in Chapter 1.

This chapter, therefore, analyses the findings of the data collected in the course of the study, on the basis of the research questions and data collected. The chapter consists of discussions of the findings presented in the previous chapter. It furthermore highlights the recommendations based on the findings, as well as the conclusions of the study. Data will be analysed on the basis of the following research questions:

- What factors influence women principals in negotiating school culture?
- What leadership style do women principals display in negotiating school culture?
- What barriers do women principals experience when negotiating school culture?
- What support do women principals need in negotiating school culture?

5.2 RESPONDING TO QUESTIONS:

5.2.1 What factors influence women principals in negotiating school culture?

All the participants indicated that available structures at their various institutions influence the way they lead how things are done at their institutions. They gave example of the SGB, educators, circuit managers, learners, parents, communities and unions. The study found that in most instances these women

experience negativity from these structures that are expected to join hands with them to pursue the schools goals in particular the SGB and the educators.
The study also found that the kind of leadership style that these participants use plays an important role in influencing how they lead. The women were found to be collaborative, participative, and inclusive, caring have good relationship with stake holders, empowering and promoting team work.

Early-bird was very vocal that she follows policy, and that's that. She indicated that if stakeholders request that something is done she agrees only if it is according to rules and regulations. Other two participants were silent about how policy influences their leadership role.

Mathews and Crow (2003) indicate that the principals' leadership is influenced by both internal and external sources as well as their own leadership style. They classify external sources as policy makers, other administrators and constituents. Other administrators refer to directors, superintendents and other school principals. This group set the direction for policies and procedures. Principals cannot do as they wish for there are policies that guide them in what they can and cannot do and these policies are developed by policy makers. In addition to the afore-mentioned principals are influenced by constituencies such as individuals, business people, religious groups, media and the community. Parents also influence schools in issues such as curriculum offerings, teacher and principal selection including choosing schools for their children.

They further asset that within schools several individuals and groups play leadership roles. These stakeholders can affect decision making of school leaders in subtle but powerful ways. Students are also included in leadership and their presence is greater that ever before and school leaders need to work with these internal groups to lead the way business is done around the school.

All the women principals also regarded communication as a factor that influence their leadership as they endeavour to lead how business is done at their schools. They indicated that they had adopted an open-door policy to enable stakeholders to communicate constantly and effectively.

Early-bird said: "I have an open-door policy where stakeholders feel free to communicate directly to me", while Multipurpose stated: "I communicate a lot, to the extent that people join me. I am simple, open and approachable". Screwdriver indicated that "stakeholders communicate directly with me".

This is consistent with what Ramsey (1999:171) says, namely that the essential tool for leadership is communication and that leaders should keep on communicating, for when they stop communicating, they stop leading. Ramsey further indicates that women tend to communicate openly, honestly and more often. Ozga (1993:11) concurs that women communicate better and furthermore says that women use different, less dominating body language and procedures and that they appear flexible and sensitive. Bush and Coleman (2000:32) agree that women use the body language that indicates a comer status and that they appear more polite and tentative, use qualifiers to simple statements, and tend to use a more participatory and collaborative style to resolve conflict.

Palestini (2003:65) indicates that a transformational leader has to master the skill of communication to be effective. A culture of mutual trust and respect is a prerequisite for effective communication and creates a trusting, supportive environment (Palestini, 2003:67).

All the women principals admitted that they did not have structures for communication; since they were leading small schools and that there was no need for this type of structure. This is in conflict with the work of Leithwood and colleagues (as cited in Marks and Printy, 2003:375). They say leaders need to create structures for participation in school decisions.

They all reported that stakeholders communicated directly with them and that there was a two-way traffic in their communication process. *Early-bird reported that "stakeholders are free to communicate directly with me." Multipurpose indicated that "everyone is free to talk to me, even the learners". Screwdriver said: "I have an open-door policy where educators, parents and learners communicate directly with me".*

This is consistent with the work of Ramsey (1999:172), who says that communication has to be a two-way flow and should be carefully planned, systematically managed and continuously monitored and refined. Morrison (2002:146) indicates that the all-channel is regarded as the most suitable for schools, because knowledge is completely distributed and all channels of communication are being shared. This suggests democracy and sharing where there is a free and complete flow of information and parties are regarded as equals in the communication process.

The women all indicated that they did not have a problem with stakeholders making them aware of their mistakes, *e.g. Early-bird said: "Do not feel afraid to tell your subordinates that you are wrong". Multipurpose said: "When I am wrong, I admit it and apologise. Screwdriver said: "I am human and as a human being I am liable to make mistakes".*

This is in line with the work of Palestini (2003:65), who says that feedback is the most important aspect of the communication process. The women all regarded listening skills as the most important aspect of communication, and Multipurpose further indicated that confidentiality was guaranteed. Early-bird indicated that a leader should know and understand her team so as to approach them correctly. This is in line with the work of Ozga (1993:20), who says that women seem to listen to people and hear them.

Multipurpose indicated that, even though she tried to communicate a lot with the educators, she was communicating less with the parents due to her workload. This might be due to her character, since she said that she was a natural introvert and that her character conflicted against her role as a principal. As Ramsey (1999:186) puts it: When the leader stops communicating, she stops leading.

According to Wheatley (1999:97) (cited in Morrison, 2002:146), the task of the leader is to disseminate information. Communication is every leader's basic responsibility, and to become a better leader, one has to work on becoming a better communicator (Ramsey, 1999:175). Communication lies at the core of every organisation; it is what schools are about. The school leader has the primary responsibility for ensuring an effective communication throughout the organisation and between the school and its multiple audiences (Ramsey, 1999:172). Goldring (2002:33) indicates that culture expresses itself through communication and that it includes the emotions of its members. He furthermore indicates that communication patterns exist internally between staff members and externally between staff and parents and other stakeholders.

All the women understood that the SBM was the decision-making body at school level and reported that it had changed the way things were done in the past. They all indicated that the top–down approach no longer worked and that, nowadays, the emphasis was on doing things together. They reported that they did have structures in place, such as SMT, SGB, and RCL, in secondary schools, which were democratically elected according to SASA, but that those structures were characterised by continuous conflict. This is in line with the work of Steyn (2003:333), who says that the SBM could lead to power struggles, since principals were now required to work with educators, learners, parents and others who might hold different values.

Early-bird reported that the problem with her SGB was that the parent members were illiterate, but the positive factor was that they were cooperative. This might be that they trusted her, because she had been serving there for a long time. This required capacity building to develop and deliver a high-quality education service (Department of Education, 1996).

Multipurpose indicated that the SGB was not helpful; they only want to get involved when money was involved. She also reported that there was lot of in-fighting among the members of the SGB and that it hindered progress. She regarded the SGB as irresponsible and, therefore, used her position and power to force them to work. She indicated that, due to these problems, she resorted to using influential parents to get things done. She indicated that there was lot of lip service, for they agreed on certain issues but failed to implement the decisions. Steyn (2003:334) indicates that education leaders can only perform effectively if the structures within which they are working are effective.

Screwdriver reported that the SGB did not play its part and further indicated that it relied on her for decisions, and then they ended up unhappy with what she had done. She indicated that, in the community where she worked, women were looked down upon, in particular, by men. The women were submissive; they never questioned anything and expected her to be like that. This is consistent with the work of Ozga (1993: 24), who says that women experience an ongoing battle against negative attitudes that undermine the self-confidence that women need in order to remain in control, and, furthermore, indicates that women constantly have to prove themselves to stakeholders.

The above is indicative of the challenges that these women experience individually and collectively. This shift in power is a serious challenge; hence, these women experience resistance to changing the way things have been done in the past.

Multipurpose and Screwdriver indicated that they never involved learners in decision making. Multipurpose even indicated that in our culture we never included children in decision making and further reported that there was no time to do so. As a result, learners are only informed about decisions taken. These two participants show resistance to changing the way things have been done in the past. They seek solace in culture. It shows what culture these women come from, and that it is not easy for them to change their behaviour overnight.

All the women reported that they encouraged stakeholders to work together as a team. They all indicated that they held morning briefings as a form of team building every day before the school started. All these women indicated that they shared ideas with stakeholders and that it reduced resistance, as people are taken on board. *Early-bird said: "I encourage educators to share information", Multipurpose indicated that "we always come together so as to agree on whatever needs to be done. Screwdriver stated: "I always share ideas with stakeholders and accept their inputs.* This is in line with what Beaudoin and Taylor (2004:121) say, namely that collaboration generates a greater number of ideas and provides rewarding experiences of shared success.

Early-bird indicated that she used delegation to empower the educators. She reported that they mandated one another on activities, and that they came together, later, for feedback. Early- bird and Screwdriver reported that they did have different committees that were responsible for coordinating school activities, which reinforced leadership at school level. This is in line with the work of Sergiovanni (2007:76), who says that transformational leaders use the concept of "power to" which is the power to empower others; hence, they view empowerment, delegation, sharing and other values with a target frame of reference (Sergiovanni, 2007:77).

Early-bird indicated that they did have some team-building activities where they socialised informally with colleagues, such as celebrating birthdays, saving money together, which they then shared at the beginning of the year, functions at school, such as the farewell function of the completing class, closing parties, helping one another financially and morally during bereavement, and buying flowers and a card for an ill staff member. This is the tradition of the school.

Screwdriver indicated that they once had team-building activities, such as closing parties and celebrating birthdays, but that they no longer had them on account of gossip. This is in line with Beaudoin and Taylor (2004), who say that gossip can interfere with staff cohesiveness, meaning it brings division between staff members and reduces the likelihood of collaboration. This indeed shows that every school has its own culture (Barth, 2002:7). Altritchter and Elliott (2000:88) posit that culture is both conservative and ever changing, it adapts to influences from other cultures and from changes in the physical, social and political environment. Bush (2003:80) maintains that women put greater emphasis on collaboration and collegiality and that they pursue shared problem solving. Goldring (2002:33) indicates that members of a group have to deal with the stated and unspoken expectations for behaviour norms in each group in order for a team spirit to develop.

All the women indicated that they encouraged collaboration in decision making. They were flexible and relied on the consensus of the stakeholders. They also indicated that collaborative decision making had advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages was that stakeholders owned the decision and it was binding, while a disadvantage was that it was time consuming. Collaborative decision making enhances the flow of information and creates an atmosphere where all members experience a sense of ownership, responsibility is shared and problems are solved together (Steyn, 2003:332).

Carless (1998) (cited in Stelter, 2002:94) contends that women are participative and inclusive because they adopt interpersonally-orientated behaviour, such as participative decision making, and consider others' opinions. Bush (2003:80) posits that women put greater emphasis on collaboration and collegiality; they emphasise negotiation and collaboration and pursue shared problem solving.

Multipurpose confessed that, due to the time factor, they did not always involve learners, they just informed them. She seeks solace in her culture, where children are not involved in decision making, Matthews and Crow (2003) warn school leader that the presence of learners in leadership roles is greater now than ever. It is the responsibility of the leader to empower and support stockholders including learners.

Screwdriver indicated that the decision-making process had changed. It was no longer top–down. They decided together. One had to engage stakeholders in negotiation to avoid being challenged, because democracy made people ask many questions, so one had to take all stakeholders on board for stakeholders to own the decision taken. This is in line with what Gultig and Butler (1999) (cited in Steyn, 2003:331) say, namely that recent reforms changed schools from top–down to participatory management where the decision-making hierarchy becomes flatter.

According to Goldring (2002:33), "decision making" is described as the moral fibre of culture. Decisions made by the group translate the values of the group into actions. Site-based decision making is an example of lateral leadership where members are offered an opportunity to contribute to solving school issues and building a sense of community. Ozga (1993:11) indicates that women value group activities; hence, they use a flexible, supportive and integrative approach that is of particular value to education. Transformational leaders provide intellectual direction and aim at innovating within the organisation, while

empowering and supporting teachers and partners in decision making (Leithwood, 1994, in Marks and Printy 2003:371).

According to Carless (1998:888) (cited in van Engen *et al.*, 2001:582), transformational leaders use lateral or non-traditional thinking, use participative decision making, and promote a cooperative and trusting work environment.

5.2.2 What leadership style do woman principals display in negotiating school culture?

The study found considerable evidence of democratic, participative, consultative, transformational and educative leadership traits in the women principals. These women principals articulated aspects of their leadership in terms of empowerment, influence, sympathy, love, caring, openness, collaboration, inclusiveness, role modelling and warmth. This transformational leadership style seems common among these women.

Early-bird said: "The principal has to show her teachers love and sympathy. Know your teachers, so that when they are not well, you can easily recognise that. I come early to school to see to the well-being of educators and learners, so that, if there is a problem I sort it out before the school starts". Multipurpose stated: "I lead by example, I embrace others' views and opinions and I involve stakeholders in whatever I do, using the bottom– up approach. I employ free and open communication". Screwdriver commented: "I exercise a lot of patience. I am a mother, a sister. I am accommodating, firm, empathetic and very understanding. I am sympathetic and a good listener. I have an open-door policy".

This finding is in agreement with the work of Bush and Coleman (2000:30), who say that women are democratic, caring; tolerant, intuitive, affiliative, informal, warm, friendly, cooperative and sharing, and promote team work and collegiality. Ozga (1993:111) adds that women are aware of individual differences and are non-competitive.

Bush and Coleman (2000:23) maintain that a transformational leader endeavours to empower staff and share leadership functions. Sergiovanni (2007:79) argues that transformational leadership fits best because of the way schools are organised and works due to its ability to tap high levels of woman potential. This type of leadership is about justice, community and equality (Sergiovanni, 2007:79). In transformational cultures, leadership is devolved (Bush and Coleman, 2000:34). Transformative leaders help shape culture, work to design ways and means to transmit that culture to others, but, more importantly, act as guardians of the values that define the culture (Sergiovanni, 1992, in Bush and Coleman, 2000:23).

The principal is the key leader and primary liaison between different stakeholder groups of the school and this role description reflects policy and practice (Smith *et al*., 2006:1). Leaders energise and excite the organisation and people in it by showing what it can become. They shape organisations, involve others in creating its future and model the ways to make it happen (Ramsey, 1999:7).

Women's leadership style is less hierarchical and more democratic, they run closely knit schools, they emphasise cohesiveness, are much less individualistic, and spend time on fostering an integrative culture and climate (Ozga, 1993:11). Women, as transformational leaders, are more concerned with the concept of "power to" because they are concerned with how the power of leadership can help people become more successful, experience a greater sense of efficacy (Sergiovanni, 2007:76).

There is a considerable amount of literature on the differences between the leadership styles of men and women. This study did not take men into account when choosing the sample of principals; therefore, this study did not address that question. Although this study concludes that the women principals employed an interactive, consultative, democratic and transformative, educative leadership style, it does not assume that men are different. This conclusion might be influenced by the fact that the women were principals of small schools and, as a result, the size of the school might encourage substantial interaction with stakeholders.

5.2.3 What barriers do women principals experience when negotiating school culture?

The study found that women experienced obstacles in their endeavours to lead, because of the way things were done at their various institutions. The women stated that they experienced challenges both inside and outside their institutions. The study found that there were similarities and differences in the challenges these women principals experienced.

Internal barriers

Hectic schedule

All the women indicated that they had a hectic schedule, which made them to work under pressure, at all times, being unable to meet deadlines, since they received information from their superiors today, which could have been submitted yesterday. They indicated their frustrations about being expected to teach, to attend to visitors, and to attend to administrative and management issues. They indicated that they did not have support staff. This is consistent with the work of Ozga (1993:23), who says that women view their task as demanding.

Even though the participant indicated that they experience a tight schedule they are making the best out of it. This might be the fact that they see their job as a service to the community (Bush and Coleman, 2000:32). It important that

participant refrain from having their fingers on everything. They need to delegate some of the responsibilities to others because this is a way of empowering stakeholders.

Lack of resources

All the participants articulated that they were experiencing serious problems with resources, buildings, electricity, furniture, staff, and, in particular, financial resources, which made it difficult to run their schools. Parents were poor and were, therefore, unable to pay school funds. They acknowledged that they received an allocation from the Department of Education, but said that it was not enough, since parents failed to augment it. Grant (2006:512) states that the majority of schools are rural and mostly under-resourced.

Safety and security

Vandalism and burglary are some of the factors that hold these women back because, in most cases, they ended up purchasing the same thing over and over. Early-bird kept on fixing the ceiling, broken cupboards and broken window panes in the office, as well as destroyed office documents, Multipurpose had to replace a strong-room door, part of the stolen fence and repair the office ceiling, while Multipurpose indicated that she had to replace forty boxes of duplicating paper and that, due to security reasons, the photocopier the school had bought had to be kept at a parent's house. It was difficult for the educators to prepare work if the machine was not on the school premises.

Governance structure

Both Multipurpose and Screwdriver indicated that the weakest link in the structures of the school was the SGB. They regarded this structure as their biggest challenge. Both indicated that the attitude of the SGB was not right and furthermore indicated that they experienced in-fighting among the members of the SGB, who gave lip service, in that they always agreed on certain issues but failed to implement the decisions. Screwdriver indicated that the SGB did not

want to take decisions; they always told her to do whatever she thought was right but, in the end, they questioned and criticised her decisions. Multipurpose indicated that they only liked to involve themselves when money was involved. This is consistent with the work of Sergiovanni (2007:1), who says that schools face unique political realities where stakeholders do not always agree and that it takes a high level of political skill in leaders to be able to bring about consensus and commitment to make schools work well for everyone.

Gossip and cliques

Screwdriver and Multipurpose indicated that they experienced gossip and the forming of cliques, which threatened the prevailing culture and the team spirit among stakeholders, in particular, educators. This is in line with what Beaudoin and Taylor (2004:68) say, namely that gossip brings division among staff, reduces the staff's willingness to follow the principal as a leader, reduces the likelihood of collaboration and the sharing of ideas, creates a distrustful environment, increases isolation, and generates misrepresentations and resentment. Beaudoin and Taylor (2004) further indicate that, gossip reduces staff willingness to follow the principal as a leader and this may make the principal to resort to gesture of power that may cause distrust.

External barriers

Lack of planning

The study found that, in most cases, the outside plans clashed with the school plans and that the school always had to re-adjust its plans accordingly. All the participants reported that their plans failed as a result of outside plans, e.g. meetings and workshops arranged by superiors, as well as union activities that were held in the course of a school day, when teaching should be taking place.

Stakeholder expectation

The women indicated that they experienced pressure as a result of the high expectations of stakeholders and the community, which left them frustrated. This is in contrast with the work of Beaudoin and Taylor (2004: 76), who say that the problem is less common in under-privileged and multi-ethnic communities where families are often grateful for educators' assistance.

Gender issues

Two of the women principals in secondary schools faced a challenge regarding their gender. The study found that they experienced resistance, disrespect and isolation from stakeholders, in particular, males. They indicated that they could feel this at the meetings they held with parents, as well as with staff. Some male parents called them "girls", a derogatory term for women. They indicated that this had to do with how stakeholders were socialised, and that; as a result, they constantly had to prove to stakeholders that they were knowledgeable and capable. Ozga (1993:24) indicates that women have constantly to prove themselves to stakeholders. Screwdriver indicated that, in the community where she served, if a boy was from the initiation school, he was regarded as a man and could not be reprimanded by a woman; therefore, there were school boys, as well, who disrespected her because of her gender. She further indicated that women were not supposed to oppose men and that, at parents' meetings, women were always submissive and men dominated the meetings. This is in line with the work of Ozga (1993: 22), who says that women experience an ongoing battle against negative attitudes that undermine the self-confidence that women need to remain in control.

The study found that, even though the women had to face challenges, they were successful as well. The women saw themselves as mentors to their staff members, role models to their learners and motivators to the parents and the community. They indicated that they got fulfilment from empowering others, seeing others grow. Multipurpose boasted about her matriculate results, while

Screwdriver and Early-bird boasted about the positive feedback they received from their former learners and the community. This is consistent with the work of Varley (2004:138), who says that middle and high schools are often result-driven while primary schools are child-centred.

Multipurpose and Screwdriver had mixed feelings about their positions as women principals and were unable to hide their emotions; they felt disillusioned and indicated that they felt like leaving the system. They indicated that there were so many changes in the education system that it took its toll on them. Surprisingly, Early-bird, the oldest of the three, although not fully happy about the changes, felt that she could absorb the pressure and was prepared to stay on until her retirement at the age of sixty years.

Maybe this could be because she was the principal of a primary school where the culture was said to be unlike that of secondary schools. This is in line with the work of Cooper (1998) (cited in Prosser, 1999:34), who says that school cultures vary between primary and secondary schools. In primary schools there are care and control, to the extent that when learners leave the primary school it is like leaving family. In contrast, secondary school culture is influenced by the schools' larger size, by departmental structures and by the nature of the teachers' academic orientation (Hargreaves, 1996) (cited in Prosser, 1999:34).

The study found that, despite these challenges, the women exercised a lot of patience, and accommodated all the stakeholders. The study indicated that, even though these women experienced challenges, they acknowledged that they needed support in doing so.

5.2.4 What support do women principals need in negotiating school culture?

From the findings of the study, it is evident that the women principals did not receive any form of formal support from the system. They acknowledged that they could not make it alone. The women indicated that the structures that were available were male dominated and that they felt isolated amidst the males who occupied positions in those structures.

Early-bird said: "I have to fend for myself. I read books on leadership and meet with other women principals like you (researcher) to minimise my frustrations, and I sometimes share them with my husband". Multipurpose had this to say: "I share my problems with associates and do this, casually, as we attend meetings or if I happen to meet one somewhere else. I sometimes share them with my eldest daughter who serves as my pillar of strength". Screwdriver indicated that "I talk to other colleagues like you (researcher), even males. I sometimes even share my frustrations with my children at home"

It is evident that these women received support from their family members, friends and other women principals, such as the researcher. They indicated that they did not fit in the male structures that were available and that it made them feel isolated.

In my interaction with the women principals, networking emerged as a common concept. The women indicated that they had to find their way through to support themselves. All the women regarded networking as important and therapeutic, because it reduced their frustrations. In realising that they were not alone, they felt better. They indicated that they networked casually as they meet with associates at meetings or if they happened to meet them elsewhere.

Early-bird furthermore indicated that she also read books on leadership, while Screwdriver indicated that she talked to other colleagues, including males. She gave an example of her neighbour, who was a male principal, and said that she sometimes talked to him, to reduce her frustrations.

This is consistent with the work of Hill and Ragland (1995:70), who say that personal and professional support systems are very important for female principals, since most rely on family for personal support and colleagues for professional support. Hill and Ragland (1995:89) maintain that it is imperative to become part of a variety of networks, personally and professionally. They further indicate that women need to network nationwide, attend seminars, workshops and conferences, seek out top women leaders with a high-quality attitude towards support, and need to speak with a united voice as women leaders. Participants need to talk to their colleagues about their experiences.

Ozga (1993:23) regards the involvement of women in networks as a solution and beneficial in that women gain emotional support from other women who share similar experiences, which enables the pooling of ideas and sharing of tactics.

5.3 CONLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

The study found considerable evidence of democratic, participative, consultative, transformational and educative leadership traits in all the participants. They used these traits to create caring, productive schools. The study found that the participants worked tirelessly to create a positive environment where stakeholders experienced positive learning and became successful lifelong learners, creating a nurturing atmosphere where stakeholders feel free to participate in activities to achieve the school's goal.

The participants in the study acknowledged that it was not easy to lead as a woman. The study found that the participants experienced a number of obstacles, both inside and outside their institutions, in leading the way to do things at their various institutions. The study also found that, in spite of the obstacles, these participants experienced success. They measured their success in terms of making a difference in other people's lives. The participants measured their success internally in terms of personal fulfilment.

The study found that schools were a hub for in-fighting and that the SGB was the weakest link. There was conflict over matters of policy and practice. The study found that the stakeholders influenced how things were done at school level through their participation.

The study found that the participants felt frustrated by the lack of resources, in particular, funds. The study also found that support systems were imperative for the participants' sustenance. Participants indicated that they felt isolated, since they operated in an area where men were in the majority.

The results of the study offered me an opportunity to understand why women were still underrepresented in leadership positions. Leadership models in education are male dominated and these are used as a yardstick in the female leadership approach.

The study found that the participants appeared to be keen to involve stakeholders in the decision-making processes. They revealed that their decisions were, in most cases, not considered or were subject to change if stakeholders felt like it. The participants' attitude towards learners' involvement and participation in democratic governance is somewhat negative. They regard learners as children, not as stakeholders in their education. These women should know that learner participation in school governance is the law and is, therefore, mandatory.

The participants' stories were of courage, pain, dissatisfaction, disappointment and disillusionment. Indeed school cultures differ.

The participants regarded the following aspects as important in their leadership role:

- Participative leadership
- Open communication
- Collaborative decision making
- Cooperative governance
- Need for resources
- Need for support structures

The study found that two of the participants from secondary schools felt disillusioned and alluded to the fact that they felt like leaving the system because there were too many changes that prevented them from coping, whereas the participant at the primary school was enjoying herself and was staying on, not wanting to leave the system before her pension age.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

In view of the findings of the study, I make the following recommendations:

1) The Department should establish structures to monitor and enforce policy implementation at school level.

2) Communities should be educated so as to equip them with moral values to develop a sense of ownership to be able to take care of their schools and property.

3) National, provincial and area project offices should provide constant and sustainable support to empower women with the necessary skills to cope in their role as leaders.

4) School group structures should receive constant training to make them capable of performing their roles accordingly.

5) Women should establish women forums or associations that could serve as support systems for women aspiring to be leaders and those who were already leaders.

6) The Department should fast-track strategies that are available to solve the problem of a lack of resources at rural schools.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Principals' leadership roles are changing because of the reforms that emphasise empowering teachers and others associated with the organisation.

The findings reflected that women leadership is influenced by a number of factors, such as communication skills, available structures, including their own leadership practice and that within the schools. Several group structures play leadership roles, meaning these women have to work with these groups to carry their leadership role forward. The findings reflected that it was not plain sailing.

To a greater extent, the findings reflected that women still experienced many challenges, such as lack of support, cliques, gossip, disrespect, and the "pull-her-down" syndrome, in their endeavours to lead. School safety measures need to be reinforced. They also lack the necessary support from the Department, as well as structures that would meet their expectations and reduce their frustrations as women.

It is evident from the findings that these women, even though they tried to be inclusive in their leadership practice, had faults as well, as evident in the fact that they failed to involve learners in decision-making processes, regarding them as children. This showed where these women came from and indicated that it was not easy for them to embrace change at once.

The findings also revealed that the SGB had not been empowered to make meaningful contributions in the decision-making processes of the school; hence, one of the participants regarded it as the “weakest link”.

Transformational leadership was seen to be dominant in the leadership of these women. Such leadership is inclusive, empowering, educative, democratic and participative.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Letter of introduction to the study

1695 BLOCK U
MABOPANE
0190
12 March 2007

Dear Madam

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

You are hereby invited to participate in the research project, “HOW WOMEN PRINCIPALS NEGOTIATE SCHOOL CULTURE”, to be conducted by MAPULA R. MABUSELA, MEd student in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria.

The research seeks to explore how women principals negotiate school culture in the rural schools of the Mabopane Area Project Office. If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed twice for periods of one hour each, you will be shadowed for a day and there will be a document analysis of one artefact of your choice. The interview will be tape-recorded and you will have the right not to answer any particular question and to ask that the tape recorder be turned off at any time.

The research project will need you to respond to questions in a free, open and frank manner. Questions will focus on factors influencing women principals in negotiating school culture, leadership styles, challenges that women principals experience and the support they need in negotiating school culture in the rural schools of the Mabopane Project Office.

Your identity will be protected to the best my ability. All the data and tape recordings will be kept confidential and your identity will remain anonymous in the final report. The findings and conclusion of the study will be made available at your request.

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and the information will be used for the research study only. You may choose to withdraw your participation at any time without penalty.

For further information about the research process, feel free to contact my supervisor:

Prof. Thidziambi Phendla
Department of Education Management
School of Education
University of Venda
Tel: 015 962 8244
E-mail: thidziambi.phendla@ univen.ac.za
Fax: 015 962 4749

Thanking you in anticipation of your participation in this study.

Yours truly

.....

Mapula R. Mabusela
(Researcher)
Cell: 082 513 8606
Tel: 012 701 3956
E- mail: mmabusela@mweb.co.za

APPENDIX B: Participant Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I hereby invite you to participate in the research study entitled, “How women principals negotiate school culture”: A case study.

I believe that you read my introductory letter, dated 12 March 2007, which gave details of the purpose and procedure of the study. If you are interested in participating in this study, I will personally conduct two interviews of an hour each, shadow you for a day and request you to provide and explain an artefact of your choice that depicts how you do things around the school.

Be assured that your identity will, at all times, be protected to the best of my ability, during and after the study. The information collected from you as a participant will be treated as confidential and your identity and your schools’ identity will never be disclosed.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and the information will be used for the research study only. You may choose to withdraw your participation at any time without any penalty.

I, ……., declare that I understand the details given by the researcher (Mapula R. Mabusela) about the research project and I willingly agree to participate in the research project.

Name: ……..

Signature: ……

Date: ……

Venue: ……..

APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

1. Tell me about yourself
    - Age
    - Qualification
    - Teaching experience
    - School category
    - Status of the school
    - Marital status
    - Hobbies

2. LEADERSHIP
    - Describe your typical workday. How do you spend your time?
    - What do you understand under “leadership”?
    - How do you see yourself as a leader?
    - How does your gender affect your leadership practices?
    - Describe your leadership style
    - What is your biggest challenge as a leader?
    - What do you understand under the term, “negotiation”?
    - What factors are important in the negotiation process?
    - What is your understanding of the term, “school-based management”? How has it affected your practices as a leader?
    - Provide examples of how you communicate with teachers, parents and learners.
    - How do you use your position and power to influence educators, parents and learners?

- Describe your decision-making process.
- Describe the structures you have put in place to promote effective communication.
- How do you promote team work (team spirit)?
- How do you use the school's vision and mission to direct the activities of the school for effective teaching and learning?
- Researchers believe that women act with an ethic of care (focus on relationships, empowering others and creating a climate of caring). How do you demonstrate an ethic of care in your practice?
- Tell me about your relationship with your teachers, learners and parents.
- What do you understand by democratic school governance? How does it affect you as a leader?
- Who makes the decisions at your school and how?
- What lessons have you learnt that you can share with others?

3. ENVIRONMENT

- How do you understand the term, "school culture"?
- Define the culture of your school. How does this influence the way you practise your leadership?
- What elements characterise a positive school culture?
- From your understanding of school culture, how do you promote a positive school culture?
- What structures are put in place to support women principals in their endeavours to create a positive school culture?
- How are the resources distributed and what criteria are used for the creation of an environment conducive to teaching and learning?
- Tell me about your successes, failures and frustrations in your endeavours to negotiate school culture.
- Tell me about a student who made a profound effect on you.

- What do you think is the most important thing learners get out of their time at your school?
- What do the following stakeholders appreciate about you: learners, educators, parents and the community?
- Tell me about an experience when you learnt something from a parent.

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