

**WOMEN MIDDLE MANAGERS IN SCHOOLS:  
NARRATIVES ABOUT CAPABILITIES AND  
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

by

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## **DECLARATION**

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# **WOMEN MIDDLE MANAGERS IN SCHOOLS: NARRATIVES ABOUT CAPABILITIES AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

## **Abstract**

This study explores the narrated experiences of nine women heads of department (HoDs) in their roles as middle managers of secondary schools in South Africa. There is scant literature about women who hold such positions in schools. Too little is known about how they develop as middle managers and what capabilities they need to perform a management function. This study aims to push that peripheral attention given in education management literature to women in middle management roles in schools into sharp focus by concentrating on the women who operate in this much neglected tier of management. The study seeks to do this by understanding how women HoDs develop capabilities in a changing social context so that they become able to function as transformational middle managers and leaders at secondary schools.

The key critical questions posed in the study are:

- What are the narratives from women HoDs about how they developed their capabilities in a transforming and contested social context?
- What are the capabilities that enable women middle managers to function as managers?
- In what way do the capabilities of women middle managers enable them to function as transformational leaders?

Located within the feminist paradigm, the study employs a participatory narrative methodology in two phases to generate data through qualitative participatory methods such as life-history interviews, letter-writing, journaling and participant observations. The first phase in the field focuses on eliciting accounts from nine women HODs about their lived experiences from early childhood to adulthood in order to understand how they developed their capabilities and how they came to take up management roles. Central to the development of capabilities are family relationships and educational experiences that influenced and equipped them for management. The

second phase of data generation concerns observations and experiences of the women HoDs in their middle management roles. In this part of the study, role models, mentors and practices as middle managers come to the fore.

To understand how women middle managers develop as managers in a transforming school context, and what capabilities enable the women middle managers to function in their role as transformational leaders, the study uses two theoretical lenses. The first lens is Nussbaum's and some educational scholars' expansion of Sen's capability approach; and the second lens is Bass and Avolio's and Leithwood et al's work on the behaviours and attributes of transformational leaders, which are used to separate out the capabilities that enable women to function as transformational middle managers.

Five key findings emerge in this study:

- The foundational management capabilities that enable women to function as transformational leaders in school management develop over an extended period of time from childhood into early career years.
- Women identify mentors and/or role models who are afar from or in close proximity to them and who are located within their personal and/or professional domains as significant formative influences on them as middle managers in schools. While some women assert that their mentors and role models put up some barriers to their development as middle managers, these women employed their agency and resilience to offset any weak capability development.
- Women middle managers' capability to function as transformational HODs is constituted in four attributes that emerge through the practice of behaviours and attributes that characterise transformational leadership. The management capabilities and the transformational leadership functionings are aligned on the basis of leadership attributes, namely, developing knowledge and skills; setting departmental directions; developing people in the department; and redesigning the department.
- While women middle managers in schools have the internal capability to function as transformational leaders based on the foundational management

capabilities they developed over many years, the external conditions within the school context may constrain them from functioning as transformational leaders. When external conditions support the development of women's management capabilities, then women appear to have a strong capability set; however when there are barriers to their capability development, then their capability set may be weak.

- Neither the capability approach nor transformational leadership theory *on their own* is sufficient to understand how women develop capabilities to function as transformational leaders within the middle management tier of schools in the South African context.

Based on these five findings, especially the fifth finding, the thesis of this study is that the affinity and complementariness between the development of foundational management capabilities and the behaviours and attributes of a transformational leader proposes a hybrid of the two theoretical lenses. This new approach, referred to as the Transformational Leadership Capabilities Approach, provides an explanation of how women middle managers develop capabilities appropriate for a management role and how they can function in that management role as transformational leaders. The Transformational Leadership Capabilities Approach unifies the capability approach and transformational leadership theory on the basis that management capabilities and transformational leadership behavioural components and dimensions are complementary.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Declaration</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>Abbreviations List</b>	<b>xii</b>
<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>xiii</b>
<b>Preface: An Autobiographical Narrative of Capabilities and Middle Management</b>	<b>xiv</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	
<b>INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY:</b>	
<b>NARRATIVES OF CAPABILITIES AND TRANSFORMATIONAL</b>	
<b>LEADERSHIP IN WOMEN MIDDLE MANAGERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS</b>	
1	1
1.1 Background and Rationale for the Study	2
1.3 Social and Educational Effects of the Apartheid Legacy	6
1.4 Purpose of the Study	11
1.5 Critical Questions Posed	11
1.6 My Paradigmatic Stance for the Study of the Women Middle Managers	12
1.7 Synopses of Chapters	14
1.8 Concluding Remarks	17
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP</b>	
18	18
2.1 Women in Educational Management and Leadership	18
2.2 The “Middleness” of the Role of Head of Department	28
2.3 Conceptions of Management and Leadership	37
2.4 Concluding Remarks	41

<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	
<b>THE CAPABILITY APPROACH COUPLED WITH</b>	
<b>TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORY FOR STUDYING</b>	
<b>WOMEN MIDDLE MANAGERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS</b>	<b>44</b>
3.1 The Capability Approach	45
3.1.1 Capabilities and Functionings	48
3.1.2 Freedoms and Agency	52
3.2 The Capability Approach and Education	55
3.3 The Capability Approach and the Development of Women Middle Managers	61
3.4 Transformational Leadership Theory	63
3.4.1 The Four Behavioural Components of Transformational Leadership	67
3.5 Transformational Leadership in Education	70
3.6 Coupling of the Capability Approach and Transformational Leadership Theory in this Study	75
3.7 Concluding Remarks	80
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	
<b>NARRATIVE INQUIRY FOR RESEARCHING THE LIVES OF</b>	
<b>WOMEN MIDDLE MANAGERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS</b>	<b>82</b>
4.1 Narrative Inquiry as Methodology	83
4.2 Feminist Research and Narrative Inquiry	85
4.3 The Narrative Inquiry Design of this Research Study	86
4.3.1 Selecting the Participants for the Study	86
4.3.2 Field Texts in the Study's Narrative Inquiry	93
4.3.3 Techniques used in Generating the Field Texts	94
4.4 Analysing the Narratives from the Study	103
4.5 Ethical Considerations	106
4.6 Authenticity and Dependability of the Research	108
4.7 Concluding Remarks	110

<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	
<b>FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD ON: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAPABILITIES OF THE WOMEN HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS</b>	111
5.1 Developing Capabilities	112
5.1.1 Emotional Well-Being	113
5.1.2 Overcoming Adversities	118
5.1.3 “Boys more Academic than Girls”	123
5.2 Experiences of Violence in Schools and of Weak Capability Sets	129
5.3 Career Choices	133
5.4 Concluding Remarks	136
<b>CHAPTER SIX</b>	
<b>ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS IN DEVELOPING CAPABILITIES</b>	138
6.1 Identifying Role Models and Mentors	139
6.2 The Influence of Role Models and Mentors in the Personal Domain	143
6.2.1 “Persevering in my Toil”	143
6.2.2 Interacting with Significant Others	147
6.2.3 Envisioning a Future	149
6.3 The Influence of Role Models and Mentors in the Professional Domain	151
6.3.1 “How Important You are to Me”	151
6.3.2 “You’ve Taught me so Much”	153
6.4 Mentors as Barriers to Advancement	158
6.5 “I am My Own Inspiration”	162
6.6 Concluding Remarks	164
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN</b>	
<b>LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE</b>	166
7.1 Developing Knowledge and Skills in the Department	168
7.2 Setting Department Directions	180
7.2.1 Being an Inspiration as a Middle Manager	181
7.2.2 Goal Setting	187
7.2.3 “I demand a High Standard of Work”	189

7.3	Developing People in the Department	192
7.3.1	“You have to know what the Human is Made of”	192
7.3.2	“I Lead by Example”	195
7.4	Redesigning the Department	197
7.4.1	Creating a Productive Department	198
7.4.2	Fostering Participation in the Department	200
7.5	Working in an External School Context	203
7.6	Concluding Remarks	209

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES**

	<b>OF A TRANSFORMATIONAL MIDDLE MANAGER</b>	212
8.1	Narratives about the Women Middle Managers in the Study	214
8.2	Management Capabilities of the Women Middle Managers	217
8.3	The Transformational Leadership Capability Approach	224
8.4	Final Remarks	229

	<b>REFERENCES</b>	232
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<b>APPENDIX A:</b>	Ethical Clearance: University of KwaZulu-Natal	249
<b>APPENDIX B:</b>	Informed Consent: Department of Education, KwaZulu-Natal (Letter1)	250
<b>APPENDIX C:</b>	Informed Consent Form: KwaZulu-Natal, Department of Education (Letter 2)	251
<b>APPENDIX D:</b>	Sample of Informed Consent from School Principals	252
<b>APPENDIX E:</b>	Sample of Informed Consent from Women Heads of Department	253
<b>APPENDIX F:</b>	Questionnaire for Women Heads of Department	254
<b>APPENDIX G:</b>	Interview Schedule for Women Heads of Department	256
<b>APPENDIX H:</b>	Letter Writing Instrument for Women Heads of Department	259
<b>APPENDIX I:</b>	Instrument for Observation	260
<b>APPENDIX J:</b>	Reflective Journal Writing Instrument for Female Heads of Department	261

<b>APPENDIX K:</b>	Instrument for Life History Interviews	262
<b>APPENDIX L:</b>	Sample of Women Middle Manager's Life History	
	Interview Transcript	264
<b>APPENDIX M:</b>	Sample of Researcher's Journal Entry	268
<b>APPENDIX N:</b>	Sample of a Participant's Journal Entry	273
<b>APPENDIX O:</b>	Biographies of Women Heads of Department	276

### **ABBREVIATIONS LIST**

DoE	Department of Education
GETT	Gender Equity Task Team
GNP	Gross National Product
HD	Human Development
HDI	Human Development Index
HoD	Head of Department
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Index

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>TABLE 2.1</b>	Numbers of educators in public schools by rank and gender in 2004 in South Africa	19
<b>TABLE 2.2</b>	Numbers of educators in public schools by rank and gender in 2005 in the province of KwaZulu-Natal	19
<b>TABLE 2.3</b>	Distribution of post level 2 Educators in 2011 in the KwaZulu-Natal DoE based on race and gender	19
<b>TABLE 3.1</b>	Matrix of the Alignment of the Sets of Ideas in the Capability Approach and Transformational Leadership Theory	76
<b>TABLE 4.1</b>	Biographical data of the nine selected women HoDs	90
<b>TABLE 6.1</b>	Locations of Mentors and Role Models within the Women Middle Managers' Professional and Private Domains and their Respective Sub-binaries	140

## **PREFACE**

### **An Autobiographical Narrative of Capabilities and Middle management**

I am an Indian female who was born in Durban in the province of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa. My schooling began in the late seventies and I schooled in educational institutions that were demarcated for Indian learners during the apartheid era.

I grew up in a nuclear family unit with my parents and an elder sister and our upbringing was steeped in traditional Indian values and culture. I came from a very secure home environment and shared a loving relationship with my parents and sibling. My capabilities of emotion and affiliation or sense of belonging were developed from a young age because the conditions within my family promoted their development.

Both my parents were teachers at primary schools and placed great emphasis on educating my sister and me. Therefore the capability of education began to develop in me from a young age and continued to grow till later in life. However, the external conditions within the schools I attended lacked resources that a well-equipped school should provide for its learners. The lack of resources did not constrain my love for knowledge because I persevered with my studies and planned a career in education. I was inspired by the passion my parents showed for teaching. It was a natural journey for me to follow in my parents' footsteps and I looked upon them as my role models and aspired to be like them: industrious, hard-working and highly ethical individuals who loved to impart and create knowledge. Like some of the women middle managers in my study, my parents were my mentors because they mentored and guided me to lead a productive life, and they gave me the freedom to develop into the type of person I am today, which is an independent woman capable of loving and caring.

Like the woman middle managers in my study, I was also seduced into school leadership as I thought that management would offer me so much more than the

routine I had as a Level 1 educator or class teacher. I willingly accepted the post of Head of Department (HoD), albeit in an acting capacity, when the male HoD was appointed as the Acting Deputy Principal of the school. What was so seductive about this management position? It willingly embraced me and promised me the opportunity to creatively express myself in a formal leadership position. It offered me the freedom to introduce new ideas and to guide teachers in the department to accept the changes that were taking place within the South African educational system. Therefore, I offered no resistance as I was being seduced into a middle management position at school.

Through my practice, I learnt that the role of the head of department was multidimensional because it involved managing the curriculum, managing people and managing the classroom as a teacher. The role entailed managing the knowledge, skills and abilities of the teachers in my team. I had to also manage the knowledge, skills and abilities of the learners. As a middle manager, I was being managed by my seniors. I had to identify which roles I was occupying at different times in the day. I was not trained for this role, but I slipped into it with ease. I was able to be the manager I was because of the capabilities I had developed over the years. The capability to form relationships, to feel compassion and a sense of responsibility for my colleagues and learners and to be ethical in my practices were some of the capabilities I learnt and that were developed through my life experiences. Therefore, my leadership and management abilities were closely related to my capabilities, which I understood as my management capabilities.

My experiences within this middle management tier of school leadership led me to become curious about the development of women middle managers in schools. I wanted to understand how women heads of department practised their roles within the changing educational climate, what capabilities enabled their middle management functioning, and how the women heads of department developed their management capabilities. These questions pushed me in the direction of my study to understand the development of capabilities in women heads of department for their middle management roles within a transforming educational context.

**CHAPTER ONE**  
**INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY: NARRATIVES OF CAPABILITIES**  
**AND TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN WOMEN MIDDLE**  
**MANAGERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

In South Africa, the middle management post at schools is referred to as the head of department (HoD) position. HoDs, the middle managers in schools, are positioned between the educators and the two senior manager posts, the principal and deputy principal. The HoDs form the first tier of the management hierarchy within schools, with the deputy principal and the principal occupying the third and fourth post levels respectively. The Employment of Educators Act (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1998) states that the HoD has the job title of an educator<sup>1</sup> in public schools, is in charge of a subject, learning area or phase and occupies the second post level which is one level above the educators and one level below the deputy principal and principal.

Middle management at secondary schools has been a managerial tier filled by many women for quite some time. This study focuses on the development of women HoDs as middle managers in secondary schools. It explores the development capabilities that enable women middle managers to function as managers and as transformational leaders at secondary schools.

Despite the increased representation of women in decision-making and management positions in government and the corporate sectors in South Africa, there is still a long way to go before institutional power will be shared equally between women and men due to the persistence of a predominantly male culture in most institutions (RSA, 2000b, p. 18). Despite the increase in numbers of women in middle management positions in schools, a similar trend is evident with women being under-represented at senior management levels such as the positions of principal and deputy principal. My study, however, moves beyond the usual gender considerations of the under-

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Employment of Educators Act (RSA, 1998) “educator” means any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional educational services at any public school, further education and training institution, departmental office or adult basic education centre and who is appointed in a post in any educator establishment.

representation of women in management positions in the educational field (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2006; Moorosi, 2008), which some scholars have contended constitutes a focus on management as a noun (West-Burnham, 1994). Instead, I take a different stance by looking at management in the active sense, as a verb, with an emphasis on its performance form of developing for managing and doing management. My inquiry is about how women middle managers develop into capable middle managers. I will show the importance of their life and educational experiences in that development. I will also consider how capabilities that enable some South African women middle managers to perform their school management role relate to the South African policy imperative that they should be transformational leaders. The rationale for this study, and why it is a research worthy topic, is provided in the next section.

### **1.1 Background and Rationale for the Study**

It is well-known that gender inequality exists among the leadership and management echelons in schools in South Africa and abroad. Traditionally, teaching has been viewed as an ideal profession for women because women are associated with childcare and nurturing, and in schools many women have occupied the positions of class or subject teacher. This line of reasoning is confirmed by Cubillo and Brown (2003, p. 279) who state that the “qualities of nurturance and selflessness required of the profession is often thought to be more suited to women”. In education management, on the other hand, women are often subordinate to men (Blackmore, 1993). In South Africa the Gender Equity Task Team’s (GETT) report states that “Education management in South Africa has traditionally been and remains male dominated at the most senior levels of decision making” (Wolpe, Quinlan & Martinez, 1997, p. 10). This situation continues to persist in South Africa in that most of the women in education are teachers (Moorosi, 2006; Unterhalter, 2004). However, more women than men are represented in middle management positions in schools in South Africa. Moorosi (2006) states that in 2004 over 60% of HoD posts were filled by women. This represents an increase since 1997 when 87% of the teachers were women and only 9% were HoDs, 2% were deputy principals and 2% were principals (Chisholm & Napo, 1999, p. 34). Women are also positively represented in HoD positions in the province of KwaZulu-Natal where 66% of the positions were occupied by women in 2005 (Moorosi, 2006). The increase of women in HoD posts point to the

middle management role in South Africa as an important category of management to research.

The middle management tier is important in schools because middle managers are curriculum leaders and manage the curriculum within a department. HoDs play a crucial role in ensuring the delivery of school improvement outcomes. Several international scholars (Brown, Boyle & Boyle, 2000a; Brown, Rutherford & Boyle, 2000b; Busher, 2005; Busher & Harris, 1999; Gold, 1998; Silins & Murray-Harvey, 1999) have noted that the role of the HoD has shifted over the years. This is also true in South Africa due to the extensive post-1994 changes that have taken place within the educational environment when the new democratic government took over from the apartheid<sup>2</sup> regime. The legislative, societal and cultural changes that took place transformed the educational environment during this period, and these changes had a significant influence on the role of the leaders and managers in schools.

There was a similar trend in school leadership in the United Kingdom (Brown et al., 2000b). According to the Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development (DoE, 1996a), the DoE in South Africa radically shifted the direction and vision of the education system after 1994 with new policy initiatives and legislation. The National Policy Framework is set out in the DoE's White Papers on Education and Training One (DoE, 1995) and Two (DoE, 1996b) on organisation, governance and funding of schools, the new national legislation, namely the National Education Policy Act (RSA, 1996a) the South African Council of Educators Act (RSA, 2000a), the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b), as well as various provincial legislation and policy documents that all indicate that South Africa was moving towards a transformed school-based system of education management (DoE, 1996a). The transformation vision of the DoE was to "democratise the education system and devolve decision making to schools" (DoE, 1996a, p. 39). Since schools were expected to become self-managing and democratic, the responsibilities,

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<sup>2</sup> Apartheid refers to the political system in South Africa between 1948 and 1994 for the separate development of people based on race. Apartheid defended the privileges of the white minority and restricted the political, social and economic rights of the black majority (Kallaway, 2002). "white" refers to people of settler European origin and "black" refers to all other racial categories, including indigenous Africans, people of mixed-race and Asian settler origin.

workload and management styles of school leaders and managers would be affected. Thus, with devolved leadership within the school context, HoD responsibilities also changed in primary and secondary schools, with the HoDs becoming more accountable for decision making within their departments and the school as a whole.

Due to the vast changes taking place within the policy and respective management structures in South Africa and schools abroad, the actual role of the HoD lacks clarity and understanding. However, much of the international literature indicates that the role of the HoD is poorly defined and multifaceted, and not widely understood (Blandford, 1997; McLendon & Crowther, 1998). Bennet, Woods, Wise and Newton (2007) state that there are tensions in the role of middle leaders in secondary schools. The first key tension is the expectation that the role has a whole school focus and a loyalty to the department, and the second tension is between a growing school culture of line management with a hierarchical structure and collegiality within the school (Bennet et al., 2007, p. 456) Moreover, there is no widely accepted job description that delineates the roles and responsibilities of the HoD, and little is known about how the role is performed in schools (Harris, 1998). This is confirmed by Rosenfeld, Ehrich & Cranston (2008) who state that the role of the head of department in schools is under researched.

The HoD post is sandwiched between the educators and senior manager posts and it is worthy of note that the incumbent functions in both categories, but does not belong exclusively to either group. HoDs are in a key position because they influence standards and the implementation of all school policies, manage the work of a team of classroom teachers in a particular department, and are directly accountable for the teaching and learning within schools. Yet educational research often neglects HoDs (Hill, 1995; McLendon & Crowther, 1998). Although the middle management position is the driving force in a school, because middle managers are directly responsible for teaching and learning within departments, this level in the management hierarchy has received far less attention in educational research, compared to research on the school principal and classroom teacher (Collier et al., 2002). The HoD plays a critical role within the school structure because the HoD supports classroom teachers who have the prime responsibility for the enhancement of teaching and learning in classrooms (Brown & Rutherford, 1999). Nevertheless Connors (1999, p. 27) notes that few studies internationally have explored the

importance and dimensions of the HoD's role in secondary schools. It is only in recent years that the work of the HoD has been receiving recognition of this important layer of management and its integral role in school effectiveness. Nevertheless, the school context within which the woman HoD works may constrain her freedom to act, and therefore to function effectively (O'Neill & Flecknoe, 2002).

More importantly to my study is the observation that, internationally and locally, research on women in middle management has been neglected. Research attention focuses more on women in senior management positions rather than on women in the lower echelons of management. Even many women researchers over the years, such as Chisholm (2001), Coleman (2002), Mannah (2008), Moorosi (2006), Ozga (1993) and Shakeshaft (1987) based their research on women in upper management positions and not on women in middle management positions. There are two exceptions to this.

The first is in a Master of Education (MEd) dissertation by Dayanthie Naidoo (2002) which is about women HoDs in the commerce department in secondary schools. Her study explores the gendered experiences of four women HoDs in secondary schools in Durban, South Africa. Naidoo found that the women in the positions of commerce HoDs were marginalised, either by departmental decisions taken by upper management (namely the principal and deputy principal), or by being outnumbered by men holding administrative positions. The women HoDs were not given the power and authority to act independently in their positions of leadership.

The second study is by Connie Zulu (2011) who investigated the way women HoDs in six universities in South Africa and the United Kingdom construct understandings of leadership and management of the academic department. Zulu found that women HoDs of university academic departments led by strong communication and interpersonal skills, information and power sharing, professionalism and integrity, servant leadership, participatory, collaborative, androgynous and transformational leadership styles.

My study is about women HoDs in secondary schools. However, it is not confined to women middle managers in a particular subject area; rather, it considers women managers as women middle managers per se, how they develop and come to manage and lead a department in their school. Their experiences as middle managers and how they develop, manage and enact their roles includes an inquiry into the contextual

factors within their private and professional lives, because these influences are assumed to be intrinsic to the development of their capabilities as women middle managers and their stance as transformational leaders. In my study, I will focus on nine women HoDs, who are in HoD posts at secondary schools in two circuits of South Africa's education system. This will be elaborated on when I discuss my methodology for the study (see Chapter Four).

In the next section, I outline the historical legacy of apartheid, how it played out in terms of the racialised and gendered inequalities in South African schools, and their management.

### **1.3 Social and Educational Effects of the Apartheid Legacy**

Prior to 1994, racial inequality permeated the fabric of the South African nation. By this, I mean that the political, economic and educational structures were racialised in favour of the white minority. Apartheid was designed to promote Afrikaner culture, language and economic interests (Kallaway, 2002, p. 1) and to undermine the political, educational and economic rights of the other race groups, i.e. black African, Indian and Coloured communities. South Africa was a pluralistic society and people were separated into four main population groups<sup>3</sup> by the Afrikaner apartheid government (Ebr.-Vally, 2001; Lemon, 2008). The people of South Africa were categorised as black African<sup>4</sup>, coloured<sup>5</sup>, Indian<sup>6</sup> and white<sup>7</sup> by the apartheid government. During apartheid rule the Afrikaner Nationalists categorised people into race groups in South Africa in two steps. The first involved labelling people randomly according to physical traits mainly, and then classifying them according to language

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<sup>3</sup> The term "population group" was invented by and for the apartheid regime (Ebr.-Vally, 2001, p.37).

<sup>4</sup> "Black" referred to all people who were not classified as "white" in the apartheid system and "African" referred to the black people who were indigenous to South Africa and who tended to speak English as a second (or third) language (Morrell, 2001, p. 155).

<sup>5</sup> "Coloured", in South Africa refers to a mixed-race population group living mainly in the Western Cape (Lemon, 2008, p. 310).

<sup>6</sup> The Indian population entered South Africa primarily as indentured labourers from the Indian sub-continent between 1860 and 1911 and a small number of others came in the 1880s and 1890s in response to the commercial opportunities presented by the indentured labourers (Lemon, 2008, p. 297).

<sup>7</sup> "White" in South Africa refers to the English and Afrikaans-speaking people of European settler origin (Kallaway, 2002).

and religion (Ebr.-Vally, 2001, p. 57). Separation between the race groups in South Africa by the Nationalist government was a way to protect and keep the “purity” of the white race and to “ensure colonial paternalism” (Ebr.-Vally, 2001, p. 62).

Through various legislative systems those who were not white were disempowered and dehumanised, nor did they have the freedoms and resources that were available to the whites (Abdi, 2002; Ebr.-Vally, 2001; Kallaway, 2002 for a fuller account of the apartheid system).

To ensure continued white sovereignty over all race groups, the apartheid government designed many policies to separate people and particularly to subordinate those who were not white. The following are a few examples to highlight the discriminatory policies of the apartheid regime:

- The Race Classification Act of 1950 determined the status of each person of South Africa (Abdi, 2002, p. 39).
- The Bantu Education Act (Act No. 47) was introduced in 1953 to exercise control in “native” education, i.e. indigenous African education (Kallaway, 2002; Fataar, 1997).
- The Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950 determined and controlled the space in which each population group was to be located and live (Ebr.-Vally; 2001).
- The Education and Training Act of 1979 replaced the Bantu Education Act of 1953. The black education organisations in South Africa rejected this legislation because it did not abolish the separate departments for African, Coloured and Indian education (Nekhwevha, 2002).

I mention these Acts as they form the basis of the political, economic and educational context South Africans experienced in their lives prior to 1994. These Acts and the total effect of the apartheid system led to complete fragmentation of the social and educational systems in South Africa. According to the Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development (DoE, 1996a, p. 18), “[a]partheid led to an education system characterised by racial, regional and gender inequality as well as ideological distortions in teaching and learning”. The Bantu Education Act and the Education and Training Act helped to reinforce inequality in education, the disintegration of learning environments and the “death of a culture of learning in

many black schools” (DoE, 1996a, p. 18). Even the curricula in schools for Black learners had very little relevance to the lives of the students.

Through the Education Acts, schooling was structured according to a racial hierarchy with schools for White learners being the preferred beneficiaries of resources, and schools for Black learners being the most disadvantaged recipients (DoE, 1996a, p. 18). The Report of the Task Team on Education Management Development (1996a) states that education during the apartheid years was also characterised by high repetition of failure and drop-out rates particularly for coloured and black African students. These features of apartheid shaped the racial, social class and gendered identities of women, and many women middle managers, and their lives, in countless ways. This political legacy and its social and institutional relations continued to frame inequality in South Africa in the post-apartheid era.

There is an interaction of gender, class and race in the formation of one’s identity (Hassim, 2006). In considering gender identity, Connell (2009) states that gender should be treated as a structure on its own and should not be collapsed with other categories such as race and class, as gender patterns may differ from one cultural context to another. Connell (2009) stresses that gender relations work within a context that interacts with other dynamics in social life. Therefore, the gendered identity that is formed develops over time, and this identity includes what kind of person one is (Connell, 2009, p.6). Connell (2009) quotes de Beauvoir who recognises that to become a gendered person involves many tensions and ambiguities that can produce unstable results. Womanhood or manhood is not fixed in nature and neither is it imposed by societal norms or pressure from authorities (Connell, 2009, p. 6). This author thus states: “people construct themselves as masculine or feminine” and by their conduct assume a place in the gender order (Connell, 2009, p. 6). Men benefit from the inequalities of the gender order, but at different levels (Connell, 2009). Nussbaum (2001, p. 50) agrees and states that “[w]omen are too often treated as members of an organic unit, such as the family or the community is supposed to be, and their interests [are] subordinated to the larger goals of that unit, which means, typically, those of its male members”. According to Wolpe, Quinlan and Martinez (1997, p. 269-270), gender is defined as: “the way in which women and men are socially constructed from birth and throughout their lives by the institutions of family, civil society and state to adopt female and male identities. Neither woman nor man are homogenous groups”.

The National Gender Policy Framework (RSA, 2000, p. xvii) describes gender as:

[t]he social roles allocated respectively to women and to men in particular societies and at particular times. Such roles, and the differences between them, are conditioned by a variety of political, economic, ideological and cultural factors and are characterised in most societies by unequal power relations. Gender is distinguished from sex which is biologically determined.

These scholars and policy makers mean that “gender” describes the lived experience of women and men in specific contexts. There is consensus on this from several scholars. Loutfi (2001, p. 4.) writes that gender roles are linked to sex and sexual stereotypes that are determined by the culture and society in which we live. In other words, a person’s gender is influenced by class, ethnicity (race), religious beliefs, being able-bodied, sexual orientation, age, current family roles (daughter, sister, wife, mother), exposure to alternative ways of being and geographical location (Wolpe et al., 1997, p. 270). Odora-Hoopers (2005, p. 55) states that gender is about “trying to understand how society made you, what you have become, how it shaped your behaviour, your aspirations, and your attitude towards yourself as well as towards society at large”. Although these scholars imply a gender polarity of masculine and feminine identities, gender ambiguities exist in instances when women adopt masculine traits (Connell, 2009, p. 6). This may occur among women in management positions. Connell (2009) states that most people combine masculine and feminine characteristics in their daily lives. Gender therefore involves a social structure and social relations in which people act (Connell, 2009).

Therefore, I begin this study with the understanding that women middle managers’ gendered identities and capabilities are developed within a context, and in South Africa the apartheid ideology of separate development and post-apartheid policies of transformation and democracy are important components of that context. Each women middle manager has her own unique experiences within the political, economic and gendered context in which she grew up and works within as a manager. Therefore I agree with Nussbaum (2001, p. 50) who contends that “we need to consider the distribution of resources and opportunities *to each person*, thinking of each as worthy of regard in her own right” (*italics in original*).

In apartheid South Africa, there were distinct racial and class inequalities that affected how people constructed their gendered identities. Some men, who were white and middle class, would have wielded more power than men from any other race group.

White male settlers had stable and well-paid jobs or owned farms, whereas African men were generally from the working class (Morrell, 2001). However, men in general had power over women, whether in private (e.g. households) or in public (that is, especially in the broader society like the workplace) and women were considered inferior to men. Men “dominated public space and decision making”, even among the African men in the countryside where African patriarchy remained autonomous (Morrell, 2001, p. 141).

Masculinity was seen in terms of the men’s dominance over women (Morrell, 2001). This dominance suggests that men have power over women in the form of patriarchy with men being the dominant “sex class” (Connell, 2009, p. 76). Odora-Hoppers (2005, p. 57) views women’s subjugation to men as a product of capitalism and patriarchy that “defines man as being the measure of all things and non-man as inferior”. There have been many forms of gender inequality acted out in different spaces, like religion, education and employment (Connell, 2009). Whereas white women were subjected to gender inequality only, women from other race groups, namely black African, coloured and Indian women, have been discriminated against both on the basis of their race and their gender. Therefore, in South Africa, opportunities and resources for people have been unequally shared according to their gender and race.

In a study about education management, it is important to acknowledge at the outset that women are exposed to greater social injustices and inequalities than men. Nussbaum (2000b, p. 219) states that “women in much of the world lack support for fundamental functions of a human life” because of the obstacles they face as women. These social and political obstacles therefore bring about unequal human capabilities in women (Nussbaum, 1999; 2000a; 2000b). Thus, over time, the woman middle manager’s professional identity is developed, or is hampered, through her interactions with other people in a variety of circumstances within such an unequal milieu that, in turn, is grounded in her individual history, personality and work-related experiences, including her experiences as a student in various institutions (Busher, 2005).

The apartheid ideology gave way in 1994 to democracy that upheld the promise that women would have equal rights with men and women would have greater

opportunities to become managers and leaders of institutions such as schools. The South African government is set to redress the past imbalances created by the apartheid system through the implementation of equal opportunity and affirmative action legislation (Mathur-Helm, 2004). Although policies have changed, management practices and gender relations may still reflect the past and act as an impediment to women HoDs. The apartheid education policies no longer exist but they reach into the post-apartheid era in people's minds and practices – hence its legacy is still evident in schools. Understanding how this social drama has played out in the lives of a few women HoDs is the topic of this study, and will help build insight into how women HoDs can develop in changing social contexts.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the development of women HoDs as middle managers in a rapidly changing social context and the capabilities that enable them to function as transformational leaders at secondary schools. I will use narratives from women HoDs about their development from their childhood years to adulthood in their social and educational lives to understand how they developed the capabilities that have enabled them to function in their middle management roles as transformational school leaders. The study is set in secondary schools where the women middle managers are located. However, the study moves back and forth in time and space from the present to the past in order to understand how this process has taken place.

#### **1.5 Critical Questions Posed**

The three critical questions explored in this study are:

1. What are the narratives from women HoDs about how they developed their capabilities in a transforming and contested social context?
2. What are the capabilities that enable women middle managers to function as middle managers?
3. In what way do the capabilities of women middle managers enable them to function as transformational leaders?

These three questions will focus on accounts of the women's early development, identifying the capabilities required for their HoD positions, and seeking clarity on

how such capabilities relate to notions of transformational leadership. To answer these questions I will use narratives from women managers about their early years in life, their education and their management experiences as women. These will be gendered experiences, and their act of doing management will be understood as the enacting and functioning of the middle management role. The manner in which the women middle managers function in their roles will depend on their achieved capabilities and freedoms in their private and professional lives. Private and professional lives sit within a social, cultural, political and economic milieu, so the narratives about their capabilities will be about their experiences and understandings as shaped within these contexts.

### **1.6 My Paradigmatic Stance for the Study of the Women Middle Managers**

My study is located within a feminist paradigm because I am a woman and a feminist, researching the experiences of women middle managers. As a feminist researcher, I do not focus on the category of gender alone. I rather consider how the gender of women HoDs intersects with race and class in their development as middle managers. A focus on gender alone would cast the study as one-dimensional (Hemmings, 2011). On the other hand, by acknowledging gender, race and class, I will ensure that women HoDs are not taken as a homogenous group as women. They are seen instead as individual women each with their own diverse experiences based on gender, race and class. The intersection of the three categories of gender, race and class yields different and multiple experiences for South African women HoDs, particularly in their formative years when they developed separately, based on their racial classification under the apartheid government. How this intersection plays out in women HoDs' lives is a research-worthy project for a feminist researcher. Although women may have differences one from the other, and may have multiple experiences because of their gender, race and class, as a group, they have a common experience of being located differently from men in educational management because of their gender.

Women in educational leadership and management are often not given the same attention as their male counterparts and have to live up to the male norm of leading and managing. Feminist research starts with the position that women are not treated fairly, as compared to men (Ezzy, 2002; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2007; Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991; Robson, 1993; Tong, 1989). It seeks to bring about change in order to

extend the rights and opportunities of women. The different strands in feminist research accept that women are oppressed and subordinate to men in many aspects of their lives and these are reinforced by political, economic and social institutions.

Research may be sexist and oppress women. Robson (1993, p. 64) suggests seven forms of sexism in research are:

- androcentricity: applying the male view of research paradigm to females;
- overgeneralisation: when a study is generalised from males to females;
- gender insensitivity: when sex as a variable is ignored;
- double standards: when male criteria, measures and standards are used to judge the behaviour of women and vice versa;
- sex appropriateness: when certain roles are deemed appropriate based on the sex of the person;
- familism: when the family is treated as the unit of analysis, rather than the individual; and
- sex dichotomism: when each sex is treated as a distinct group, rather than considering that they may share similar characteristics.

In contrast to these forms of sexism in research, Gosetti and Rusch (1995) note that a feminist paradigm focuses on the gaps and blank spaces of dominant cultures, knowledge bases and behaviours. Using those spaces, feminist research can focus on women and their experiences and contribute to a feminist theory of educational management. Many women who are educational managers see differences between the dominant culture of male managers and their own experiences as women leaders. Gosetti and Rusch (1995) suggest that leadership knowledge should be challenged and replaced with knowledge and information that is more inclusive and democratic, and therefore the importance of considering the experiences of both men and women in leadership.

Therefore, as a woman researching other women's experiences in educational management, I adopt a feminist view on educational management, one that does not have a male bias. As a feminist researcher, I seek to research women middle managers through the richly textured narrative of women's stories about their lives. This multi-dimensional lens of the narrated story allows me to gain deep insight about the participant in her management role. As a feminist researcher, I let the women middle manager tell her own story as a subjective participant, with her own educational and life experiences. Women tell stories that are back stories and are a male-dominated account of history in which women are not traditionally the movers

and shakers. According to the Longman Exams Dictionary (2006, p. 93) a back story is that which has “happened to a character in a book or film before the beginning of the story being told in the book or film”.

Feminists value history’s back stories of those who are quiet or silenced, and all their detail, and of the underdog such as women or girls. By giving voice to the experience of the woman middle manager and by letting her tell her story, I am able to empower and give legitimacy to this category of woman who is often under-represented in educational leadership and management literature. Critical feminists are concerned about the inequality and the unjust structuring of society. As a feminist researcher, I am interested to theorise how women middle managers in secondary schools are able to cross the boundary or break the “glass ceiling” of gender in the workplace, and how they are doing and achieving this as middle management achievers. An inherent limitation of this feminist approach is that my findings will not be generalisable to all women HoDs. Nevertheless, the study will have strength in its rigour and depth, and the findings will be relevant to women HoDs in similar social contexts.

### **1.7 Synopses of Chapters**

Over the rest of my thesis I will argue that women HoDs develop capabilities such as affiliation, emotion, knowledge, imagination and practical skills, integrity and others that are important for their functioning as HoDs, and that these capabilities connect with leadership attributes and behaviours such as intellectual stimulation, high performance expectation, goal consensus and associated features, thereby enabling the women HoDs to possibly function as transformational leaders in the school context. A “capability” is seen as the potential to function and a “functioning” is what a person manages to do with the capability (Sen, 1999). Sen. (1992, p. 7) refers to capabilities as the “real opportunity” to “accomplish what we value”.

In Chapter Two I review the literature relevant to the study. I clarify the concepts of middle management and women in management. I explore the meaning of the “middleness” of the management role, which seems to be sandwiched between the senior managers and the educators whom the women managers guide in their departments. It is within this “sandwiched” space that the women managers have to function and lead their teams. I then review the literature about the role of the HoD

and the challenges of the role, albeit the limited power that it carries within the school. The chapter further focuses on challenges women face in management based on their gender, and considers the emancipatory, transformational leadership style as a style of leadership that women managers are inclined to follow. The chapter also focuses on management and leadership within the South African and international terrain.

Chapter Three introduces and discusses the dual theoretical lenses of the capability approach and transformational leadership, which I use to make sense of the development of the capabilities of women HoDs and their practices in their departments at schools as transformational leaders. I link the capability approach with ideas about transformational leadership and I present a matrix of the alignment of sets of ideas of key scholars who have written about the capability approach and transformational leadership. I argue that, through the capability approach the development of foundational management capabilities of women middle managers can be explored, and the transformational leadership theory allows the professional practice of leaders within a transforming educational context to be studied.

Chapter Four is about narrative inquiry as my chosen methodology for studying the lives of women middle managers. I outline its strengths, especially in working with participants collaboratively. I explain how I applied the methodology in the field in a two-phased approach. I discuss the four types of field texts that I generated as data, my approach to their analysis and how I dealt with the ethical challenges in the study. I provide biographical details about the participating HoDs and the criteria for selection of the participants. I discuss the various methods I used to generate data, the reflective journal, letter writing, observations and interviews.

Chapter Five discusses the capabilities that the participants developed during their early years and through their education. Their family and educational experiences from childhood to adulthood are explored within their different contexts, with particular attention being given to race, gender and class issues. My finding is that along the life paths until the time of active middle management, the selected women managers experienced barriers to the development of their capabilities, in the form of poverty, emotional insecurity and gender inequality. However, the participating women middle managers were able to resist these barriers they faced and, through perseverance, developed capabilities that enabled them to succeed.

Chapter Six focuses on the mentors and role models who, through their interaction with the participants, influenced them as middle managers and how they functioned as managers. Nussbaum's (1999) human functional capabilities and the professional capabilities of Walker, McLean, Dison & Vaughan (2010) specified were used to analyse the data surrounding mentors and role models. The participants had either been mentored from afar or from close proximity, and these relationships with their role models and mentors helped shape whom they are as middle managers. Their shaping into their management roles does not imply that the women participants passively accepted a way of being; rather the participants actively chose the role models and mentors that they felt would help them develop in their personal and professional lives. The role models and mentors ranged from family members to former educational leaders and political activists.

Chapter Seven discusses the functioning aspect of the capability approach that is the outcome achieved. The capability approach and transformational leadership theory inform this chapter as it explores the functioning of women middle managers as transformational leaders within secondary schools. I show how the development of their management capabilities through the years enables women middle managers to function as transformational managers within their departments. However, within the school context, there may be external conditions that can form barriers to the women functioning as transformational leaders.

Chapter Eight finally states the findings and conclusion to the study. First, the main characters of this research are women so the study is viewed through a feminist lens. I found that the capability approach showed that the foundational capabilities developed in women middle managers enabled them to function in their management role. The foundational capabilities activate in the women middle managers the freedom to practise their role as transformational middle managers within a changing educational context. My findings show that the barriers the women participants face in their work environment can be offset by their agency and strong capability of resilience. Based on my analysis of the nine women's narratives, I propose that the transformational leadership capability theory can usefully explain the development of the foundational management capabilities that are needed for middle managers to function as transformational leaders. The leadership attributes of developing knowledge and

skills, setting departmental directions, developing people in the department and redesigning the department are used to align the management capabilities and the transformational leadership function in the transformational leadership capability theory.

### **1.8 Concluding Remarks**

In South Africa, middle management in schools can be constructed as a gendered management position because women are in the majority in this management tier. This tier is essentially important as middle managers are curriculum leaders and manage the curriculum taught within a department. The core function of a school is that of teaching and learning, and the middle manager is primarily concerned with this key aspect within schools. In this study, I will seek insight into how women as middle managers lead their departments and which leadership and management functions are related to the capabilities that they developed in their early childhood years and under the influence of role models and/or mentors, and how this development took place. This study will propose that the women middle managers' capabilities are critical for them to function as transformational leaders.

I now turn to the literature pertaining to issues concerning the development of women in middle management at schools.

## **CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW OF WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP**

This chapter has three themes as I review the international and South African literature pertaining to first, women in educational management, second, middle management and third, management and leadership. Firstly I look at how women have been discriminated against and marginalised in educational management vis-à-vis their male counterparts. I then look at the literature about the role of the HoD and the difficulties in executing this role. Finally, I review the international and South African literature on the concepts of management and leadership.

### **2.1 Women in Educational Management and Leadership**

Leadership and management are gendered. By this I mean that women and men experience leadership and management differently and I argue that management roles in schools, particularly the senior management positions, favour men. Women, on the other hand, are often marginalised from top management positions, although in South Africa there has been a steady inflow of women into middle management positions in schools. In most organisations within South Africa women are still generally confined to the lower rungs of the management hierarchy, and find it difficult rise to the senior management positions (Mathur-Helm, 2005). Eagly (2007) asserts that women are often disadvantaged when seeking access to leadership positions and suffer resistance and prejudice when they do occupy these roles.

The accompanying three tables (Tables 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3) show the distribution of male and female educators according to rank and gender in South Africa and in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. They show that, while women dominate in numbers as educators or teachers in public schools, their numbers diminish as they go further up the management hierarchy in South African schools. This is a national as well as a provincial trend. For example, nationally 70% of Post Level 1 educators (the entry tier for an educator) are women and in KwaZulu-Natal 74% of these educators are women.

**TABLE 2.1 Numbers of educators in public schools by rank and gender in 2004 in South Africa**

	Male	Female	Total	% Female
Post Level 1: Educator/Teacher	86 115	203 074	289 189	70%
Post Level 2: HoD	18 147	28 521	46 668	61%
Post Level 3: Deputy Principal	16 636	10 343	26 979	38%
Post Level 4: Principal	6 418	2283	5701	26%
<b>Total</b>	<b>127 316</b>	<b>241 938</b>	<b>371 537</b>	<b>65%</b>

Source: Moorosi, 2006, p. 16

**TABLE 2.2 Numbers of educators in public schools by rank and gender in 2005 in the province of KwaZulu-Natal**

	Male	Female	Total	% Female
Post Level 1: Educator/Teacher	14 860	42 191	57 051	74%
Post Level 2: HoD	4062	7881	11 943	66%
Post Level 3: Deputy Principal	1897	1310	3207	41%
Post Level 4: Principal	3050	2153	5203	41%
<b>Total</b>	<b>23 869</b>	<b>53 535</b>	<b>77 404</b>	<b>69%</b>

Source: Moorosi, 2006, p. 17

**TABLE 2.3 Distribution of post level 2 Educators in 2011 in the KwaZulu-Natal DoE based on race and gender**

African (A)		% F	White (W)		% F	Coloured (C)		% F	Indian (I)		% F
Male (M)	Female (F)		Male (M)	Female (F)		Male (M)	Female (F)		Male (M)	Female (F)	
5258	5160	49.5	443	403	47.6	118	115	49	759	568	42

Source: KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, 2012

The number of women occupying senior management positions (post level 3 and 4) decreases compared to the number of women in post level 1 and 2 positions. There is an increase in the number of women in middle management positions compared to the number in senior management positions in education. For example, the percentage of women in post level 2 (i.e. the HoD position) is 66% whereas the percentage decreases in post levels 3 and 4 (i.e. deputy principal and principal positions respectively), with 41% women occupying both these posts in public schools. This shows that women are readily accepted in lower management tiers but this is not the case for appointments in the upper tiers of the management hierarchy. This differentiation may be linked to the opinion expressed by Wolpe et al. (1996, p. 197) that gender domination and exploitation is based on essentialist notions of woman as mothers rather than encouraging their career development. For example, women have been considered as being essentially suited to handling young children because of their caring, nurturing and supportive nature, and women teachers have thus had a history of being assigned to the lower rungs of the education hierarchy where they interface with children, rather than in roles where they might make decisions about the school as an institution<sup>8</sup>.

Schools in South Africa remain male-dominated and male-oriented (Moorosi, 2008; Chisholm, 2001). Table 2.3 presents a racial and gender disaggregation of HoDs (post level 2) in KwaZulu-Natal. In schools, as one goes further up the management hierarchy, the number of women occupying these senior management positions decreases. The significance is that at schools the division of labour between men and women is skewed against women, with the assumption being that men “have knowledge, are better able to make decisions, and wield power” (Morrell & Moletsane, 2002, p. 233).

In the literature it is argued that men are leaders more often than women based on assumptions in society that men make better leaders than women (Blackmore, 1999; de la Rey, 2005; Soobrayan, 1998). Hearn (1999, p. 167) agrees and states that the “historical development of management cannot be understood without naming most

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<sup>8</sup> Morley (2005) states that even in higher education institutions there is a gendered division of labour as teaching is female-dominated and research is male-dominated.

managers as men". This assumption has promoted educational management as an androcentric male profession which is disconnected from the mainly female occupation of teaching (Bush, 2003, p. 29). Shakeshaft (1993) believes that gender discrimination is one of the greatest barriers to women becoming school managers and leaders. It is no surprise therefore that many theories of education leadership are developed mostly by men, for men. The prevalence of research in the field of management and leadership neither addresses gender as an important concern, nor looks to the experiences of women, and this results in the dominant representations of leadership being articulated by men and based on men's experiences (Fine, 2009, p. 181). Therefore, viewing education leadership through a female lens as I do in this study offers an alternative to the predominance of literature about education leadership and management that is authored by men.

There have been numerous studies about women holding principal positions in schools (Coleman, 2002, 2003b; 2005; Fennell, 2005; Hall, 1996; Kruger, van Eck & Vermeulen 2005; Moorosi, 2006), but less attention has been given to female HoDs and their development and experiences of their role as middle managers. Two studies that focused on women in middle management were researched by Naidoo (2002) and Zulu (2011) within the South African education context. Even far less has been written about the management capabilities of women in the first tier of management. Many women have challenged the assumption that men are better able to make decisions and wield power than women. Some feminists, such as Carol Shakeshaft (1987) argue that the issue of gender cannot be ignored when researching education management. Scholars such as Marshall and Young (2006) and Shakeshaft (1987) criticise research about educational management for ignoring the issue of gender and state that research on management has an androcentric bias. Kruger (2008, p. 156) asserts that there are gender differences in school leadership and these differences should be accepted and taken advantage of as schools can function more effectively if school leaders took gender differences into account.

Shakeshaft (1987) proposes that women have different leadership styles to men. She argues that past research assumes that the experiences of males and females are the same and therefore research on males was generalised to the female experience. However, she contends that female experiences that are different from those of males

are ignored or given insufficient recognition. Rusch and Marshall (2006) assert that school administration is often examined from a predominantly white male perspective.

However, women and men also do not comprise homogenous groups. Wolpe et al. (1997, p. 40), point out that women and men are “differentially located according to class positions, ethnicity, religious beliefs, physical and other disabilities, sexual orientation, age and geographical location”. Therefore, in the South African context, female leaders or managers may perform their roles differently from males because of their gendered and other identities. Hence female leaders also cannot be categorised as a homogenous group, as they could be differently located according to their race, ethnicity, age and gender.

Indeed, gendered and racialised identities in South Africa are affected differently by the country’s social and political history of oppression or privilege. The gendered, racialised and economic experiences of the women managers are diverse and it is assumed that their capabilities to perform and succeed in life are different from each other. Although many women middle managers may have reached a state of well-being, that is, to be the managers they want to be, the literature on women in educational management (Fennell, 2005; Moorosi, 2006; Littrell & Nkomo, 2005; Mogadime, Mentz, Armstrong & Holtam, 2010) indicates that there are differences in circumstances and characteristics of women and therefore they may develop different strengths in a capability and possibly different sets of capabilities.

When studying women in management and leadership positions, researchers often ask whether men and women lead their colleagues differently and whether men are more effective leaders than women. Certain authors like Thornton and Bricheno (2009) and Cubillo and Brown (2003) write about the feminisation of the teaching profession generally and, from an international perspective, show that women are stereotyped into the caring and nurturing roles. Rusch and Marshall (2006) state that women leaders are more collegial and accustomed to the instruction of children, they are less concerned with politics and bureaucracy and are more inclusive and empowering of others. Even when women are promoted to management positions within an institution, they are often typecast into the same caring and nurturing roles Coleman (2003a). Coleman (1997a; p. 127) states that senior women managers in secondary schools are often identified with certain types of roles and both senior and middle

female managers tend to be associated with the pastoral role in schools, which can become a barrier to the automatic attainment of headship. Cubillo and Brown (2003) agree. They have found that “women in middle management roles in education are often assigned pastoral duties; that is, they are cast in the role of the “senior mistress”, while men are given responsibility for areas such as curriculum and finance” (Cubillo & Brown, 2003, p. 279). Women middle managers are therefore assigned duties that involve a caring and nurturing role which are closely related to the mothering role of the classroom educator, while men in middle management are given duties that involve curriculum and financial planning and policy for the department which are essential aspects of management and leadership (Cubillo & Brown, 2003). Eagly (2007) is of the view that women middle managers fare well in their role within organisations because of the demands in this tier of management for complex interpersonal skills.

In education management, theories of leadership were written from a male perspective and women leaders are expected to live up to this hegemonic male norm (Fennell, 2005). This is evident also from two South African studies that consider the role of women in education management. Although the studies do not consider women in middle management, they do highlight the role of women in education management and the discrimination the women managers experience in their roles as leaders. The first study by Moorosi (2006) investigates the problem of the under-representation of women in principal positions in secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal, a province in South Africa. Moorosi (2006) examines South African policies directed at addressing gender inequality, and how these policies are implemented and sustained in education. One of the major problems that Moorosi found was that women principals lack institutional support in all phases and this proves detrimental to their performance of their roles.

The second study by Mannah (2008) focuses on how women leaders in the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) experience gender equality<sup>9</sup>. The women who were studied occupied senior positions and, as in Moorosi’s study, Mannah found these senior leadership positions were traditionally male-dominated

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<sup>9</sup> SADTU is the largest teacher organisation in South Africa and is aligned to the ruling party.

spaces. Mannah uses statistics to show that approximately 65% of SADTU membership is women, 85% of the most senior leadership positions are held by men. Mannah (2008) finds that the leadership positions in SADTU are maintained by men through their manipulation of union bureaucracy, governance, exploitation of culture and adherence to traditional values and threats of physical and sexual violence. Thus these two scholars, Moorosi and Mannah, show that women leaders in education in South Africa, continue to experience gender discrimination and inequality in the post-apartheid era, i.e. after 1994 when South Africa as a state adopted democracy as a form of government.

When considering why women are underrepresented in elite leadership positions, it should be acknowledged that there are many barriers that women educators experience before they can gain entry into the male-dominated arena of management and leadership in education. The barriers to women's upward mobility in educational management are explained by Schmuck (1986, p. 176) as an inequality from "individual socialization processes, organisational constraints to women's mobility, and gender-based career socialization". Coleman (1994) identifies such inequality as being due to:

- Overt and covert discrimination. This form of inequality against women is either direct or indirect and can be the greatest deterrent to career progress.
- Organisational constraints. At every level of the educational organisation there may be barriers to the advancement of women, for example, at the point of application for a promotion, when planning a career path, the various levels of opportunity within a post and the various expectations of others within the organisation.
- Theories of socialisation. Women are seen to be deficient compared to men and thus less likely to be promoted because of the way in which they have been socialised.

Schmuck (1986) points out that "deficit" theory constructs women as needing to be trained or educated up to the level of men, rather than them being valued for what they might bring to the field of management. The deficit theory implies that women are deficient and lacking in leadership skills and therefore they have to be trained to the level of their male counterparts. Since women in education management have not

experienced the same opportunities as their male counterparts in South Africa over the years, particularly during the apartheid era, the DoE has a training programme called “Women in and into Management and Leadership Positions” to enhance the capacity of women managers. In this programme “managing” is described as having the ability “to take decisive action against those that deviate from the regulations” (DoE, 2007, p. iii). It further states that the woman manager should:

- Be aware of her rights as a representative of the employer, as well as her own rights
- Exercise these rights in a manner that is respectful of the rights of others (DoE, 2007, p. iii).

This stipulation requires that the woman should manage to assert herself and at the same time to be mindful of the rights of those whom she manages. However, due to various factors within the school, the legacy of apartheid, as well as cultural factors, women are encouraged to be docile, and many women managers may find it difficult to be assertive (DoE, 2007). Thus the DoE deems it necessary to train women managers to be assertive rather than being submissive and aggressive, as assertiveness should be viewed as a necessary quality in managers. It involves:

- Standing up for your rights without violating the rights of others
- Expressing your beliefs, needs, wants, opinions and feelings directly in a socially acceptable manner
- Being able to say “no” without feeling guilty (DoE, 2007, p. 2).

Different styles of management have been found to have feminine or masculine characteristics and these differences are related to the construct of gender (Oakley, 2000). Assertive behaviour is considered a masculine leadership characteristic, including characteristics such as being highly regulated, conformist, normative competitive, evaluative, disciplined, objective and formal (Gray, 1993, p. 111). The feminine or nurturing characteristics are being caring, creative, intuitive, aware of individual differences, non-competitive, tolerant, subjective and informal (Gray, 1993, p. 111).

Gray (1993) refers to the two sets of characteristics as the masculine, defensive/aggressive paradigm and the feminine or “nurturing” paradigm. Trinidad and Normore (2005) are of the view that gender, race, class and other elements of

social difference play a part in the development of leadership styles. I agree with these authors' statement that "recognising women's styles of leadership represents an important approach to equity as long as they are not stereotyped as "the" ways women lead, but as the "other" ways of leading" (Trinidad & Normore, 2005, p. 275). In a changing educational environment, with schools becoming decentralised, self-managing and having flatter management hierarchies, there is a need to use an appropriate style of management in schools. One leadership style that suits such organisational structures is transformational leadership which tends to encompass more feminine than masculine characteristics of leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transformational leadership helps to promote positive change and to develop individuals and organisations. Transformational leadership focuses on developing the organisation to be innovative. It does not only focus on direct coordination, control and supervision of curriculum, transformational leadership also builds the organisation's capacity to select its purpose and to support the development of changes to teaching and learning (Hallinger, 2003).

Wolpe et al. (1997, p. 204) believe that women managers are not a homogenous group and therefore may have different styles of managing depending on the various situations in which they find themselves. Many women are forced to adopt a hegemonic style of leadership, one that is considered masculine, in order to succeed in a male environment (Wolpe et al. 1997). However, research has found that women often exceed men in the use of democratic or participatory styles, and are more likely than men to use transformational leadership behaviours and contingent reward, styles that are associated with contemporary notions of effective leadership (Trinidad & Normore, 2005; Wolpe et al., 1997).

Eagly (2007, p. 2) is of the opinion that the stereotypically feminine qualities of cooperation, mentoring and collaboration are important to leadership, particularly in contemporary organisations. These qualities of leadership are important in transformational leadership. Similarly, providing individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation require good interpersonal skills, other areas where women may have some advantage over men (Riggio, 1992).

Several lines of argument in the leadership literature propose that female leaders tend to be more transformational than male leaders (Rosener, 1990). One explanation is

based on the idea that transformational leadership highlights the nurturing of subordinates and that, through a process of socialisation the nurturing qualities of women are particularly well-developed in comparison to those of men. This implies that women managers may intuitively follow a more transformational style of leadership. The difference in the male – female differences in transformational leaders may be due partly to the tendency for women, as a group, to be more relations-oriented (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Eagly and Johnson (1990) follow this school of thought when they describe female leaders as being more interested in others than their male counterparts and that they tend to be more socially sensitive. Coleman (2003a, p. 30) describes women and male leaders as being “predisposed towards collaboration, empowerment and teamwork”. Coleman (2003) conducted a survey on the perception of men and women headteachers about their own management and leadership style. She found that their self-perception on leadership style is more likely to be feminine than masculine where both men and women identify themselves as having a feminine style of leadership. Collaboration, empowerment and teamwork are identified as transformational, shared leadership styles (Fennell, 2005; Grogan, 2005) and this is yet another attempt to put women more in line with transformational leadership than men.

It has been found that female leaders are also more likely to attribute their transformational leadership to their relational qualities (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Female leaders seem to develop unique, individual relationships with each follower or subordinate colleague, suggesting that they may be better in one-to-one interactions and more concerned about an individual colleague’s development than men are in a similar position (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 123). Another reason that female leaders may be more transformational than male leaders is associated with the moral value inherent in transformational leadership (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987). The argument is that when reasoning morally, women highlight responsibility and care, while men highlight rights and justice (Gilligan, 1982). A similar assumption is that women could be more transformational because they are less likely to be self-serving authoritarians than men tend to be as leaders (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Burn’s (1978) conception of transformational leaders is based on their ability to be morally uplifting. As affirmed by Gilligan (1982), women have a deeper sense of moral understanding than men do.

Since this study focuses on women in middle management roles, I now discuss the literature about the role of middle management and what scholars have found about the challenges that middle managers experience in their position in the management hierarchy.

## **2.2 The “Middleness” of the Role of Head of Department**

The HoD is often referred to as a middle manager. Middle management is the label used to position teachers with subject/department and/or pastoral responsibility within an educational organisation (Gunter, 2001). According to the Employment of Educators Act (RSA, 1998) the HoD is in charge of a subject, learning area or phase and occupies the second post level which is one post level above the teachers at school and a level below the deputy principal and the principal. Therefore, within schools in South Africa, there is a two-tiered management structure, the middle management tier (HoD) and the Senior Management tier (principal and deputy principal). Brown et al. (2000a) state that the middle management level in schools is responsible for teaching, coaching (modelling good classroom practice) and managing the department (i.e. leading professionals). However, it is the principal who is recognised as the educational leader of the school (Caldwell & Spinks, 1998). As is the case in many other countries, the authority of the principal in South Africa is statutory (Bush, 2003, p. 49).

With the principal at the apex of the management hierarchy in the school, the HoD is located in the second management tier of the school and is sandwiched between the senior management team (SMT) and their educator colleagues. The role of the HoD should be as important a role as the other management roles within schools because HoDs are directly responsible for teaching and learning within their departments, and the main aim of the school is to ensure that effective teaching and learning takes place. The general consensus is that, located within the current form of site-based management, the middle manager such as the HoD in a secondary school, is “pivotal” (Gold, 1998, p. xiii).

HoDs in secondary schools occupy a crucial position in the management hierarchy, and are seen as “linking pins” between their departments and the “upper executive” of the school (Collier, Dinham, Brennan, Deece & Mulford, 2002, p. 19). Collier et al. (2002) state that, if there are any educational changes of a positive nature, the HoD

must guide and drive the change “both at the department and executive level” (Collier et al., 2002, p. 19). The “middleness” of the post creates a dilemma for the HoD, as the HoD has to be an educator and a manager and a leader, which can bring about conflicting role definitions. Koehler (1993, p.11) states that: “Department chairs walk a tightrope between the maintenance and survival needs of the school and the human and professional needs of the people within it”. This suggests that the HoD has to ensure that the administrative tasks within the department are adequately performed and, at the same time, the human and professional needs of the educators and learners within the department are satisfied. The role of the HoD is twofold in nature as it entails the HoD being both task- and people-orientated. The HoD has to balance the two tasks for the effective functioning of the department. The “middleness” of the role and being both an educator and manager at the same time, highlights the dual nature of the HoD’s role.

The HoD is neither fully teacher nor manager, yet is a conduit for the tensions in the relationships between the teachers and senior managers in a school (Brown & Rutherford, 1999, p. 232). The role is subject to pressures from the SMT and the teachers in their departments as both require the undivided attention of the HoD. Brown and Rutherford (1999, p 231) state that within the UK and US secondary schools, organisation around department and subject HoDs is a “taken for granted” feature. This illustrates the important role middle managers play within schools. Leadership of the middle management team is seen as integral to developing a successful school (Brown & Rutherford, 1999). Blandford (1997, p. 3) states that the middle manager is a staffroom manager and a teacher. As the teacher the middle manager manages the “development of knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities of pupils” and the middle manager as the staff manager manages “the knowledge and understanding, skills and abilities of colleagues” (Blandford, 1997, p. 3).

Bennet (1995) has shown that there is some resistance to the label of middle managers and their positioning from within the profession, particularly within the primary school where the organising of learning is based on horizontal collaborative and co-operative networks. In the secondary school context, an HoD is regarded as central to the control function: “secondary schools are more likely to be places of

dispute and argument than places of consensus, and individuals are needed who can undertake the responsibility of trying to weld together the often disparate and disputing subunits into a coherent whole” (Bennet, 1995, p. 104).

Thus the HoD, located in the middle management tier, is placed in a conflicting situation because of the demands made by the principal above in the hierarchy and the educator colleagues below. Brown et al. (2000a) state that HoDs subordinate their own vision to those of the senior managers. In their study they found that the HoDs felt that senior managers’ vision was inadequate or poor yet this was forced down on the HoDs and teachers in a non-consultative manner. They also found that the HoD’s vision for the department was often under-valued and their professional judgement insufficiently recognised by the senior managers (Brown et al., 2000b, p. 250).

Turner and Bolam (1998, p. 351) state that contextual factors may affect the way in which HoDs work with their departmental colleagues. They found that HoDs have little decision-making power and are often used by principals to “rubber-stamp” decisions made by the SMT (Turner & Bolam, 1998, p. 381). Such a situation poses an added dilemma for the HoDs to effectively perform their role and lead the team of educators within the department. Wallace and Hall (1994) however, found that the climate in most secondary schools in the United Kingdom appears to empower middle managers to contribute to school-wide policy and this enables them to have a significant impact on management concerns that go beyond the sphere of their individual responsibilities. Principals who create a management structure based on their beliefs in a more collegial culture help to empower HoDs to be more effective managers and leaders of their department (Brown & Rutherford, 1999). These authors believe that HoDs can bring about successful change within their departments thereby contributing to the improvement of the whole school.

The literature written about the role of the HoD has evolved over the years. According to Brown and Rutherford (1999), the HoD role has become more diverse, complex and challenging, and HoDs have acquired increased burdens of responsibility and accountability. This is due to the “bewildering plethora of macro, meso and micro policy changes” that have occurred internationally, particularly in schools in the UK (Brown & Rutherford, 1999, p.229). Glover, Gleeson, Gough & Johnson et al. (1998) concur that the role of the HoD is increasing in responsibility, because senior

managers are now delegating operational responsibilities to middle managers as their workloads too have increased. Glover et al. (1998) found in their study that the type of tasks given to middle managers by senior managers is seen as a status symbol, not only for the middle managers, but for the members in their department. Therefore, if HoDs are involved in policy-making at a school level, the educators in the department believe that the interests of their department or subject are represented at senior management level (Glover et al., 1998, p. 283). According to Glover et al. (1998) the tasks that are undertaken by the HoD are multiple and this can further complicate the functions of the HoD.

Similarly, there have been vast educational changes in South Africa, particularly since 1994. In South Africa, in Chapter A, Section 4.4 of the Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998, it is stated that the job of the HoD in South African schools is to

- engage in class teaching
- be responsible for the effective functioning of the department
- organise relevant/related extra-curricular activities so as to ensure that the subject, learning area or phase and the education of the learner is promoted in a proper way

The Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998 clearly states that the duties and the responsibilities of the HoD are individual and varied and are dependent on the approaches and needs of each school. This means that the contextual factors of a school will determine the exact duties of the HoD and it can vary within each school. Therefore, the HoDs could be assigned more duties than they are expected to perform. This could pose a challenge to their management and leadership roles as too little time may be spent on the core function of managing a department. The Act outlines the five core duties of the HoD, which are: teaching, being in charge of extra-curricular activities, being in control of the learners and teachers in the department, being in charge of the personnel in the department, ensuring the planning and management of the department and being responsible for all communication within the department. The policy states that the HoDs are not limited to these core functions and duties which imply that more tasks can be assigned to them.

I see the HoD's role in classroom teaching as an educative role. According to Chapter A, Section 4.4 the Employment of Educators Act (1998), the HoD in a secondary

school is expected to teach at least 85% of the expected scheduled teaching time. Therefore, the HoD is primarily a classroom-based teacher, with additional management roles and responsibilities. Responsibility for personnel within school defines that the HoD has a management and leadership role. Therefore South Africa's education policy presents a dichotomous role that could pose a problem for HoDs because they have to ensure that the educative and managerial roles are not in conflict with each other. The co-ordinating, administrative, liaison and networking roles flow from the duties and responsibilities of the HoD, and this suggests that this middle management tier, although very much sandwiched between and taken for granted by educators and senior management in schools, should be given far greater recognition as the role is varied and complex. The varied duties and responsibilities of a HoD suggest that the middle manager is not only an educator, but also an administrator, a manager and a leader with several tasks on hand.

Various scholars have written about the complexity of the HoD role. Dimmock (1999, p. 442) says that school leaders "experience difficulty in deciding the balance between higher order tasks designed to improve staff, student and school performance (leadership), routine maintenance of present operations (management) and lower order duties (administration)". It is also found that leaders routinely use words such as "empower" and "delegate" to define the work they assign to their subordinates (Brower & Balch, 2005). Brower and Balch, (2005, p.73) clarify that "[e]mpowering someone to oversee a project, lead peers on a task force, head a department, or carry out visions – or any similar endeavour that contributes to the growth and well-being of the institution – requires someone to serve in the leader's capacity". Middle managers are accepted as department leaders who look after human and teaching resources to bring about effective teaching and learning (Glover et al., 1998, p. 297). Therefore, women who are HoDs are not only managing a department, but also leading the educators within the department, delegating tasks and empowering individual educators within the department. This shows that HoDs are not only managers but also leaders.

A recurrent theme in the research by Glover et al. (1998, p. 285) is that effective teaching and learning depends on the ability of the middle managers to "motivate, inspire and support teams of staff". This suggests that the leadership ability of the HoD is an important aspect of school improvement and departmental effectiveness.

Brown and Rutherford (1999) also regard the leadership of the middle manager as key to implementing change and other processes that promote successful learning in their departments. These authors argue that principals of schools are “too far from learning”, and their primary role is to provide direction for the school and to offer pressure and support that will help facilitate improvements in the quality of teaching and learning and in standards of achievement (Brown and Rutherford, 1999, p. 238). These authors also note that HoDs have traditionally seen themselves as being responsible for the curriculum and not as managers of the members in their department.

The new role of managing and leading their colleagues in their departments can prove challenging. However, Collier et al. (2002) found in their study of HoDs in secondary schools that the women respondents valued facilitating the success of the educators in their departments and working with staff more highly than their male colleagues. The women department heads in the study were over-represented in identifying “workload pressure, dealing with under-performing staff, and interpersonal conflicts/problems with and between staff as the worst aspects of the role” (Collier et al., 2002, p. 23). This highlights the supportive and collegial nature of the women HoDs. They prefer facilitating and working with staff to dealing with conflict situations and under-performance of educators within their departments that requires them to be firmer and less consultative with the educators under their jurisdiction. This is also suggested by Thornton and Bricheno (2009) who state that women in education are often associated with pastoral care, or with a particular age phase within the school and with subjects such as arts and humanities that rank lower in status than subjects such as Mathematics and Science.

Harris (2000) elaborates on the complexity of the HoD role when she distinguishes four dimensions in the HoD’s work. The first dimension concerns the ways in which the HoD translates the perspectives and policies of senior staff into the practices of individual classrooms. This “bridging” or “brokering” function (Busher & Harris, 1999, p. 307) of curriculum leaders is a central responsibility of HoDs. Blase and Anderson (1995) assert that it implies a transactional leadership role, where HoDs use “power over” others to secure working agreements with departmental members about how to achieve school and departmental goals and practices.

According to Harris, (2000) a second dimension focuses on how HoDs encourage a group or team of members to cohere and form a group identity. The areas of subject knowledge that the department shares, usually defines the boundaries of the group. Harris (2000) develops these ideas when she contends that an important role therefore, is for the HoD to foster collegiality and shared leadership within the group by shaping a shared vision (Busher, 2005). This implies a leadership style that empowers others and that involves subject leaders using “power with” or “power through” other people to bring about collaborative departmental cultures (Blase & Anderson, 1995). This style of leadership is people-oriented, and requires a leadership approach that helps other people to transform their feelings, attitudes and beliefs. This implies a transformational leadership role and, according to Harris (2000), transformational leaders do not only manage structure, they also purposefully impact on the school culture in order to change it. Therefore, an important dimension of the HoD’s work is to shape and manage the departmental culture.

Harris’ third dimension is about improving staff and student performance. At one level this role can be viewed as a transactional leadership role, where for example the HoD might monitor the school goals and how the school is meeting prescribed levels of curriculum performance. However, Glover et al. (1998) add an important aspect of mentoring, or a supervisory leadership role, that supports educators’ development and the development of pupils academically and socially. For mentoring and supervision of educators in their departments, the expert knowledge of the HoD is vital.

Harris (2000) outlines the fourth and final dimension of the HoD’s work as a liaison or representative role. This requires that the HoD be in touch with outside sources of information in the external environment of the school, and to negotiate, where needed, on behalf of other members of the department. Harris (2000) sees part of this dimension of the HoD role as being to represent and communicate the views of departmental members to senior staff and other middle managers within the school. Busher and Harris (1999, p. 307) view the role of the HoD as that of a translator whereby “the perspectives and policies of senior staff” are put into practice in individual classrooms. The HoD is therefore the implementer of policy that is laid down by the SMT. The management role of the HoD is to maintain efficiently and effectively the “current organisational arrangements” in a school and the “overall function is towards maintenance rather than change” (Cuban, 1998, p. xx). My

understanding of South Africa's policy on the duties and responsibilities is that the HoD, apart from the administrative and management roles, also has a leadership role, and therefore should not only be seen as a translator and implementer of policy. The HoD as a leader of a department will "shape the goals, motivations and actions of others" (Cuban, 1988, p. xx). Gunter (2001, p. 111) suggests that middle managers exist as 'performers' because of the need to respond to "external change rather than through the requirements of their subject discipline or to facilitate pedagogy".

Therefore, given the complexity and challenges as outlined above, the role of the HoD has to be clearly defined, understood monitored and evaluated within secondary schools. The size of a department renders different demands on the HoD. This is one of the findings from Glover et al. (1998). They found that the focus of work for the middle manager is different in a large department compared to a small department. Leaders of small departments do not see themselves as managers but as teachers with additional administrative duties to perform. They also state that single-subject departments mean that the middle manager has a shared disciplinary identity and expertise with the educators in the team, compared to a head of a large department, with more than one subject, who is disconnected from this knowledge base (Gunter, 2001, p. 108).

For the past two decades, responsibility for the management performance of a team, through, for example, classroom monitoring and departmental review, was regarded as essential but not widely understood (Gunter, 2001). Glover et al. (1998, p.281) found that middle managers tended to "see their work as a large number of unconnected duties required by the administrative machine of the school", rather than them having a highly developed understanding of the role. By this, they suggest that the HoD has to also ensure that innovations within the department are made and policies are implemented effectively, therefore, the management and leadership roles of the HoD are equally important. Adey (2000) found that middle managers were beginning to adapt to their changing role in respect of their managerial responsibilities, but they had yet to develop their leadership role. The increased workload of the HoDs means that they have additional responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning within their subject as well as having the responsibility of contributing to the shaping of school policies and priorities of the whole school (Adey, 2000, pp. 419-420). Middle

managers are now becoming increasingly aware of their changing role which according to Glover et al. (1998, p. 290) is marked by four characteristics:

- a) the change from administration to management and leadership
- b) the downward delegation of aspects of whole-school organisation
- c) the increasing responsibility of the monitoring and evaluation of their subject areas
- d) the interpretation of change initiated by senior management to classroom teachers.

The increased workload of the HoD indicates that there is a need for development and training provision for middle managers to ensure that they are effective in their role and have well-functioning departments (Adey, 2000; Brown & Rutherford, 1999; Glover et al., 1998). The effectiveness of a school and school improvement depends on the notion of distributed leadership both by senior and middle managers in a school (Brown & Rutherford, 1999) and teachers (Harris, 2003a; Harris, 2003b; Grant, 2006; Williams, 2011) whereby power is shared among the managers and educators within the school. According to Hopkins, Ainscow & West (1994), a school's capacity to manage change and bring about school effectiveness is for managers to practise transformational leadership, to have staff development, to ensure collaborative planning and to involve the staff, students and the community in decision making, among other conditions. Women middle managers therefore, have the ability to create effective departments as their leadership style is transformational and collaborative, as suggested by Hopkins et al. (1994) and Busher (2005). Fennell (2001) states that women in school management view power as multi-dimensional and multi-directional and they therefore encourage the empowerment of all members in an organisation through collective values and actions.

To sum up, my review of the literature on the role of the HoD in schools has found that the HoD has varied responsibilities and the role does not only involve routine administration of duties and teaching, but also managing the teaching-learning process in the department. Apart from being in charge of subject, learning area or phase, a HoD is also responsible for developing policy for their department, subject, learning area or phase. As pointed out by Brown and Rutherford (1999) and Glover (1998) HoDs play multiple interchangeable roles and some of these roles are that of educator,

leader, manager and administrator. It is therefore important to define the roles of a manager and leader as the terms are often used interchangeably in the leadership and management literature. What is glaring from the literature on middle managers is that the authors do not write on management with a gendered perspective. From my literature review, Collier et al. (2002) were the few authors who mentioned women middle managers in their study. The other authors have ignored gender dimensions to middle management. Being gender sensitive to issues of women in management should be part of a vision of development that redresses gender inequalities and “constructs a new ethical basis for continued development” (Odora-Hoppers, 2005, p. 56). Therefore, more field research is needed to understand the gendered dimensions of middle management positions in secondary schools. My study responds to this need.

In the next section I will discuss the concepts of management and leadership in the educational context.

### **2.3 Conceptions of Management and Leadership**

The discussion above showed that management and leadership tend to impinge on each other in middle management. Hence in this section I untangle the concepts of leadership and management in order to show the relationship between these terms and how I use them in this study. It is important to note how scholars differentiate between these concepts because I argue in this thesis that women heads of department are not only managers but also leaders of departments.

Within a South African context Singh and Lokostch (2005, p. 279) contend that management in education has traditionally been based on rules and regulations and the control of system inputs and outputs. They argue that a new paradigm of management should be based on shared leadership and shared vision. West-Burnham (1994, p. 28) puts it this way when he proposes that management should be seen as a verb or activity rather than a noun or object. Rather than management referring to a senior group of staff, it should be seen as an activity in which it is engaged by all members of an educational organisation, i.e. senior staff, teaching staff, non-teaching staff and children or students participants. Within the new framing of management, managing is therefore making things happen. It is the processes in which all people engage in an organisation.

A different perspective is presented by Cuban (1988). Cuban describes a leader as a person who influences others to embrace change whereas a manager is a person who is involved in effective maintenance of an organisation rather than in change. He states (Cuban, 1988, p.xx):

By leadership, I mean influencing other's actions in achieving desirable ends. Leaders are people who shape the goals, motivations, and actions of others. Frequently they initiate change to reach existing and new goals...Leadership...takes... much ingenuity, energy and skill. Managing is to maintain efficiently and effectively current and organisational arrangements. While managing well often exhibits leadership skills, the overall function is towards maintenance rather than change. I prize both managing and leading and attach no special value to either since different settings and time call for varied responses.

According to Chance and Chance (2002, p.85), writers often differentiate between leaders and managers in terms of the person rather than the process of managing and leading. In differentiating between the process of management and leadership, Schein (1985) suggests that leadership can be distinguished from management in that the main function of leadership is to shape and direct the organisational culture. Bush (2008) on the other hand, states that the concepts of leadership and management overlap each other and with administration. Different countries show preferences for these terms. Management is widely used in Britain, Europe and Africa, while administration is used in the USA, Canada and Australia (Bush, 2003). Dimmock and Walker (2005, p. 12) assert that "leadership involves setting the general and longer-term directions of the organization". In South Africa the Task Team on Education Management Development (DoE, 1996a, p. 27) does not link management with administration but states the following about management: "Management is about doing things and working with people to make things happen. It is a process to which all contribute and in which everyone in an organisation ought to be involved".

Coleman (2003c, 156) equates leadership with "vision and values" and management with "processes and structures". In terms of policy some of the management functions of the HoDs are to control and monitor the departmental activities, make decisions and allocate resources within the department. The HoD has to inspire departmental members to work effectively, set goals and have a vision for the department in order to ensure the "effective functioning of the department" (RSA, 1998). This can be considered the leadership functions of the HoD. Being responsible for a team of educators within their department means that HoDs have to inspire and motivate educators in order to achieve these goals. Therefore, even though HoDs have their

management functions and responsibilities, the leadership attributes of inspiring and motivating colleagues is essential for effective teacher performance. The arguments in the literature presented in section 2.2 about women having strengths in collegial relations and caring for colleagues and their development, seem to suggest that women HoDs may have an edge over men HoDs in the dual manager/leader role. I will therefore use the words leaders and managers in this thesis when referring to the women heads of department, because I view them as both managers and leaders of their departments. This resonates with Schon's (1984) argument that often the distinction between the roles of manager and leader is not intended since we generally expect managers to lead, therefore it may be acceptable to treat management and leadership as one concept.

Management and leadership within the South African educational context have changed in the post-1994 era, from a bureaucratic system of educational management to a decentralised decision-making approach that promotes self-managing and autonomous schools. Thurlow (2003, p. 35) states that the post-apartheid approach to education management in South Africa has the school and its community as its primary focus. To this end the Task Team Report (DoE, 1996a, p. 28) states: "In [South Africa], schools are the building blocks for transformation of the education system. It is in schools that the culture of teaching and learning must be recreated, and the foundational lessons of democracy learned".

In the light of this, according to Thurlow (2003), the post-apartheid education policies and legislation of post-apartheid South Africa promote a process of decentralised decision-making in which schools have to increasingly manage themselves. The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996b) has devolved decision-making power to the schools and thus advocates democratic school governance. The Task Team Report (DoE, 1996a, p. 19) states that the traditional system of management was one in which principals and teachers were consistently at the receiving end of top-down management structures. During the apartheid era South African schools displayed many bureaucratic features with hierarchical structures (Bush, 2003, p. 49). This meant that the managers of schools worked in a highly regulated environment and had become accustomed to receiving direct instructions from the departmental officials (DoE, 1996a, p. 19).

Thurlow (2003) contends that the Task Team's proposed self-management of schools does not guarantee a positive change in management styles, but that real transformation would depend on the nature and quality of internal management. The Task Team (DoE, 1996a, p. 29) proposes that the self management of the schools "must be accompanied by an internal devolution of power within the school and in transformational leadership". The Task Team thus recommends transformational and distributed leadership, which is the distribution of power over decisions among the various stakeholders in the school context. Through transformational leadership, a school would be driven by the values and mission that would have been developed consensually and owned by all members of a school, not only the principal (DoE, 1996a). The Task Team (DoE, 1996a, p. 30) also proposes an integrative and collaborative approach to educational management which is based on consent and consensus. Therefore, participatory and collaborate approaches to leadership and management are set as the base for transforming schools in the post-apartheid era in South Africa.

Senge (1996, p. 45) describes the type of leader that is required for the sort of changing educational landscape and conditions as occurring in South Africa:

we are coming to believe that leaders are those people who 'walk ahead', people who are genuinely committed to deep change in themselves and in their organisations. They lead through developing new skills, capabilities, and understandings. And they come from many places in the organisations.

The type of leader that Senge refers to is one who adopts a transformational leadership approach. Transformational leadership engages various stakeholders in decision-making and therefore assists the internal management of the school in becoming more collaborative (Grant, 2006; Gronn, 2000). There is a shift from a focus on "individual achievement and meritocracy to an emphasis on collective achievement, social networks, and the importance of teamwork and shared accountability" (Fletcher, 2004, p. 648). Transformational leadership has aspects similar in nature to distributed or shared leadership because participation is from bottom-up, rather than top-down where leadership practices are enacted by people at all levels in an organisation and work within a context of interdependence (Hallinger, 2003). Transformational leadership is collaborative, like that of distributed leadership in which leadership is devolved to include teachers and other line managers and is not only in the control of

the principal (Grant, 2006). In this regard the middle managers can therefore be seen as leaders of their departments because they too develop “new skills, capabilities and understanding” in their team members (Senge, 1996, p. 45). The middle managers can thus lead the change process within schools through this transformed leadership style. The leadership can be around “curriculum issues, assessment, teaching and learning, community and parent participation, school vision building, networking, the development of partnerships, and so on” (Grant, 2006, p. 514). Transformational leadership moves away from a traditional understanding that involves transactions between members of the department in schools (see Caldwell & Spinks, 1992). In transformational leadership, followers are committed to change (Hallinger, 2003). Eagly (2007) proposes that women leaders are more transformational than male leaders because of their stereotypically feminine qualities of co-operation, mentoring and collaboration, which are qualities of transformational leadership.

Therefore, within the South African policy context transformational and collegial leadership and management is proposed so that schools with leaders/managers such as women heads of department are capable of meeting the challenges of a changing education system.

#### **2.4 Concluding Remarks**

The chapter began with a focus reviewing scholarly and policy literature on women in management. Scholars such as Mathur Helm (2005) and Moorosi (2006) show that women in South Africa are confined to the lower rungs of the management hierarchy and few women are given the opportunity to become senior managers in schools. The literature shows that this division of labour in education is skewed as men occupy most of the senior management positions because of the assumption that men are better at decision-making than women (Morrell & Moletsane, 2002). Bush (2003) contends that education management is seen as an androcentric male profession and is disconnected from the female experience of teaching. Shakeshaft (1987) views sex discrimination as being one of the main barriers to women becoming school managers and leaders. Although the literature review suggests that leadership and management in education are often based on men’s experiences, scholars such as Wolpe et al. (1997) contend that neither men nor women comprise homogenous groups because

life experiences are singularly based on differences in class positions, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and age.

Even within the role of middle management some scholars such as Cubillo and Brown (2003) show that women are often assigned pastoral duties involving nurturing and caring whereas men are given responsibilities for aspects such as finance and curriculum. The literature review shows that the middle management position is complex because of the multiple roles the middle manager in secondary schools plays. Harris (1999) expresses this complexity by distinguishing its four dimensions: first, how the HoD is able to translate the perspectives and policies of senior staff into practice in the department; second, how the middle manager is able to encourage the teachers in the department to form a group identity; third, how the middle manager is able to improve staff and student performance; and fourth, the liaison or representative role of the HoD. Some scholars like Adey (2000) indicate that middle managers are beginning to adapt to the changing role in respect of managerial responsibilities, but has yet to develop their leadership role as middle managers.

The literature shows that within the middle management tier of educational management, leadership and management functions tend to impinge on each other; hence the concepts of management and leadership need further clarification. Singh and Lokostch (2005) point out that educational management in South Africa has traditionally been based on rules and regulations and control of system impetus and outputs, but contemporary management in education is based on shared leadership and a shared vision. Thurlow (2003) shows that management and leadership in education have changed in South Africa from a bureaucratic system to decentralised decision-making that promotes self-managing, autonomous schools. Coleman (2003c) equates leadership with vision and values, and management with processes and structures. Several literature sources note that even the educational policies within South Africa promote a new type of transformational leadership within schools. The type of leader and manager for the changing educational context is a leader who leads as a transformational leader accompanied by the devolution of power within the school (DoE, 1996a).

My findings from the literature review are useful for this study because the following points can be highlighted:

- Seeing women as a specific category is important in educational management since women tend to have their own style of leadership, something that is often overlooked or incorrectly viewed as a deficient style of management when compared to their male counterparts.
- The middle management tier is an integral part of the educational management hierarchy because middle managers drive the core function of a school, the curriculum and its associated teaching and learning processes.
- A new approach to educational management in the ethos of transformational leadership is required in South Africa's changing educational context.
- As documented in the sources consulted, not much is understood about how women middle managers in schools lead their departments as transformational leaders.
- There is a dearth of research on women in middle management and how women become managers and develop their management capabilities and creates a gap in the literature.

In the next chapter I discuss the capability approach and transformational leadership theory in order to understand why women middle managers are able to become transformational managers. I will apply these theoretical approaches to investigate how women middle managers develop capabilities from their formative years to function as transformational leaders in their departments.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**THE CAPABILITY APPROACH COUPLED WITH TRANSFORMATIONAL**  
**LEADERSHIP THEORY FOR STUDYING WOMEN MIDDLE MANAGERS**  
**IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

In Chapter Two I discussed various scholars' work about women in education management, the "middleness" of the HoD role and the challenges faced by managers occupying this important position in the school management hierarchy, closing by reviewing the literature on management and leadership in education. In this chapter my purpose is to consider a set of ideas about how people develop capabilities that enable them to function in later life. I refer to these ideas as the "matrix of alignment of the sets of ideas of the capability approach and transformational leadership theory". The capability approach from Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2000a) is useful because it enabled me to explore how women middle managers come to be the managers they are. Looking at Nussbaum's central human functional capabilities, and how these capabilities are developed in the women managers from their formative years, and paying attention to the concept of professional capabilities as used by Walker, et al. (2010), I reflect on the capabilities essential for women middle managers to function as professional women. I then turn to the transformational leadership theory because this form of leadership underpins South Africa's policy for school leaders such as women middle managers. The Transformational Leadership Theory may be a relatively "old" leadership theory, but it is integral in this study because it is used to explain how women middle managers are able to function within a post-apartheid changing educational context. The transformational leadership theory as applied by Bass and Avolio (1994) and Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach (1999) is useful as it enabled me to explore the transformational leadership functions of women middle managers.

I find the capability approach is a useful theoretical lens to understand how women HoDs have developed capabilities to become middle managers, and how they are thus able to function in their management roles. The concept of human capability was developed by Amartya Sen and expanded by Martha Nussbaum. Transformational leadership theory, also used in this study, will additionally explore how women middle managers are able to lead their departments effectively in the post-apartheid

period seeing many changes are taking place within the transforming education sector in South Africa.

The central idea of the capability approach is that human beings need to be acknowledged as dignified and free people who shape their own lives in cooperation and reciprocity with other people, rather than being passively shaped or acted on by the world in the manner of a “flock” or “herd” of animals (Nussbaum, 2000a, p. 72). In addition, the capabilities or freedoms to which the women middle managers have been exposed are integral to this study and will be a focus in this chapter. Sen’s instrumental freedoms and Nussbaum’s list of capabilities are used as a means to evaluate the capabilities, freedoms and opportunities experienced by the women participants. These enable them to lead worthy and meaningful lives and to flourish in their management roles. The transformational leadership behavioural components of Bass and Avolio (1994) and the leadership attributes and dimensions of Leithwood et al. (1999) from an educational context, will be used to understand how women middle managers function within their roles.

### **3.1 The Capability Approach**

Sen’s (1999) capability approach is about human well-being and the development of various freedoms necessary for people to function well. His reason for thinking about capabilities in relation to freedom is because he was looking for an alternative approach to the traditional ways of measuring human development by indicators such as income levels. Development, for Sen, is seen as the process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. Thus, according to him, human freedom “contrasts with narrower views of development, such as identifying development with the growth of gross national product, or with the rise in personal incomes, or with industrialisation, or with technological advance, or with social modernization” (Sen, 1999, p. 3). He advances the idea that, although the growth of the Gross National Product (GNP) or of individual incomes is important as a means for expanding the freedoms of people, freedoms depend on other things, such as social and economic arrangements, as well as political and civil rights (Sen, 1999, p3). Sen’s capability approach to the well-being of humans is a “concentration on freedom to achieve in general; and the capabilities to function in particular” (Sen, 1995, p. 266). In order for development to take place, Sen (1999, p. 3) contends that the major sources of unfreedoms have to be removed so that people will be capable of making use of, or taking up, the good

opportunities in life. He lists unfreedoms as: poverty as tyranny, poor economic opportunities, systematic social deprivation, neglect of public facilities, and intolerance or over-activity of repressive states (Sen, 1999, p. 3). Sen, an economist, formulates the capability approach from the point of view of an economist rather than from an educational perspective. However, as some scholars have argued, education is central to his capability approach (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 7).

When considering the capability approach *vis à vis* education, Sen (1999) views education as a basic capability. He does not provide a list of specific basic capabilities, nor does he justify how to identify these basic capabilities (Terzi, 2007, p.26). He does, however, suggest a few elementary capabilities, such as the primary need and right to be sheltered, nourished, educated and clothed (Sen, 1999, p. 20, 2004, p. 78). Significantly, Sen's (2004, p. 77) reason for not providing a list of predetermined capabilities is that this would limit public participation about what should be included and why. He argues that a prescribed list denies people the freedom to voice their opinions over matters that concern them intimately. Nevertheless, Sen (2004, p. 79) admits that some of the basic capabilities feature in "every list of relevant capabilities in every society". In his view, an exact list of capabilities should consider the local context. For example, overcoming poverty in a country may require the development of a different set of capabilities as compared to performing a role in educational management. However, the basic or elementary capabilities advanced by Sen could arguably enhance other more complex capabilities depending on the purpose of the exercise.

Sen's capability approach highlights the notion that people have to have their fundamental needs met in order to achieve well-being (Saito, 2003, p. 19). In turn they achieve capabilities that offer them the freedom to act and make choices. Unlike Sen, who does not provide a list of capabilities in his approach, Nussbaum proposes a universal, cross-cultural list of central human capabilities needed for individuals to flourish and lead a life of dignity (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p.13). Nussbaum (2000a, p. 74) states that these central capabilities are not only instrumental in furthering pursuits, but that "[t]hey are held to have value in themselves, in making the life that includes them fully human". Nussbaum's list of central human functional capabilities entails life, bodily health, bodily integrity, senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason, affiliation, other species, play and control over

one's environment (Nussbaum, 2000a, pp. 78 – 80). This list of central capabilities comprises “separate components” but, as she goes on to state, they are all of central importance and are distinct in quality (Nussbaum, 2000a, p. 81). At the same time, the capabilities in Nussbaum's list of capabilities are all related to one another. Thus, according to Nussbaum (2000a), for example, promoting women's control over the environment and their right of political participation is essential and linked to promoting their literacy. Nevertheless Nussbaum (1999, p. 236) holds that her human capabilities list is “open-ended and humble” as it can always be contested and revised. Thus, Sen and Nussbaum hold different positions on naming capabilities. However, both include a fundamental role for education as a capability (Nussbaum, 2000a; Sen 1999).

Since education is a basic capability, it is able to support and expand the other more complex capabilities in life. For example, through education, educated women were (and in a general sense are) able to take up middle management posts and achieve a sense of fulfilment from that work. However, being a capable middle manager may be an outcome achieved after many years of education and practice as an educator. While in the post-apartheid context of concentrated change and transformation in the education sector, it might be tempting to focus only on counting the numbers of women having the capability to achieve a middle management appointment, it is, however, important to understand what capabilities such women hold, and how they developed these so that they are equipped to apply for middle management posts and to function as managers. The value of a focus beyond counting capable women, rather than trying to understand how they developed their capabilities to function as middle managers, is that it may help to disentangle the complex ways of developing women who aspire to be middle managers in South African schools.

The capability approach highlights the point that numerical measures such as per capita income are inadequate to measure a person's development, performance and achievements (Saito, 2003, p. 19). The capability approach therefore focuses on what people are able to do. On this basis, the capability approach is useful for understanding how women managers develop and function as capable middle managers.

Next I discuss the key concepts used in the capability approach.

### ***3.1.1 Capabilities and Functionings***

A “capability” is the potential to function. It refers to what people are able to be and do with their future, rather than what resources to which they have access (Walker, 2005, p. 103). Therefore, capability is seen as a kind of freedom (Sen, 1992, pp. 39-42, 1999, p. 75). “Functioning” is what one manages to achieve and to do with the capability “the various things a person may value doing or being” (Sen, 1999, p.75). Examples of functioning may include being well-nourished and growing, reading and writing, and being a middle manager of a department in a school. Functioning is the achievement or outcome attained by a person because of their capabilities and the value placed on that functioning.

Functioning and capabilities are interrelated. Capability is seen as the opportunity to achieve and functioning is the actual achievement. Moreover, according to Robeyns (2005, p. 95) what is important is that people have the freedom or valuable opportunities (capabilities) to lead the kind of lives they want to lead, to do what they want to do and be the person they want to be. Once they effectively have these substantive opportunities, they can choose those options they value most. For Sen, his capability approach relates to “freedom in the range of options a person has in deciding what life to lead” (Dreze & Sen, 1995, p. 10). Capability is therefore seen as the freedom to achieve various paths. For example, when choosing one’s career, a person should have various options to choose from when considering the path they wish to follow, and they should have sufficient information to reflect upon what they value (Walker, 2005, p. 104).

The distinction between functioning and capabilities is important because only measuring functioning or outcomes can give too little information about how they are doing (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 4). Thus, assessing the performance or functioning of women in middle management posts will be incomplete or partial unless one knows and understands the capabilities they had during their formative years and takes this into account. The following examples are explanatory in this regard: having books to read or a teacher to help one learn to read are seen as opportunities or capabilities, whereas reading is seen as the functioning – the achievement, the difference between potential and outcome (Walker & Unterhalter,

2007, p. 4). According to Alexander (2004, p. 453), if functioning represents what a person manages to achieve in life, capabilities stand for the various combinations of functioning the person might achieve. It is for this reason that both capability and functioning are necessary for exploring how women middle managers have developed and how they do their work as women in management in secondary schools.

Exploring the choices they make to enter the management terrain, and the challenges they face on entering management, will illuminate the capabilities and help us recognize how women become managers and leaders. According to Sen (1992, p. 39), the well-being of a person can be seen in terms of the quality of that person's being or the "well-ness" of that person. Living has a set of interrelated "functionings" that consist of "beings and doings" and what a person achieves can be seen as the "vector of his or her functioning" (Sen, 1992, p. 39). Functioning can be elementary such as having a basic education, to more complex achievements such as being promoted to a management position. Hence the "*capability to function*" shows the freedom a person has to lead one type of life or another and the "capability set" reflects a person's freedom to choose a possible type of living and form of freedom (Sen, 1992, p. 40). If the achieved functioning brings about the person's well-being, then the capability to achieve those functioning will comprise a person's freedom or the real opportunities to have well-being (Sen, 1992, p. 40). Thus the capability set informs us of the "various functioning vectors that are within reach of a person" and the well-being of that person (Sen, 1992, p. 41). Unterhalter (2007, p. 77) describes a capability set as being "wide" if there are fewer constraints to achieving a combination of various functions. For example, a women middle manager may have various choices when deciding what type of a manager she wants to be. The choice she makes to function in a particular way as a manager will constitute her freedom or opportunity only if the achieved function of choosing that particular management style constitutes her well-being. Therefore the woman middle manager has a wide capability set and, if her capability set is relatively constrained by forms of unfreedoms, then it can be deduced that she has a narrow capability set.

Unlike Sen who is of the opinion that a list of capabilities should not be prescribed, I tend to agree with Nussbaum who suggests that a list of human capabilities should be compiled. I believe the list of central human capabilities is important in this study, because it shows what capabilities are developed in the women middle managers for

their management roles, and what freedoms and opportunities they have to develop these. Nussbaum (2000a) views the list as an important vehicle to lay the foundation for basic political principles that guide constitutions to enable people to function in a fully human way. Nussbaum (2000a, p. 71) states that, when comparisons are made between the lives of various people in order to produce accounts of regional, class and national differences in quality of life, it is within the space of the central capabilities that these are done. She also believes that, in certain core areas of human functioning, people should meet a certain basic level of capability, and that any rating below this basic threshold level in any of these core areas should be seen as needing attention, as the absence of these basic capabilities is a mark of the absence of human life, and that the person is not enabled to live in a truly human way (Nussbaum, 2000a). For Nussbaum (1999, p. 234), when a person is able to function at a higher threshold level, that person's capability then becomes "truly human" and the person is able to live a life worthy of a human being. This also refers to human worth and dignity, ideas that are borrowed from Karl Marx.

Nussbaum (2000a) distinguishes three different types of capabilities: basic, internal and combined capabilities. The basic capabilities are seen as "lower-level" capabilities which a person needs to perform a function that will lead to higher-level capabilities. Nussbaum (1999, p. 237) describes internal capabilities as "states of the person herself that are, so far as the person herself is concerned, sufficient conditions for the exercise of the requisite functions". She uses the example of most people having the internal capabilities for religious freedom and freedom of speech. Nussbaum's (2000a, p. 84-85) combined capabilities are defined as "internal capabilities *combined with* suitable external conditions for the exercise of the function". She explains this in the example of citizens of non-democratic regimes who may have the internal capability to exercise thought and speech in accordance with their conscience, but they cannot exercise that capability because of the contextual repressive conditions. Her three types of capabilities stress the importance of developing of people's internal capabilities as well as preparing the context so that the people are able to exercise their capability and function (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 237).

Women middle managers may have the internal capability to be managers and to practise management, however, when this is coupled with external conditions such as

social, economic, educational and political obstacles or unfreedoms, then they may not be able to function effectively as middle managers. If this is so, the external barriers that women may encounter as managers in the form of organisational, societal or political barriers, and disabling, undemocratic policies will need to be changed for them to function as managers and grow within their own management fields. For example, policies within an educational institution should take cognisance of gender issues and ensure that females as well as males are given equal opportunities to develop in a truly human way, that is, in a way that is free of humiliation, discrimination and gender bias. A gender blind or gender neutral, or gender unfriendly/hostile policy would be an external barrier to the functioning of a woman in a management position. This is what Nussbaum means by the combined effect of internal and external capabilities.

This study is about women who have attained a middle management position, that is, they function as middle managers. However, women in such posts come from very different social backgrounds as they would have attended different educational institutions for their primary, secondary and tertiary education and these may have been largely separated according to race and class. Therefore, the capability sets of these women may differ in the form of the opportunities and freedoms. They may have been influenced by belonging to different racial groups and different social class structures based on their families' earning potential. So, although the women middle managers may attain middle management status, having common a function as HoDs in secondary schools, their capabilities might well be different.

The capabilities the women participants in this study possess and display in their management roles may differ in the way they work within their own school or departmental context. It is precisely because of such differences that Sen and Nussbaum, and others such as Unterhalter and Walker, see the importance of evaluating capabilities rather than functioning. Nevertheless, I believe that, in trying to understand how women middle managers function in their roles, and how their capabilities that have enabled them to function as transformational leaders have developed over the years, it is important to explore their capabilities as well as their functioning in their role as HoDs in middle management. Thus the value of the capability approach lies in its allowing for the evaluation of capabilities or real

freedoms or opportunities of each person, in order to understand how they have become capable and how they are able to function in their work.

Developing a capability does not imply passivity. Functioning indicates active participation and agency. Therefore the following important concepts in the capability approach are freedoms and agency and they are discussed in the next section.

### ***3.1.2 Freedoms and Agency***

According to Sen (1999), people are active participants in their own development. This active participation is referred to as agency. As a feminist researcher agency is important to me, because each person's individuality and subjectivity is acknowledged. Through agency the person is able to make choices for herself and she resolutely does not willingly accept her lot in life. As Sen (1992, pp. 19) argues, people differ from each other in many different ways because of their "different external characteristics and circumstances". These differences are important when assessing the freedoms and opportunities that people have, because the fewer freedoms and opportunities a person has, the less agency that person has to make choices based on reasoned reflection. This highlights the inequality in society among people, particularly women and minority groups. Because there is this inequality within particular groups of people, individuals are unable to do what they value doing (Sen, 1992, p. 20).

Agency, on the other hand, means that "each person is a dignified and responsible human being who shapes her or his own life in the light of goals that matter to them, rather than being shaped or instructed how to think" (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 5). People reach their goals through reasoned reflection and their agency helps them to imagine and act towards new ways of being, thus leading to their development. For Sen (1999), agency is not only important for individual freedom, but also instrumental for collective action among groups of people and democratic participation in that action. For example, in the school setting, working in teams is essential and integral for efficiency, particularly in post-apartheid South African schools that promote teamwork and have devolved transformational leadership rather than decision-making power being the preserve only of the principal or those in formal leadership roles (Grant, 2010).

An “agent,” according to Sen (1999, p. 19), is “someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well”. Being an agent, for Sen (1999), is to be actively involved in shaping one’s own life and having opportunities to reflect on this. To treat people as agents means that they are given a chance to be heard, and to be involved in collective evaluations and decisions (Agarwal, Humphries & Robeyns, 2003, p. 5). Therefore, freedom involves both the processes that allow freedom of action and decisions, and the opportunities that people have, given their personal and social circumstances (Sen, 1999, p. 17).

Both participatory processes and opportunities help to bring about the development of human beings and this is an expansion of the basic human freedom concept.

According to Sen (1999, p. 36), freedom is the primary end of and the principal means towards human development. These can be called respectively the “constitutive role” and the “instrumental role” of freedom in development (Sen, 1999, 36). Sen explains that the *constitutive* role of freedom relates to the importance of substantive freedom in enriching human life, and that these substantive freedoms include elementary capabilities like being able to avoid starvation, undernourishment, escapable morbidity and premature mortality, and promote the freedoms that are associated with being literate and numerate as well as having freedom for political participation and freedom of speech (Sen, 1999, p. 36). In Sen’s terms, these can be seen as basic capabilities. Therefore, women middle managers who are given substantive freedoms such as the freedom to be educated are able to enrich their lives by following a profession that they want.

The *instrumental* role of freedoms is concerned with the way different kinds of rights, opportunities and entitlements become contributors to the expansion of human freedom and to human development (Sen, 1999, p. 37). For example, if women are given the opportunity to advance in management and leadership positions in schools, they will be able to develop their capabilities as leaders and managers. Sen further explains that different types of freedom interrelate with one another, and that freedom of one type may help to advance the freedoms of other types. The idea of freedom used in the capability approach should be viewed in a positive rather than a negative sense, that is, “freedom to,” rather than “freedom from” (Saito, 2003, p. 21). Within the school context, women middle managers who are given opportunities by their

principals to make decisions not only at departmental level, but also at whole-school level, enable women middle managers to develop their management and leadership skills for further leadership roles in the upper echelons of management within schools. Nussbaum (2000a) however, feels that Sen's treatment of freedom is not sufficiently specific. She argues that freedoms have both good and bad dimensions and that not all freedoms are of equal worth.

Sen (1999, p. 38) identifies five *instrumental* freedoms: political freedoms, economic facilities, social opportunities, transparency guarantees and protective security. He says these freedoms are linked and complement each other. In my study, the instrumental freedoms of economic facilities and social opportunities are the more important. The women middle managers participating in this study grew up during a turbulent era in South Africa's history, the dark apartheid days when many were exposed to economic and social deprivation. The deprivations that they experienced gave them fewer freedoms and opportunities than those who were privileged with the result that they lacked certain substantive and instrumental freedoms.

Sen (1999, pp. 38-39) describes the freedom of economic facilities as the opportunities that individuals enjoy for the purpose of consumption, production or exchange. He explains the freedom of social opportunity as the arrangements that society makes for education, health care and so forth. These influence a person's substantive freedom to live better (Sen, 1999, p. 39). It is his view that these freedoms are important not only for one's private life (such as living a healthy life and avoiding preventable morbidity and premature mortality), but also for more effective participation in economic and political activities (Sen, 1999, p. 39). It is for this reason that this study will explore the economic facilities and social opportunities that women middle managers in schools have been exposed to while on the road to achieving their management positions. These are the real opportunities, which I see as capabilities that have enabled them to be in their present positions as middle managers.

To sum up, in this study I consider those aspects of women's narratives that show agency or that contribute to their well-being in their middle management roles, because this will help me understand what freedoms and opportunities women middle managers need that enable them to function in their roles.

### **3.2 The Capability Approach and Education**

As an economist, Sen does not directly explore education when he explains his theory. However, education can be explored using the capability approach (Saito, 2003, p. 17). Through education, one is able to develop as a human being, and both Sen and Nussbaum see human development as central to the capability approach. Thus, education is also important in enhancing the capabilities of people. Nussbaum (2000a, 2003) would support the view that children should remain in compulsory education until they have developed the capabilities that are important in enabling them to have valued choices. Therefore, in order to develop a mature adult capability, one has to have practice of it (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 14). Hence it becomes important to document the participants' early educational experiences, as it impacts on their later development and functioning as middle managers. The processes and outcomes of education ought to enhance freedom, agency and well-being by "making one's life richer with the opportunity of reflective choice" and enhancing "the ability of people to help themselves and to influence the world" (Sen 1992, p. 18).

The United Nations Development Programme (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1990) bases its work on Sen's capability approach, defining human development (HD) "as a process of enlarging people's choices... [t]he most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living...[a]dditional choices include, political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect" (p. 10). Thus, education is seen as one of the core means to help in human development and to expand the choices people can make. Education is integral for the development of women middle managers' capabilities. By developing their capabilities women middle managers are able to become empowered and make choices and be involved in decision-making.

Having the opportunity to make choices and be involved in decision making suggests that people have freedoms to choose. Freedom of choice suggests a state of democracy, empowerment, autonomy and agency which can be achieved through education. Ranis et al. (2006, p. 333) interpret empowerment as being concerned with the ability of relatively weak groups of people in society to be autonomous and to be able to take control of their lives. The type of education that therefore promotes freedom, the ability to reason and be autonomous is a liberal form of education. One such group of people that can benefit from a liberal education is women. As

Nussbaum (2000a, 2006) states, women's autonomy can be achieved through education and this autonomy helps females to enhance their own capabilities. Sen, being concerned with gender inequalities, also views education as a "multiplier for expansion of capabilities" (Unterhalter, 2009, p. 336). In this study, education is assumed to be pivotal in expanding the capabilities and functioning of the women middle managers. The education they receive from their early schooling days through to their tertiary education helps to expand their capabilities and functioning for their later roles as managers. While formal education develops the women managers to be literate and grow intellectually, it might, however, also prove to be a space where they suffer inequalities and deprivations as females. Thus, the impact of women managers' early schooling and higher education experiences are proposed to be important in shaping their career.

Education, understood here as formal education, is a central capability, according to Nussbaum. The list includes being able to use imagination and thought, to develop emotional attachments, and have the freedoms to sustain these. It also includes being able to develop a conception of good through practical reason, develop the basis of self-respect, enjoy play and have a sense of control over one's environment (Unterhalter, 2007, p. 77). Nussbaum (1999; 2000a) proposes that all the items in her list of central human capabilities are of equal importance and are distinct in quality. However, within this list, two of these core capabilities stand out, particularly in respect of education, that of practical reason and affiliation, which in her view are both capabilities that organise and permeate all other capabilities (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 235). To use one's senses in a way that is not "infused by the characteristically human way of thought and planning, is to use it in an incompletely human way" (Nussbaum, 1999, p. 236). In this regard, Nussbaum (2000a, p. 79) describes practical reason as: "being able to form a conception of the good and to engage in critical reflection about the planning of one's life. (This entails protection for the liberty of conscience)".

Nussbaum means that one has to have the ability to make choices concerning one's life as this entails engaging in critical reflection and planning. Not having the right to choices concerning one's life, is having a lack of freedom and this goes against the grain of freedom and liberty that people should have. The capability of practical reason is coupled with the affiliation capability, but when one reasons for oneself

without considering the needs and circumstances of another, one is behaving in an incompletely human way. By this Nussbaum means that people have to be considerate of others with whom they interact.

Nussbaum (2000a, pp. 79-80) describes the affiliation capability as:

Being able to live with and toward others, to recognise and show concern for other human beings, to engage in various forms of social interaction; to be able to imagine the situation of another and to have compassion for that situation; to have the capability for both justice and friendship. (Protecting this capability means protecting the freedom of assembly and political speech.)

By this Nussbaum means that people should be able to form relationships with others and to be caring and compassionate. She sees the capabilities of justice and friendship as being necessary when forming meaningful relationships with others. Having the social bases of self-respect and non-humiliation; being able to be treated as a dignified being whose worth is equal to that of others. This entails, at a minimum, protection against discrimination on the basis of race, sex, sexual orientation, religion, caste, ethnicity or national origin. For example, in work, being able to work as a human being, a person must be able to exercise practical reason and enter into meaningful relationships of mutual recognition with other workers.

Within the context of this study, the affiliation capability is important as affiliations are reminiscent of relationships the women have within their families, with people at educational institutions they attended and the schools where they teach or work as middle managers. These relationships and affiliations are also important because they influence women and shape their ideas and actions. In essence, all relationships are based on the interactions people have with others with whom they interact personally or in close proximity. On a larger scale, women are also influenced by relationships and affiliations from afar. In this regard they may have role models who are political or national figures and are influenced by their values and ideologies.

Although Sen (1999) might view basic education as expanding social opportunity and freedom and other more complex capabilities, researchers such as Unterhalter (see Flores-Crespo, 2007, p. 49) do not agree that the human capabilities of women are necessarily being expanded in all educational institutions. For example, corporal punishment inflicted on women within the academic environment, is destabilising rather than bringing about their well-being and freedom from harm.

A capability, from Nussbaum's list of central capabilities, which I believe is directly related to education and management because it promotes freedom of choice, is the capability that stresses drawing on the senses, imagination and thought. Nussbaum (2000a, pp. 78-79) describes this capability as:

Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a “truly human” way, a way informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing self-expressive works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences, and to avoid non-necessary pain.

Nussbaum views this capability related to the senses as necessary as it helps promote one's ability to think, imagine and reason. It also ensures that one is able to have freedom of speech and therefore to make choices concerning religion, art and politics. With this capability women will be assured of being able to think and reason, and not be cajoled into making decisions. This capability highlights the freedom and opportunities that people can achieve through education, as education enables one to “use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason.” Although not limited to subjects such as literacy, mathematics and science, the education one receives enables functioning in this “truly human way”. In this study, the women participants are HoDs of particular subjects or learning areas, ranging from mathematics and science to literacy, language and communication and arts and culture. This fact further indicates the diversity of this group of women middle managers, as they are not confined to specific areas of subject specialisation. More importantly, although Nussbaum sees the importance of literacy, mathematics and scientific training as being essential in enabling the higher order thinking and reasoning skills; she also notes that it is not limited to these areas alone.

Mathematics and science have historically been perceived as subjects dominated by males and thus tended to be afforded far more recognition than subjects such as arts and literacy. This perception intensified due to the prevalence of women in the latter fields. Regarding the capability of senses, imagination and thought, Nussbaum (2000a, p. 79) notes that, in order to use one's imagination and thought in a “truly human” way, you has to have the capability and freedom to express yourself in religion, music, literacy and other areas of education too, as these are also important in helping to promote a sense of well-being and human flourishing.

The other capability from Nussbaum's list of capabilities that is important for this study is that of emotions. Nussbaum (2000a, p. 79) describes emotions as:

Being able to have attachments to things and people outside ourselves; to love and care for us, to grieve at their absence; in general, to love, to grieve, to experience longing, gratitude, and justified anger. Not having one's emotional development blighted by overwhelming fear and anxiety, or by traumatic events of abuse or neglect. (Supporting this capability means supporting forms of human association that can be shown to be crucial in their development).

Nussbaum's description of emotion suggests that people must be able to live without fear and any form of abuse and enables one to care for and to love others. Education is a caring profession where educators take care of learners, teach them and counsel them. Development of this capability will enable people to form relationships and associations with others. If people are shown love and care, in general, their capability to love and care for others will be enhanced. Caring suggests a moral obligation that people have for those for whom they are responsible within their departments.

Many writers have indeed acknowledged the ethic of care in women's educational practice in teaching and leading (Noddings, 1992; Vogt, 2002). As HoDs, women middle managers are responsible for the teaching and learning that takes place in their departments while also spending a substantial amount of their time teaching. As middle managers engaging with the learners and educators in their departments, the effectiveness of their interactions will depend on the type of relationships and associations they form with them. For example, a caring and empathetic disposition will yield a stronger working relationship than an overly formal one or one characterised by unapproachability. Nussbaum's central capability of emotions can therefore help to redefine leadership, with the ability to look at it through a feminist lens where care and empathy are seen as important attributes of leadership.

Other researchers, (such as Brighouse, 2000; Saito, 2003; Terzi, 2005, Walker & Unterhalter, 2007) have also written about the capability approach in relation to education. Since the research done by Walker et al. (2010) is most pertinent to this study, it is briefly dealt with here. Walker et al. explored how professional education at universities might contribute to transforming South African universities. They identified the professional capabilities for working in the South African context with particular reference to making a contribution to reducing poverty in South Africa. They found that, through developing professional capabilities, professionals can lead

people and change their lives. The following professional capabilities were specified (Walker et al., 2010, p. 13):

- 1) Affiliation (i.e. care and respect for people of diverse cultures and background. Accepting obligations to others and communicating professional knowledge in an accessible way by being courteous and patient)
- 2) Resilience (i.e. perseverance in difficult circumstances and recognising the need for professional boundaries and having a balanced life)
- 3) Social and collective struggles ( i.e. participating in public reasoning and listening to all voices in the conversation. Promoting community empowerment and human rights and humility. Contributing to community policy formulation and implementation, and training and educating others)
- 4) Emotion (i.e. empathy as having a narrative imagination, compassion and self-care. Having integrity and rationality and being emotionally reflexive)
- 5) Integrity (i.e. acting ethically and being responsible and accountable to colleagues and a community, striving to provide a high quality service as a professional)
- 6) Assurance and confidence (i.e. expressing and asserting one's own professional priorities and having confidence to act for change. Contributing to policy formulation and implementation)
- 7) Knowledge, imagination and practical skills (i.e. being enquiring, critical, evaluative, imaginative, creative and flexible. Having a firm critical grounding in disciplinary, academic knowledge. Being open-minded)
- 8) Informed vision (i.e. being able to imagine alternate futures and improved social arrangements. Understanding how the profession is shaped, by historical, socio-economic political context from a national and international perspective).

The professional capabilities as identified by Walker et al. (2010) are important capabilities that reflect how women as professionals in education develop into capable middle managers. Employing Nussbaum's list of central human capabilities, I will use the following capabilities to determine which capabilities are to be developed in women middle managers that enable them to function as capable managers: senses, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason and affiliation. I will also consider whether women middle managers are able to function in their management role due to the development of capabilities in their early years. The capability

approach and the development of women as middle managers are the themes of the next section.

### **3.3 The Capability Approach and the Development of Women Middle Managers**

When considering the proportion of middle managers in schools, it would appear that both males and females are equitably distributed in the middle management tier of the management hierarchy. However, if one considers the capability sets of individual male and female middle managers, it may be found that these capabilities will differ for each person, based on various “diversities” such as gender, race, age, class and social and economic factors (Sen, 1992, p. 117). This means that rather than viewing the middle managers as a homogeneous group of managers, their heterogeneity will be acknowledged. This understanding is fundamental to the capability approach.

Therefore, in applying these attributes in my study, I will consider what each women HoD has as her own freedoms, opportunities and capacities to function as a middle manager and each of these will be identified from the narratives of each woman.

In addition to a focus on the capabilities, functioning and well-being aspects of women in management, narratives may reveal the story-teller’s agency. This means that attention should be paid to an account of how women practise and function as middle managers. Sen (1999, p. 189) observes that the concentration on women’s well-being, was “welfarist” in its focus on women and how to improve the treatment of women. This has since evolved and broadened to focus on the active role of women’s agency. Women are no longer seen as passive recipients of welfare-enhancing assistance, but rather as transforming active agents of change.

Nussbaum proposes that when looking at the agency of women in the capabilities approach, the question should not be “How satisfied is this woman?” or “How much in the way of resources is she able to command?” Rather the question should be “What is she actually able to do and to be?” (Nussbaum, 2000b, p. 230). Thus when studying women middle managers in secondary schools, my emphasis will be on what the women middle manager does and what she is in a position to do, that is, what her opportunities and liberties are as a middle manager. The focus will not only be on the resources that are present in the school, but also on how the resources such as the

availability of time to manage the teachers in the department, the teaching facilities, the number of teachers within the department, whether the teachers are adequately qualified to teach the particular subjects, the relationships and affiliations she has with the teachers and other managers, enable her to function in her role as a HoD.

According to Sen (1999, p. 190) obstacles to the well-being of women are present in the world and identifying these is important when considering social justice issues. He sees the number of women who have died, particularly in underdeveloped countries, either as a result of gender bias in the distribution of health care and other necessities, as the “missing” women in society. Furthermore, he sees many women across the world as having culturally neglected needs, and avers that most of the deprivations they suffer have been socially generated. As much as it is important to bring these deprivations to light in order to remove the iniquities experienced by women, Sen (1999) proposes that the limited role of women’s active agency affects the lives of other people. Focusing on women’s agency in this study of middle management will help to remove the iniquities that depress their well-being. The agency aspects that Sen (1999, p. 191) refers to are many and varied and include: women’s earning power, economic role outside the family, literacy and education, and property rights. While these aspects of agency may appear diverse, they, however, add force to women’s voice and agency through giving them independence and empowerment.

Sen (1999) maintains that more attention should be paid to the part women play in society, if given the opportunity, at diverse levels of political activities and social initiatives. Thus, in analysing the narratives of women middle managers, I will seek to ascertain when women are given opportunities to become managers or leaders in schools, how they exercise their agency to function in school middle management positions and how this has empowered them and given them freedom.

For Nussbaum (2000a, p. 7) the capability approach is a universal approach, that is, it acknowledges cross-cultural norms of justice, equality and rights, yet is also sensitive to local particularity and to the circumstances that shape options, beliefs and perceptions of people. The capability approach is sensitive to pluralism and cultural differences as advocated by Nussbaum (2000a). To sum up, the diverse nature of

women managers in this study will be acknowledged. It will be assumed that they will have different racial, religious and cultural characteristics. Each woman's narrative will be understood and analysed as a unique account rather than me homogenising and making generalised findings about women middle managers. Nevertheless, although the women middle managers may differ from each other, they may have commonalities in their stories. For example, they may have faced similar challenges within their departments, or they may employ similar leadership styles of management. In essence however, I will work towards identifying the capabilities, functioning, agency and freedoms of the women middle managers, as each woman is seen as an individual who is trying to achieve her own sense of well-being as a middle manager in a school.

One way of revealing the well-being of a manager in school, is to consider the type of leadership approach used by the manager. A leadership approach that promotes collaboration and participation among members in an organisation is suitable for a transforming school culture. Transformational leadership is not only suitable for the changing educational system, but it is also a leadership style that is preferred by women leaders. In the next section, I will discuss transformational leadership theory and why it is used in this study. I will also establish how this theory can be linked to the capability approach.

### **3.4 Transformational Leadership Theory**

Transformational leadership theory lends itself to the capability approach because human development, transformation and change are central to both these theories. The capability approach and transformational leadership both acknowledge the agency aspect of the individuals and people are seen as active participants in their lives and are able to make choices and decisions rather than being shaped by others. The capability approach evaluates the capabilities and real opportunities that people have regarding the life they choose to lead. Through the opportunities and freedoms available to them, people are able to transform and positively change their lives and achieve goals that matter in their lives through reasoned reflection.

Transformational leadership theory also promotes positive change for individuals, groups and organisations (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002). Positive change helps to develop and transform people and organisations. Both approaches focus on

development and have important things to say about women. As discussed, the capability approach focuses on women as being one of the deprived groups of people in society as women have fewer opportunities and freedoms than men. The capabilities of women need to be developed in order for them to lead the lives they desire and for them to flourish. Women become empowered, through the achievement of capabilities, to lead a life of fulfilment.

Transformational leadership, on the other hand, focuses on women as being capable leaders of transformation. Women are posited in this regard as being good communicators, having strong interpersonal skills and being more relations-oriented (Bass & Riggio, 2006). There is thus no reason why women should not be given more opportunities to develop as managers and leaders since they make capable transformational leaders and “are more disposed to transformational leadership behaviours” (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 115). Transformational leadership theory can therefore be seen to complement the capability approach in this study. More importantly the capabilities of women middle managers as transforming leaders is integral to this study and through the capability approach and transformational leadership I am able to understand how women middle managers develop their capabilities to function as transformational managers and leaders of departments in a changing social and educational context.

Transformational leaders are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, to develop their own leadership capacity. Leithwood and Jantzi (1999, p. 453) state that the authority and influence associated with transformational leadership “are not necessarily allocated to those occupying formal positions”, although this is adopted in much of the literature. This means that “power is attributed by organizational members to whomever is able to inspire their commitment to collective aspirations” such as a middle manager in a school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999, p. 453). Transformational leadership theorists (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Burns, 1978), conceptualise leadership as either transactional or transformational. Transactional leaders lead through social exchange. Burns (1978, p. 4) notes that politicians, for example, lead by “exchanging one thing for another: jobs for votes, or subsidies for campaign contributions.” Similarly, transactional business leaders offer financial rewards for productivity or deny rewards

for lack of productivity (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Transformational leaders however, help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to the needs of individual followers by empowering them, by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers as a leader of the group and within the larger organisation. Transformational leaders can move followers to exceed expected performance as well as allowing the followers to experience satisfaction and commitment to the group and the organisation (Bass, 1985).

The transformational leadership model built by Burns (1978) has been expanded by Bass (1985) and other theorists investigating organisational leaders. Burns (1978) conceptualised the transactional and transformational dimension as separate, whereas Bass (1985) has argued transactional and transformational leadership can be complementary. Recent research shows that transformational leadership is important in every sector and in every setting (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002) not only in the military setting (for example Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Yammarino & Bass, 1990). It would, therefore, also be important in the education setting.

Indeed, much research has been done on transformational leadership in education, particularly on principals in schools (Bhagawat, 2006; Griffith, 2004; Hallinger, 2003). However, a gap exists in the literature in that very little research has been done on HoDs as transformational leaders. Scholars such as Bass (1985), Bass and Riggio (2006) and Avolio and Yammarino (2002) write about transformational leadership from a corporate and business perspective and not from an educational context, although they do acknowledge that any member of an organisation can be a transformational leader, even a middle manager. Leithwood and Jantzi (1999) who write from an educational viewpoint, also state that any member who is able to inspire the commitment of the other members of a staff at school, can be a transformational leader. However, they too have not focused on HoDs as transformational leaders. Scholars such as Aubrey-Hopkins and James (2002), Brown et al. (2000), Glover et al. (1998) and Ribbins (2007) researched primary and secondary school middle managers, but none of these studies considered HoDs as transformational leaders. Many studies on women in leadership positions have focused mainly on women in senior positions and those women who have managed to break the glass ceiling and occupy positions generally the preserve of men. Employing transformational leadership theory as a means to analyse and explain the data of female HoDs in this

study will help to extend and broaden the existing knowledge of women in educational leadership and management positions. Research indicates that in general, women leaders are more transformational than their male counterparts (Bass and Riggio, 2006). In Burns' (1978) extensive historical analysis of leaders and leadership, he theorises that in the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century many of the leadership theories were based on inaccurate and misunderstood views of power. He notes that the true essence of leadership is found in the relationships between leaders, followers, motives and resources (Fennell, 2008).

Burns (1978) describes transactional leadership as occurring in situations where one individual initiates contact with others to exchange resources. While all individuals who are involved participate in the exchange, each represents their own positions, interests and motives for the exchanges. The individuals involved are not bound together by the pursuit of on-going mutual goals and, while such exchanges maintain the life and work of an organisation, they do not create a positive or productive environment for change (Burns, 1978).

Transformational leadership, on the other hand, involves a mutual exchange of resources in which both or all stakeholders involved are transformed by the interaction (Burns, 1978). Through interaction, all parties, the leaders and the followers, move toward a higher level of mutual goals and pursuits. Not only should the transformational leader display certain behaviours and characteristics, but the followers should also have certain characteristics: they must be inspired by the institutional vision; they must be willing to accept tasks given to them by the leader; they must feel confident that they can carry out the goals of the institution; they must be competent to fulfil the directions given by the leader; they must demonstrate personal and professional trustworthiness; and they must be loyal to the common good of the institution (Brower & Balch, 2005, p. 73). Transformational leadership, according to Bass and Riggio (2006), is a moral pursuit in which the levels of conduct and the aspirations of both the leaders and the led are raised. Transformational leadership produces positive changes in organisations and can be used to set the tone for on-going change and growth in the culture of the organisation. Another aspect of transformational leadership, according to Burns (1978), is that transforming leaders have to be morally uplifting.

Bass and Riggio (2006, p. 14) refer to authentic transformational leaders as those who transcend their own self-interests for either utilitarian or moral reasons. If utilitarian, the objective of the transformational leader is to benefit the group or its individual members, the organisation or society, as well as the individual, and to meet the challenges of the tasks or mission. As a matter of moral principles, the objective is to do the right thing, to do what befits the principles of morality, responsibility, a sense of discipline and respect for authority, customs, rules and traditions of a society. The opposite of the authentic transformational leader is the inauthentic transformational leader or pseudo-transformational leader (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 13). Though they may exhibit many transforming characteristics, they eventually cater for their own self-interest.

Transformational leadership is concerned with improving the performances of followers and developing followers to their fullest potential (Avolio, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Its leaders have a strong sense of internal values and ideals, and they are effective at motivating followers to act in ways that support the greater good, rather than their own self-interest (Northouse, 2007). Transformational leadership has much in common with charismatic leadership; however, charisma is only one component of transformational leadership. Conceptually, leadership is charismatic, and followers seek to identify with such leaders and emulate them (Bass, 1985, p. 30). Leaders and managers should be able to inspire their followers to rise above their own interests, to strive for meeting the common goals of the organisation and even set goals of a higher level than those previously recognised by the followers.

### ***3.4.1 The Four Behavioural Components of Transformational Leadership***

Bass and Avolio (1994) refer to the four I's of transformational leadership which are the four major behavioural components of transformational leadership. These are: 1) idealised influence; 2) inspiration; 3) intellectual stimulation; 4) and individualised consideration. A discussion of the four components follows.

#### ***Idealised Influence***

Bass (1985) regards charisma as part of the emotional component of transformational leadership. Bass and Avolio (1994) observe that followers perceive their transformational leaders as role models. Transformational leaders are admired,

respected and trusted. Followers identify with the leaders and want to emulate them; leaders are viewed by their followers as having extraordinary capabilities, persistence and determination. Two aspects of idealised influence stand out: the leader's behaviours and the elements that the followers attribute to the leader (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6). This is the interactional nature of idealised influence: it is embodied in the leader's behaviour and in attributes that the followers assign the leader. Leaders who have a great deal of idealised influence are willing to take risks and are consistent rather than being arbitrary in action. Transformational leaders do the right thing, demonstrating high standards of ethical and moral conduct (Northouse, 2007). They provide individuals with a vision and a sense of mission for their organisation (Northouse, 2007, p. 181).

### ***Inspirational Motivation***

Transformational leaders behave in ways that motivate and inspire those around them by providing meaning and challenge to the work of their followers (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6). Team spirit is aroused in the colleagues and enthusiasm and optimism are displayed. Leaders get followers involved in envisioning attractive future states, create clearly communicated expectations that followers want to meet, and demonstrate commitment to goals and a shared vision. Idealised influential leadership and inspirational motivation usually form a combined single factor of charismatic-inspirational leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 6). The charismatic-inspirational factor is similar to the behaviours described in charismatic leadership theory (Conger, Kanungo & Associates, 1988). An example of inspirational motivation in a school context is seen when middle managers motivate the teachers in their department to excel in their teaching through the example set as a role model as well as through their charismatic attributes as a leader.

### ***Intellectual Stimulation***

According to Bass (1985, p. 98), transformational leaders stimulate extra effort among their followers through their charisma and/or showing individuals due consideration. Transformational leaders stimulate the efforts of their followers to be innovative and creative by questioning assumptions, reframing problems and approaching old situations in new ways (Bass and Riggio, 2006, p.7). Creativity is encouraged and new ideas and creative problem-solving are solicited from followers who are included in

the process of addressing problems and finding solutions (Avolio, 1999). Followers are encouraged to try new approaches, and their ideas are not criticised if they differ from those of the leader. Intellectual stimulation is used by a transformational leader to promote intelligence, rationality and problem solving (Chipunza & Gwarinda, 2010). Intellectual stimulation in the school context takes place when the middle manager is able to promote creative thinking and unique ideas amongst the teachers to improve teaching and learning in the department.

### ***Individualised Consideration***

Consideration of others is an important aspect of relations between leader and colleague (Bass, 1985, p. 82). Transformational leaders pay special attention to the needs of each individual follower for achievement and growth by acting as a coach or mentor (Northouse, 2007, p. 183). Followers and colleagues are encouraged to achieve higher levels of potential. Individualised consideration is practised when new learning opportunities are created along with the presence of a supportive climate. Individual differences in terms of needs and desires too are recognised. The leader's behaviour demonstrates acceptance of individual differences as would be the case when some employees receive more encouragement, some more autonomy, others firmer standards and still others more task structure. A two-way exchange in communication is encouraged, and "management by walking around workspaces is practised" (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 7).

Interaction with followers is on a personal level. The leader needs to be a good listener, be aware of individual concerns and see the individual as a whole person rather than just as an employee or as just another teacher in the school. The leader delegates tasks as a means of developing followers. Delegated tasks are monitored to see if followers need additional direction or support and to assess progress, however, followers should not feel they are being checked on. Therefore, teamwork is an important aspect of transformational leadership, and, as HoDs, the female participants in this study should be able to lead and work with a team of teachers, ensuring that effective teaching and learning takes place within their departments. HoDs, as leaders of subject departments, should be able to engage in teamwork and delegate tasks effectively in a way that is consistent with their judgements of the individual members of their teams, their levels of competence and the need for growth opportunities.

In addition to the work done by Bass (1985, 1990) and Bass and Avolio (1994), other writers have contributed to the understanding of transformational leadership. The research of Bennis and Nanus (1985) and the works of Kouzes and Posner (1987, 2002) use similar research methods to those of Bass and other earlier writers. They identified a number of middle and senior management leaders and conducted interviews with them using open-ended, semi-structured questionnaires, on which they based their models of leadership (Northouse, 2007, p.186). Their findings also show that transformational leaders have a vision for their organisations (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 89), are able to set new directions for their organisations and create trust in the organisation (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 48). They are aware of their own competence and capabilities and this positive self-regard inspires the followers and raises their confidence levels as well (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). Similarly Kouzes and Posner (2002) found that transformational leaders act as role models and set an example for others to follow, have a vision for their organisations, are willing to change the status quo and experiment with new ideas, practise collaborative leadership and teamwork in their organisation and they encourage the staff members in their organisations by rewarding their accomplishments (Kouzes & Posner, 2002). Therefore, many of these researchers have found similarities among leaders of organisations and what constitutes transformational leadership in business organisations. Transformational leadership has also been researched in the educational context, particularly among principals in schools. Some of the founding work on transformational leadership in schools is by Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999).

### **3.5 Transformational Leadership in Education**

Looking at transformational leadership in school situations, Leithwood et al. (1999, p. 9) formulate several dimensions of a transformational leader in education. The first is building a school vision, in which the transformational leader works with others to develop a vision for the school, using all available opportunities to communicate the vision to members of the school community. Examples of leadership practices at school that are associated with vision building are: providing a sense of purpose for colleagues; initiating processes that allow staff members to develop a shared vision; and creating enthusiasm in colleagues with visions of what they would be able to accomplish were they to work collaboratively to change their practices (Leithwood, 1999, p. 58).

The second dimension is establishing school goals, in which the leaders help members of the school community to work on short term goals that lead to the fulfilment of the common vision for the school. Establishing school goals is closely related to building a vision but, while vision-building for the organisation is a long term initiative, goals that are developed through consensus by staff members are to be accomplished in the short term. Examples of school practices that aim at goal-setting as typically set by the school principal are: providing staff members with opportunities to establish school goals and to regularly review these; expecting teams of teachers (departments) and individuals to engage in setting goals; and to review the progress made towards achieving the goals; and referring to and using the school's goals when making decisions about the school (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 65).

Demonstrating high-performance expectations is the third dimension, in which leaders have high expectations for innovative, professional and hard work from staff that are committed to the welfare of students. Individuals receive desired rewards for their efforts and for creating a productive school culture. Examples of transformational leadership practices that are identified with high-performance expectations are: expecting the staff to be innovative, hard-working and professional, demonstrating a strong commitment to the welfare of the students and not accepting poor performance from anyone (Leithwood, 1999, p. 69).

The fourth dimension, individualised support, involves equitable, supportive treatment for colleagues, developed by getting to know colleagues personally. Individual consideration is further shown through recognition for good work and effort. Leithwood et al. (1999, 72-73) identified 20 leadership practices related to individualised support and these are associated with the following facets of individualised support: “equitable, humane and considerate treatment of one’s colleagues”; “support for the personal, professional development of staff”; development of “close knowledge” of individual colleagues; “recognition of good work and effort” and “approaches to change”. Examples of the practices associated with individualised support are: treating all colleagues equally, being approachable and accessible and protecting teachers from anything that may disturb their classroom work (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 72).

Intellectual stimulation is the fifth dimension in which individuals are challenged through the introduction of new ideas, encouraged to reflect on their work and to be innovative and to develop professionally. Leithwood et al. (1999, p. 76) identified four basic strategies for leaders to intellectually stimulate staff members. These are: “to change those school norms that might constrain the thinking of staff”; “to challenge the status quo”; to encourage “new initiatives” and for school leaders “to bring their colleagues into contact with new ideas”. Examples of practices that are aligned to intellectual stimulation are: insisting on careful thought before carrying out any task, stimulating the staff members to reflect and think about what they are doing for the students, encouraging staff members to use new practices without pressurising them, searching for new ideas by visiting other schools, attending conferences and cascading the new ideas to the other staff members (Leithwood et al., 1999, pp. 76-77).

Modelling best practices and important organisational values, in which the leader sets the example for individuals to follow, is the sixth dimension. The leader is seen as a role model and leads by doing. The transformational leader is committed to the school organisation, to the professional growth of the teachers, to enhancing the quality of the group and individual problem-solving processes, to reinforce key values such as respect for others, integrity and trust in the colleagues’ judgements (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 80). Examples of practices associated with modelling are: displaying energy and commitment for work, asking colleagues for a feedback about their work and showing that problems can be solved from multiple perspectives (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 80).

The seventh dimension, developing structures to foster participation in school decisions, involves the leader in providing opportunities for power to be distributed throughout the organisation. Leaders structure the environment to involve teachers and others in shared decision-making about issues that directly affect their work. The following are examples of practices to create and maintain shared decision-making structures in schools: leadership is distributed through the school and the power associated with leadership does not lie only with the principal of the school, allowing staff members to be involved in decision making and taking staff into account when making decisions concerning the school.

Creating a productive school culture is the eighth transformational leadership dimension that refers to behaviours of a transformational leader that develop “school norms, beliefs, values and assumptions that are student-centred and support continuing professional growth by teachers” (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 83). Transformational leaders are also concerned with the development of a positive school culture as part of building a strong, positive school community. Examples of practices related to culture-building are: planning a school vision that relates to collaborative work and the care and respect of students, sharing power and responsibility with other staff members even if they are not in formal leadership roles and providing opportunities and resources for collaborative work among staff members (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 84).

Leithwood et al. (1999) categorise the eight leadership dimensions into setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organisation. The first category is setting directions which include the following transformational leadership practices or functions: 1) building a shared vision; 2) developing consensus about goals; and 3) creating high performance expectations (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 55). The second category is developing people and involves: 1) individualised support; 2) intellectual stimulation; and 3) modelling. The third leadership category concerns redesigning the organisation and the leadership practices of this category are 1) culture; 2) structure; 3) policy; and 4) community relationships. I will use the three categories of setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organisation to align the capabilities with the transformational practices. To this list of categories I will include developing knowledge and skills as a category.

Apart from direction-setting being an integral attribute of leadership, the influence of the leader is also important. Leithwood et al. (1999, p. 6) state that “who exerts influence, the nature of the influence, the purpose for the exercise of influence and its outcomes” have to be considered in order to understand the type of leadership followed by a leader. Transformational leadership influence is exercised through motivation which is able to raise the members’ aspirations for work and inspire higher levels of commitment to the organisation. Leithwood et al. (1999, p. 25) have argued that the influence of transformational leadership moves schools beyond first-order, surface changes to second-order, deeper transformations that alter the “core technologies” of schooling, such as the pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment.

Leithwood et al. (1999, p. 25) state that first-order changes involve models of learning and forms of instruction that are designed to teach for understanding and to improve student learning. The second-order changes are about school restructuring which requires leadership that “has shared vision; creating productive work cultures; distributing leadership to others; and the like” (Leithwood et al., 1999).

Transformational leadership in schools achieves these ends through the pursuit of common goals, empowerment of people in the organisation, development and maintenance of a collaborative culture, promoting processes of teacher development and engaging people in collaborative problem-solving strategies (Fink, 2005). Bush (2003) states that the principal or head of the school facilitates the participative and collaborative culture within the school and provides the staff with leadership opportunities. Therefore leadership practices are dependent on the organisational contexts. In order for women middle managers to function as transformational leaders the school context must enable democratic, transformational and collaborative leadership practices.

Although the writers mentioned in this section consider the principal as the primary leader of the school and appreciate that being a transformational leader is not exclusively a leadership style of a principal, they agree that leadership can be practised by all those in leadership positions, either informal or formal, and not necessarily the head of an organisation (Yammarino, 1994). All levels of managers can be transformational leaders, even middle managers. Both male and female leaders can be transformational leaders, since transformational leadership is not confined to a particular gender. In the next section I will discuss the coupling of the capability approach and transformational leadership theory and why both of these are important for a study on women middle managers.

### **3.6 Coupling of the Capability Approach and Transformational Leadership Theory in this Study**

In order to determine how women HoDs develop as capable managers and leaders and how they function and practise as middle managers and leaders of their departments, in this study I link the capability approach with ideas about transformational leadership. I propose that the linking of the two theories is important as neither theory on its own is sufficient to understand how women heads of department develop their management capabilities to function as transformational middle managers in a changing educational context. Both theories are important for this study because the capability approach looks back at the personal growth and development of capabilities in people that allow them to function in ways that they have reason to value, and the transformational leadership theory looks at the professional practice. Both these theories support and complement each other. I assume that the development of capabilities in childhood will lead to management skills and attributes. Therefore, preparing the ground and developing the capabilities is a precursor to transformational leadership. The matrix is theoretical and may show an ideal assumption of how the development of foundational capabilities may lead to transformational leadership. The application of the matrix will be used to understand and explain the data of the women middle managers and whether the development of the capabilities do indeed lead to transformational leadership behaviours. Although in different contexts, they both speak of transforming and developing individuals. In Table 3.1 following I present the complementary ideas in a matrix of key scholars who have written about the capability approach and transformational leadership and show the alignment in their ideas.

**TABLE 3.1 Matrix of the Alignment of the Sets of Ideas in the Capability Approach and Transformational Leadership Theory**

	<b>Capability</b>	<b>Approach</b>	<b>Transformational Theory</b>	<b>Leadership</b>
	Nussbaum: Central human functional capabilities	Walker et al.: Professional capabilities	Bass & Avolio: Behavioural Components	Leithwood et al.: Leadership Dimensions
<b>Categories for Alignment</b>	<b>Management</b>	<b>Capabilities</b>	<b>Transformational Functioning</b>	<b>Leadership</b>
<b>Developing Knowledge and Skills in the Department</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Senses, imagination and thought</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge, imagination and practical skill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intellectual stimulation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intellectual stimulation</li> </ul>
<b>Setting Departmental Directions</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Informed vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Inspirational motivation</li> <li>Idealised influence</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building school vision</li> <li>Establishing goals</li> <li>High performance expectation</li> </ul>
<b>Developing People in the Department</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affiliation</li> <li>Emotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affiliation</li> <li>Emotion</li> <li>Integrity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual consideration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individualised support</li> <li>Modelling</li> </ul>
<b>Redesigning the Department</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practical reason</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social and collective struggles</li> <li>Assurance and confidence</li> <li>Resilience</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Structuring to foster participation</li> <li>Creating productive school culture</li> </ul>

The main pillars of the matrix are four of Nussbaum’s (2000a) capabilities taken from her list of ten human capabilities. These selected capabilities are used because they relate strongly to the function and practice of management. Against these I align eight professional capabilities from the list of professional capabilities created by Walker et al. (2010, p. 7). I refer to these sets of capabilities as “management capabilities”. Against these management capabilities I then align a set of “transformational leadership functionings” taken from Bass and Avolio’s (1994) behavioural components, and the leadership dimensions specified by Leithwood et al. (1999). I link the set of leadership functions to a set of capabilities based on their affinity or being complementary. For a particular capability the middle manager may behave in ways that correspond to the behavioural components or attributes. In the vertical alignment when a particular capability such as Nussbaum’s capability of senses, imagination and thought aligns with the professional capabilities of knowledge, imagination and practical skills (Walker et al., 2010), then the middle manager may behave in a particular way, such as being able to intellectually challenge colleagues in

her department according to the behavioural component of intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994) as well as the leadership dimension of intellectual stimulation (Leithwood et al., 1999).

In the horizontal alignments I categorise the alignments using leadership attributes to explain the alignment of the management capabilities and the transformational leadership functioning: 1) developing knowledge and skills in the department; 2) setting departmental directions; 3) developing people in the department; and 4) redesigning the department. The categories of setting departmental directions, developing people in the department, and redesigning the department are similar to those used by Leithwood et al. (1999) in their study of principals as transformational leaders in schools. The categories used by Leithwood et al. (1999) focused on the principal and the effect the principal has on the whole school. I have adapted these categories to suit my study of women HoDs and how they develop capabilities that may enable them to function as transformational leaders within their departments.

In the first horizontal alignment I use the category of developing knowledge and skills to align the management capabilities of senses, imagination and thought (Nussbaum, 2000a) and knowledge, imagination and practical skills (Walker et al., 2010) to the transformational leadership functioning of intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood et al., 1999). I propose that these two management capabilities are necessary in order for the women middle managers to intellectually stimulate and motivate the members in their department. Therefore, if the woman middle manager has not developed the management capability of knowledge, imagination and practical skills, she may not be able to stimulate her departmental members intellectually. If the woman middle manager herself is unable to challenge herself to try new practices in her teaching, then she may be unable to challenge and convince the members in her department to be innovative and attempt new practices as teachers.

The second horizontal alignment is categorised as setting departmental directions. This aligns the management capability of informed vision with the transformational leadership function of inspirational motivation, idealised influence (Bass & Avolio, 1994), building school vision, establishing goals and high performance expectation (Leithwood et al., 1999). Through the setting of directions in the department, the teacher's commitment is identified as an important aspect of a school's capacity to

change. By developing the capability of informed vision the woman middle manager may be able to imagine alternative futures and improved departmental arrangements. The capability of informed vision may allow the woman middle manager to build a vision for the department that can be pursued over a few years and also to develop consensus on goals for the department that can be achieved in the short term. The capability of informed vision may enable the woman middle manager to expect a high level of performance from the members in her department, as she may be able to inspire and motivate the teachers to see the challenging nature of the goals being pursued in the department. She may be able to act as a role model for the teachers as she is admired, respected and trusted, and may therefore be able to provide the teachers with an overall sense of purpose for the department.

The third horizontal alignment involves developing people in the department. This category aligns the capabilities of affiliation, emotion (Nussbaum, 2000a; Walker et al., 2010) and integrity (Walker, 2010) with the transformational leadership function of individual considerations and support (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood et al., 1999) and modelling (Leithwood, 1999). Since an organisation is made up of people, the development of people is integral because everything that is associated with an organisation, such as the way in which it is structured and its norms and values, must be “interpreted through the emotions, beliefs, values and behaviours of the people” (Leithwood, 1999, p. 72). Therefore, developing people in the department focuses on the development of both the teachers and the learners in the department, and how their “dispositions and motivations” can be developed, as these are needed to create a set of shared directions for the department (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 71). The capability of affiliation involves people interacting with each other as well as forming of relationships. The capability of emotion involves being able to treat others with care, respect and compassion. These are essential capabilities that need to be acquired by a leader in order for the leader to be able to support the individual needs of department members. Being a leader who possesses the capability of integrity will facilitate ethical and responsible work practices. Having developed the capabilities of affiliation, emotion and integrity may enable the woman middle manager to set an example for the members of the department to follow and to model. For example, if the woman middle manager has a strong sense of commitment to her work, and aspires to maintaining high performance standards in her department through her own

teaching practice, then the teachers in her department will be able to replicate her work commitment.

The fourth horizontal alignment involves redesigning the department. In this alignment the capabilities of practical reasoning (Nussbaum, 2000a), social and collective struggles, assurance, confidence and resilience (Walker et al., 2010) are aligned with the transformational leadership function of structuring to foster participation and creating a positive school culture (Leithwood et al., 1999). The culture of a school includes aspects such as the “norms, beliefs, values and assumptions” that are shared by all members of the school (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 83). The transformational leader who practises culture-building within the school is able to develop school norms, beliefs, values and assumptions that are “student-centred and support continuing professional growth by teachers” (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 83). These behaviours of the transformational leader are collaborative and the teachers’ motivation to change is enhanced because the transformational leader is able to influence the beliefs of the teachers about the social support they have available to them (Leithwood et al., 1999).

The second function within the alignment of redesigning the department is that of shared decision-making structures. The transformational leader provides opportunities for the members to participate in decision making on issues that affect them. This contributes to the empowering of teachers. The capability of practical reason is the ability to form a conception of what is good, and to engage in the critical reflection about the planning of one’s life (Nussbaum, 2000a, p. 79). Closely related to the capability of practical reason (Walker et al., 2010) is the professional capability of social and collective struggles that promotes human rights and contributes to the formulation and implementation of policy as well as empowering other people. Assurance and confidence is a professional capability (Walker et al., 2010) that enables a person to have the confidence to act for change and to contribute to policy formulation and implementation. The capability of assurance and confidence enables a person to express and assert their own professional priorities. The capability of resilience enables the professional person to persevere and remain committed to the profession in difficult circumstances. The four capabilities of practical reason, social and collective struggles, assurance and confidence and resilience complement the transformational leadership function of structuring to foster participation and the

creation of a productive school culture. The capabilities allow for the transformational leader to share power and responsibility with others, to act for change and to distribute the responsibility of leadership throughout the department.

The matrix of the alignment shows that the capability approach and transformational leadership theory are complementary and how the capabilities of Nussbaum (2000a) and Walker et al. (2010) are necessary in order to function effectively as a transformational leader.

This matrix will again figure in Chapters Five, Six and Seven when I return to focus on the capability development and freedoms that the participants experienced from their formative years to their teaching years while on their journey to middle management positions. The theme of Chapter Five will be the women middle managers' social and educational lives in their formative years and how, within these contexts, their capabilities were developed for their management roles. Chapter Six will report on the how role models and mentors encouraged management capabilities in the women middle managers. These chapters refer particularly to the capabilities as described by Nussbaum (2000a) and Walker et al. (2010). Chapter Seven addresses the functioning of the participants in their management positions and how the capabilities that have been developed over the years may enable them to function as transformational middle managers.

### **3.7 Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter I have discussed the capability approach and transformational leadership theory and how these could be used to theorise how women HoDs develop into capable middle managers. I compare the complementary ideas across the capability approach of Nussbaum (1999; 2000a; 2000b) and Walker et al. (2010) to transformational leadership as theorised by Bass and Avolio (1994) and Leithwood et al. (1999). I show how these complementary ideas can be aligned because of their relational features as I demonstrate this through hypothetical examples of women middle managers' capabilities for functioning as transformational middle managers.

The concept of human capability was developed by Amartya Sen (1992, 1999) and expanded by Martha Nussbaum (2000a). I find the capability approach is useful as a theoretical lens to understand how women HoDs have developed capabilities to

become middle managers, and how they are thus able to function in their management roles. Additionally the transformational leadership theory will also be used to explore how women middle managers are able to lead their departments effectively in the post-apartheid period that is witnessing many changes as transformation takes place within the education sector in South Africa.

In the next chapter I will discuss the methodology used to explore how women middle managers developed their capabilities to function as transformational middle managers.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**NARRATIVE INQUIRY FOR RESEARCHING THE LIVES OF WOMEN**  
**MIDDLE MANAGERS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

This chapter is about the methodology I used to study the professional lives of women HoDs in secondary schools and how they developed the capabilities to become middle managers.

As a researcher, I hold a feminist perspective that values the participation and voice of those being researched. Therefore, I have employed a methodology that privileges the voices of women and their lives. Moving away from a quantitative, positivist and objective research methodology, I use narrative inquiry because it enables me to elicit information about the lives and experiences of the participants in my investigation. Narrative inquiry is qualitative in nature in that it builds around assumptions about how research that concerns human action is interpreted (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p.3). I am not interested in predicting trends or correlating factors about women managers. Rather, my interest lies with understanding the formative years, experiences and the work of women who are middle managers in secondary schools in the South African context. Narrative research does not try to generalise its findings like positivist research, it focuses on the individual and on the uniqueness of each human action and event (Polkinghorne, 1995).

Narrative inquiry is an appropriate methodology for a study about women HoDs and how they experience their role as middle managers because it involves the reconstruction of the participants' experiences in relationship both to the personal and to the social milieu (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). For instance, the personal experiences of the women middle managers might have a direct impact on how they have become middle managers and how they function in their management roles. Early life experiences might have developed particular capabilities in the women middle managers, and these capabilities could enable the women to function in particular ways as middle managers. Narrative involves a sequence of events, a storyteller and an audience and allows us to understand the 'meaningfulness of everyday life' in ways that are not as easy with other positivist methodologies

(Wetherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 3). Quantitative research would not enable the personal and professional experiences of each woman middle manager to be highlighted as effectively as narrative research.

In this chapter I begin by discussing narrative inquiry as a methodology and its suitability for the feminist researcher. I then outline the design, matters pertaining to the participants, and the various methods that I used to generate the data for the study and how I applied them. Finally I discuss how I analysed the data and addressed ethical issues.

#### **4.1 Narrative Inquiry as Methodology**

Narrative inquiry refers to a subset of qualitative research designs in which stories are used to describe human experience (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 5). Riesmann (2008, p. 5) defines a narrative as a “story” with a plot that is “topically centred and temporally organised”. Polkinghorne (1995, p. 7) views the story as having events and actions and these are drawn together into an organised whole by means of a plot. Connelly and Clandinin (1990, p. 2) define narrative inquirers as researchers who “describe ... lives, collect and tell stories of them, and write narratives of experience”. These scholars also note that narrative is used in educational research because “humans are storytelling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world”. Using this view as the basis of my study, the female HoDs were seen as the storytellers or narrators of the stories they told of their lives and experiences as middle managers in secondary schools.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) observe that narrative is both phenomenon and method. This means that narrative names the structured quality of experience to be studied, and it names the patterns of inquiry for its study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). These writers call the phenomenon “story” and the inquiry “narrative”. People are described as leading storied lives. Whether it is the writer of the story or the teller, the narrator of a story provides further meaning to the story being told (Wetherell & Noddings, 1991, p.2). The writer too has a story that is embedded in his or her culture, language, gender, beliefs and life history. The writer of the story also has a personal experience of the story as it is told by the narrator. Thus the writer or the researcher and the narrator or the participants all have personal experiences of the narratives.

By personal experiences Clandinin and Connelly (2000) mean the emotions such as feelings, hopes, desires, aesthetic reactions and moral dispositions of the person, whether it is the researcher or participant. By social conditions they mean the environment, the external conditions, forces and people, that form part of the individual's life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narratives do not only describe events and what has happened in the participant's life, they also express emotions, thoughts and interpretation (Chase, 2005). The interweaving of the social, educational and personal experiences of the women managers is important, as the experiences of being a HoD that are of a social and professional nature cannot be isolated from their personal experiences. Clearly, the women middle manager will lead her department using a particular approach that she chooses based on her personal experience, skill and attributes. Thus her personal life shapes who she is as a professional leader.

Storytellers move back and forth in time and place telling their personal and social experiences. Therefore, women's accounts of their experiences as HoDs may be interwoven with their past experiences of their personal and social milieus. I thus generate narratives about the participants' life histories spanning the time from their childhood to when they became middle managers in order to explore how their past experiences influenced their roles as HoDs and influenced them as middle managers. I will return to the life history interviews when I discuss the methods used to generate and collect data.

Narrative inquiry "is relational" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81). By this is meant that, in the process of narrative inquiry, a relationship is formed between the researcher and the researched. As a narrative inquirer, I had to become involved in the participants' lived experiences, and at the same time step back and see my own story in the inquiry, the stories of my participants as well as the bigger landscape of society. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 81) state that "This movement of back and forth between full involvement and distance is, as with relationships in everyday life, the responsibility of neither the inquirer alone nor the participants alone." Therefore, the relationship in narrative inquiry between the researcher and the researched is collaborative and the intention of the researcher is not uppermost during the research process because the collaborative process overshadows it (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009, p. 94).

The collaborative relationship in narrative inquiry has an affinity to feminist research and this is discussed in the next section.

#### **4.2 Feminist Research and Narrative Inquiry**

Feminists claim that patriarchal or male-centred perspectives have historically dominated mainstream research (Franz & Stewart., 1994; Harding, 1987; Mannah, 2008; Reinharz, 1992). This is because the male perspective was considered more important than the female experience. Feminists argue that using feminist methods in research are more likely to produce valid findings and truthful, inclusive accounts of social experiences. Feminist research often use qualitative methods such as participatory research methods, which actively involve the research participants in the inquiry process and allow for the plurality of women's experiences thus giving multiple "voices" to women, are distinctive to feminist research (Gray, Williamson, Karp & Dalphin, 2007, p. 214). Conventional positivist research methods are unable to capture the true accounts of women's experiences, as they focus on objectifying knowledge. Through this, they make the women as subjects disappear and the realities of women are not seen as a serious social scientific problem (Smith, 1990). Using a feminist perspective in the study means that, when studying the women participants, we look for what has been "overlooked, unconceptualised, and not noticed" and yet may be very important to women's experience (Stewart, 1994, p. 14).

Although there is no specific toolkit of feminist methods, there is, however, a specific or distinctive feminist perspective to understanding research practices. In a feminist perspective, all knowledge is socially located and situated and it is therefore partial or incomplete. This means that the researcher's position in the social system of gender and class relations influences how research is conducted, and the research findings (Gray et al., 2007, p. 212). In feminist research, race, social class and sexual orientation are considered important features of individuals, because these features impact on how gender is experienced (Stewart, 1994, p. 27). Feminists contend that conventional, positivist science claims to be universal, and it has excluded, distorted and mis-measured women's experience (Gray et al. 2007, p. 212). Feminist research is about emancipating or liberating women from practices that oppress them. Therefore, a feminist approach to method is to reject scientific knowledge that is patriarchal in nature. As Dale Spender (1985, pp. 5-6) explains: "[t]his is why patriarchal

knowledge and the methods of producing it is a fundamental part of women's oppression, and why patriarchal knowledge must be challenged – and overruled”.

Feminist researchers reject the value-neutral claim of the positivists (Neuman, 2006, p. 103). One approach advocated by feminist researchers is to use multiple research techniques that give voice to women and corrects the predominant male-oriented perspective (Neuman, 2006, p. 102). Narrative inquiry is a subset of the qualitative research design and is one of the accepted methods among feminist researchers. In fact, qualitative research is mainly characterised by the use of data in the narrative form (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 6). Narrative inquiry uses words instead of numbers. It is about building a relationship between the researcher and the participant and moving away from the general or universal to the specific and subjective. These characteristics of narrative inquiry are integral in feminist research as women participants are seen as beings each with their own, subjective experiences. Feminist researchers are interested in these experiences of women and thus women who are researched are approached to express their own points of view rather than treated as objects of the research study (Chase, 2005, p. 655). Hence, as a feminist researcher, rather than seeing the participants selected for this study as a homogenous group of middle managers, I viewed each participant as an individual with unique personal and professional experiences and, by using a narrative research design, I could achieve this desire and ensured that this came to the fore.

### **4.3 The Narrative Inquiry Design of this Research Study**

In this section I delve more deeply into the study's research design and detail the selection of the participants, their biographical profiles, the field texts and techniques used to generate research data from the women HoDs. In the next section I will discuss how the participants were selected for the research.

#### ***4.3.1 Selecting the Participants for the Study***

In this study there are nine participants. As an Indian woman myself, and an Acting HoD, and having experienced challenges and opportunities in this role as an Indian woman, initially I was interested in the experiences only of Indian women HoDs of secondary schools. However, upon reflection about women in management positions in schools, I decided to expand my study to include women HoDs from the other race

groups because I realised that it was not feasible to limit the research to one racial category. As a feminist researcher, I realised that women HoDs from other race groups also had particular experiences of their roles as middle managers and therefore their stories were integral to the research. My focus thus shifted from Indian women HoDs to women HoDs in general enabling me to emphasise the gender of women HoDs rather than their race. Due to its fluid nature, narrative inquiry as a methodology allowed me to make this change easily. As Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 115) state: “Narrative Inquiry often has purpose, though purpose may shift, and always has focus, though the focus may blur and move”. Thus I set about purposively selecting participants regardless of race group. I received permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to conduct research in the selected secondary schools (see Appendices B and C<sup>10</sup>).

As noted by Cohen, Manion & Morrison, (2007), in purposive sampling cases are handpicked on the basis of the participants’ suitability for the researcher’s specific needs. Supporting this, Cole and Knowles (2001, p. 65) point out that:

... if we accept the subjective and intersubjective nature of human experience and meaning-making, the dynamic, multidimensional, and contextual nature of knowledge, and the related unpredictability of the human condition, then concerns about “sample size” and representativeness, purity of “truths” told, and the generalizability of research findings to populations of people become nonissues.

I acknowledge that a limitation to my study is that the sample is small and focuses only on nine women middle managers. The study is also limited to women in secondary schools hence the intention was not to use this study’s findings to generalise about to all women middle managers in all schools. However, my goal, like Cohen et al. (2007) and Coles and Knowles (2001), was to locate a small number of individuals who were willing to make a commitment to work with me over a period of time to gain in-depth insight into the issue of how they developed the capabilities to be managers and how they function in their HoD roles. Purposive sampling is used to access “knowledgeable people” meaning that the participants should have in-depth knowledge about particular issues, by “virtue of their professional role” (Cohen et al.,

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<sup>10</sup> There are two letters of consent from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. The second letter that I received was in response to my request to extend my study. The request was made soon after my initial request to the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Subsequently the title of my thesis changed to its present title “Women Middle Managers in Schools: Narratives about Capabilities and Transformational Leadership”.

2007, p. 115). I did not intentionally set out to select nine participants, it was only after I visited the schools and informed the HoDs about my study, did these nine women middle managers agree to participate. Some HoDs, who I initially spoke to, did not want to participate because they lacked the time to be involved in an in-depth study that required much of their time and effort. I was not discouraged to work with a small sample because my intention was not to generalise my findings, rather it was to acquire in-depth information from the participants through the use of multiple data collection techniques. The advantage of using the multiple method technique is that it allowed me to gain as much information as I could in regard to the themes I worked with, within the limited time I had spent with each participant.

Prior to selecting the participants and inviting them to participate in my research study, I developed criteria for the selection of participants. The criteria are:

- The participant needed to be a woman
- The participant had to have at least two years of experience as a HoD. This criterion would ensure that she was experienced in her role and would be able to discuss how she functioned in her middle management role.
- The participant had to manage a range of subjects or learning areas. I wanted to understand how the various learning areas or subjects were managed by women.
- The participant had to be posted to a school within proximity to my home. The proximity of the schools was an important criterion because my research design entailed a week observing the participant in her role as HoD.
- The participant's school needed to be a secondary school. My research was confined to secondary schools because the literature shows that women educators face greater barriers in being promoted to middle management positions in secondary schools than in primary schools and women HoDs face greater challenges in secondary schools.

I obtained a list of schools in two circuits, namely Durban Central and Phumelela Circuits which were both part of the Umlazi District in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, from the local circuit offices of the education authorities. I

contacted at least fifteen of the principals of schools on the lists to enquire if the school had women HoDs who might participate in the study. Eventually eight schools were identified and participants were selected on the basis of the above criteria. One school was a working class township school and the others were middle class suburban schools. Of the eight schools, one school was a school for girls and the other seven were co-educational schools. Although all eight schools were government schools, the school for girls was an “ex-model C” school and enrolled only White learners during the apartheid era. The school had more resources and facilities than the other seven schools, for example it had a well-equipped sports field and a school hall. Seven of the schools had learners from the different race groups, although, the school for girls was the only school with White learners. The school in the township only had African learners and teachers. Prior to 1994, during the apartheid regime, schools were separately administered according to the race of learners. The eight schools had their own political history and were built during the apartheid era. One school was once administered by the African education department, two by the House of Representatives for Coloured learners, one by the House of Assembly for White learners and four by the House of Delegates for Indian learners. For me, this political history and social landscape was important in so far as it concerned the locale where the participants were working as middle managers. I recorded my personal experience of the schools I visited in my reflective journal. On September 12, 2007 I wrote:

The participants are located in schools that are transforming at different stages as far as the demographics of educators and learners are concerned. The schools are attempting to enrol a diverse, multicultural group of learners, but, the township schools do not have such diversity amongst learners or educators as the schools in the urban areas. Some schools are successfully transforming to meet the changes of our democratic society, others are not.

In Table 4.1 following I present the biographic profiles of the nine female HoDs who participated in the study.

**TABLE 4.1 Biographical data of the nine selected women HoDs**

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Hema</b>	<b>Arthi</b>	<b>Rita</b>	<b>Neelam</b>	<b>Mandisa</b>	<b>Thembi</b>	<b>Irene</b>	<b>Valerie</b>	<b>Gene</b>
<b>Racial Classification</b>	Indian	Indian	Indian	Indian	Black	Black	Coloured	Coloured	White
<b>Age group</b>	41-50	51-60	51-60	41-50	31-40	51-60	41-50	41-50	60+
<b>Marital status</b>	M	M	M	M	M	M	S	D	S
<b>No. of children</b>	Two	Two	One	Two	Three	Three	None	None	None
<b>Area of specialisation</b>	Geography, Guidance Counselling	English	Biology, Natural Science	Science Education	Commerce	Languages	Physical Education	Commerce	Economic Sciences
<b>Departments being managed</b>	Social Sciences; Geography; History; Tourism; Home Economics; Human and Social Science; Life Orientation	Languages – English Afrikaans, Zulu	Biology; Life Sciences; Natural Science; Physical Science; Mathematics	Mathematics; Science	Commerce; Business Economics; Accountancy	Language-English	Life Orientation; Arts and Culture; Technology	Economics; Business Economics; Accountancy; Economics & Management Sciences; Travel and Tourism	Commerce; Accountancy; Business Economics
<b>Highest level of education</b>	BA - Post Graduate Diploma in Education	MA	B.Ed.	D.Ed.	B.Ed.	B.Ed.	H.D.E	B. Comm.	B. Comm.
<b>First year of teaching</b>	1988	1985	1984	1987	1996	1980	1984	1988	1969
<b>Year of promotion to HoD position</b>	2000	1999	2002	2003	2000	1995	2002	2003	1985

**Notes:**

- a) Fictional names are used to provide the participants with anonymity
- b) The marital status of the women participants is represented by the following symbols: M = Married, S = Single, D = Divorced
- c) The highest level of education is represented by the following symbols: MA = Master of Arts, BEd. = Bachelor of Education (Hons), DEd.= Doctor of Education, HDE.= Higher Diploma in Education, B. Comm. = Bachelor of Commerce

The nine participants agreed that I should provide them with fictional names, as they wished to remain anonymous in the study. The race of the participants was important as the women experienced their formative years within a political context that separated people by race. Thus, the women participants had diverse personal, educational and social experiences based on their racial classification. In terms of race, four of the women participants were Indian, two were black women, two were Coloured women and one woman participant was white.

The age of the participants helps to show the level of maturity of women middle managers. The participants ranged from 31 years to 60 years and all women had been HoDs for at least four years. All participants felt that they were sufficiently experienced as middle managers, which was determined by the number of years they spent as HoDs.

The marital status and the number of children that the participants have are important categories because family responsibilities impact on the professional lives of women HoDs. Six of the women managers were married with children, two were unmarried and one was divorced. In interviews all the participants confirmed that their family responsibilities impacted on their role as middle managers, however, those participants who were single or divorced indicated that they had more time to commit to their role as middle managers. For example, they cited being able to attend workshops and meetings that required them to travel and to stay away from home. The participants who were married indicated that, although their husbands supported their role as HoDs, they felt compelled to divide their time between their work and family lives. Having children also compounded their responsibilities as wives and mothers, however, the participants who were married and had children, indicated that they were supported by their spouse and children in their management roles. Those participants who did not have children stated that they had fewer family responsibilities and therefore were able to concentrate on their professional lives. These women managers like Gene, Valerie and Irene indicated that although they did not have children of their own, they did feel maternal towards the learners they taught. Some participants like Arthi, Hema and Rita felt that teaching was the most suitable job for them especially when their children were younger, as they were able to spend quality time with their families during these formative years. They indicated that their career aspirations were on hold for some time until their children were older.

The area of specialisation is an important category as it is related to the department that is being managed by the women middle managers. With the curriculum changes that are taking place in the South African education system, different subjects that are related may now be joined to form one department.

The level of qualification is an important category as it shows the professional qualification and ability of women middle managers. The participants had professional teaching qualifications and taught their specialisation subjects. However, all the participants, except Thembi, were managing departments that included other subjects apart from their own area of specialisation. Thembi explained that two languages constituted the Language department at her school. IsiZulu was the Home Language and English the First Additional Language. Due to the Language Department being so large, another HoD was then appointed to supervise isiZulu and Thembi concentrated only on English. There were many changes taking place within the educational context involving curriculum matters in secondary schools. Schools therefore, began changing the arrangement of their departments, and grouped certain learning areas and subjects into one department. For example, English, Afrikaans and Zulu were grouped together and formed the Languages Department, which were previously separate subject departments.

The first year that the participants started their teaching careers is an important category as it highlights the number of years the women middle managers have been in the teaching profession. This category is related to the year of promotion as it shows the number of years the participant spent as a Level 1 educator before being promoted to a middle management position. The most experienced HoD began her teaching career in 1969 and the least experienced started teaching in 1996, but what is apparent is that nearly all the participants had taught for more than ten years before being promoted to a HoD post. Mandisa was the exception to the group of participants as she had taught for only four years before being promoted to the HoD position.

Of the nine participants in the study, I personally knew one of the participants because we taught in the same area and occasionally met at union meetings. I was introduced to the other eight participants when they agreed to participate in the research. My relationship with the participants developed over the weeks I spent with them and I found that they became accepting of me as a researcher and were able to share

information more easily with me. I realised that the participants trusted me as the researcher who wanted to know more about their lives and roles as middle managers. Although I was guided by the interview schedule, the interviews were informal, particularly the meetings at the participants' homes. Initially a few of the participants felt intimidated by my "researcher role" and would constantly ask if they were "answering correctly". I had to reassure them that there were no predetermined answers to any of the questions. I found that as I gained the participants' trust, they saw me as an equal – someone who listened and seemed to understand who they were as middle managers. At my initial meetings with the participants I was also nervous because I wondered if I would gain their acceptance to undertake the research. As a researcher I did not consider myself as having "power over" any of the participants because I believed that they were more knowledgeable about their field of work and their lives than I was. Therefore, throughout the research process, the participants were my equal.

All the biographic information provides factual information about the participants' personal and professional lives, which is the initial step in appreciating their narratives. In order to understand how the participants function in their role as HoDs and to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of how they developed their capabilities as middle managers, various field texts were also used to generate this data. These field texts are dealt with in the following section.

#### ***4.3.2 Field Texts in the Study's Narrative Inquiry***

Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to the data generated in the field as field texts. Field texts are written by the participant and the researcher to represent aspects of the field experience. The field texts are composed in a three dimensional inquiry space (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 50). These authors have used three metaphorical terms for the three dimensions in narrative inquiry: personal and social (interaction), past, present, and future (continuity); and place (situation). This means that the field texts should reflect time and place and be situated in a personal-social continuum. As a narrative inquirer, I was constantly aware of where my participants and I "were placed at any particular moment – temporally, spatially, and in terms of the personal and social." (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 89). When narrative inquirers are in the field they are never there to only record someone else's experience. They too are having an experience, the experience "of the inquiry that entails the experience they

set out to explore” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 81). Thus I saw my experience as a dual one: experiencing the role of my female HoDs in their middle management roles and also being part of the experience itself. As a researcher working from a feminist perspective, I located myself within my participants’ experiences and tried not to be detached from my participants when reflecting in my journal about my field experiences.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), the field texts created may be more or less collaboratively constructed, may be more or less interpretive and may be more or less researcher influenced. Some of the field texts were collaboratively and reciprocally constructed in my research, such as the letters and journals that were written by the participants. I did not believe that I could offer an “absolutist interpretation” of the stories or narratives of my participants, but rather shared my reactions to the stories in a non-judgmental way as suggested by Thomas (1995, p. 8). The participants were also allowed to write and reflect on matters that were important to them in the area of study. This was in the form of the letters and reflective journals. This did not mean “an abdication of expertise and knowledge” (Thomas, 1995, p. 8) for me as the narrative inquirer, or the “abandonment of craft skills and expertise” of my participants as teachers and managers. Rather, the participants and I worked together during data generation to gain a more in-depth understanding of their experiences as HoDs and middle managers. The narratives of the participants remained their “communicative property” as Gubrium & Holstein (2009, p. 41) refer to their contribution, but, I did not wish to abdicate my role as the researcher, and therefore, I analysed the data personally. The various techniques used in generating the data will be explained further in the next section.

### ***4.3.3 Techniques used in Generating the Field Texts***

Using various field texts enabled me to gain rich in-depth information and have a richer understanding of the participants and their experiences as women HoDs. I felt like a conductor of an orchestra. Each field text represented a different musical instrument. As a conductor cues in each instrument’s player to create a unified, harmonious piece of music, I found the stringing together of various field texts about each woman created a unified narrative of her experience as a HoD and middle manager. I employed four specific techniques to generate text, letter writing, journal

writing, participant observation and interviews. Letter writing and journaling are examples of autobiographical writing (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

The field texts, which are descriptively made to record events, happenings, attitudes and feelings, are able to freeze specific moments in the narrative inquiry space. Some of the field texts that could be used are field notes, photographs, student's written work and teacher's planning notes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 82). These authors further the range by listing other types of field texts that are used in narrative inquiry: teacher stories, autobiographical writing, journal writing, field notes, letters, conversations, research interviews, family stories, documents, photographs, memory boxes and other personal-family-social artefacts and life experiences.

The data that participants personally constructed in written text about their experiences as middle managers is autobiographical writing. I used two techniques to generate autobiographical writing, letter writing and the reflective journal. This would allow the participants the freedom to express themselves about their professional lives and this self-reflection would help to create rich and in-depth field texts, as I believed that letters would be a liberating way to express oneself. I will firstly discuss the reflective journal and then the letter to show how these writing techniques were used in the study.

### ***The Reflective Journal***

Narrative inquirers recognize that any piece of autobiographical writing is “a particular reconstruction of an individual narrative, and there could be other reconstructions” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, p. 39). Through diary or journal writing, the writers are able to listen to their own stories. Cooper (1991, p. 104) states that through journal or diary writing we are “able to nurture ourselves as we simultaneously illuminate our lives and emotions”. I therefore asked the nine participants to keep a reflective journal, which I provided, and record their experiences as HoDs for a week. Through journal writing one is able to tell a story and it “becomes a quest for understanding and integration, a bridging of the inner mindscape and the outer landscape” (Cooper, 1991, p. 99). Therefore, the journals would be a powerful way to give accounts of experience and to reflect on the experiences at hand. However, not all the participants offered in-depth reflections in their journals. Some made log entries into their journals of the day's happenings and

events. These entries were brief listings of what they did for the day. Other participants wrote in great detail of their daily experiences as HoDs. When I came to analyse the diary entries I found that, when the participant had a routine day of teaching and very limited management functions, the diary entries were brief and reflected the routine events of the day. For example, an entry would read “Photocopied worksheets” or “Period 4 and 5 - Taught Grade 12 Maths”. The journals enabled the writers to examine their own experiences, and to gain a new perspective of their experiences and this allowed them to transform the experiences themselves as Cooper (1991, p. 99) too noticed. Through journal writing the participants could reflect on their experiences as women middle managers and present a deeper understanding of their roles. My analysis of the functioning of the women HoDs as middle managers is presented in Chapter Eight.

Once I had received their journals and read the reflections, I could use the information in the journals to discuss relevant entries at the next formal interview with the participants. This allowed for negotiated meaning of the participants’ experiences as HoDs.

During my week of observation with each participant, I also used a journal to reflect on my observations as a researcher. I recorded my observations and my experiences in my personal journal, which became an invaluable field text. The recordings were made while I was in the field or later in the day. Although the research journal is usually composed of “the researcher’s reflections, ideas, commentaries, and memos” (Roulston, 2010, p.121), I used the journal to enter my reflections of what I observed in the field (an example of an entry made is shown in section 4.4.1). My journal entries were not only descriptive of what I observed during my week of observation at each school but I also recorded the informal conversations I had with the participants during that period. The exact words of the conversations were not recorded but I did try to retain the “integrity of its substance” and recorded the content and tone of the conversation with the participants in line with the advice recorded by Gray et al. (2007, p. 192).

### ***Letter Writing***

The next autobiographical field technique that I used in my research was that of letter writing. Letters are written to someone else with the expectation of a reply.

According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 106) “In letters we try to give an account of ourselves, make meaning of our experiences, and attempt to establish and maintain relationships among ourselves, our experience, and the experience of others.” In narrative inquiry letters as field texts may be used among participants and researchers. Letter writing has the ability to establish equality among the writers – the give and take of conversation. The most notable quality of the letter is the conversational, personal tone of the writer.

However, I did not use the letter as a means of communication between the participants and myself; instead, I used the letter as an autobiographical text that would reflect the innermost thoughts of the participants that can sometimes be constrained in a face-to-face interview. I called this field text “The unsent letter to role models or mentors”. According to Cooper (1991, p. 99), unsent letters allow the writer to write with honesty and depth. Because the letter is unsent, the writer is able to express thoughts more deeply and honestly than a face-to-face conversation or interview might allow.

The participants were each requested to write a letter to a role model or mentor informing them of the influence they had had on the participant’s role as HoD. The participants were informed that the letters would not be sent to the role model or mentor, but, would be used as autobiographical data for further analysis (see Appendix H). Brief descriptions were outlined to the participants regarding the terms “mentor” and “role model”. Of the nine participants in the study eight agreed to write the letters and one participant, explained that she could not participate in this particular activity as she neither had a mentor nor role model who had influenced her in her role as a HoD. In order to stay true to narrative inquiry and feminist research traditions, I asked the participants to collaborate in the interpretation of the letters. Once the participants had written their letters, I read and interpreted the letters. Subsequently, the participants were asked for their response to my interpretation of their letters.

### ***Observations***

As a narrative researcher, I immersed myself in the field with each participant in their own educational landscapes. I shadowed and observed each participant for a week in order to understand how she functioned in her role as HoD. Through participant

observation, I was able to experience the participants in their role as middle managers. According to Belk, Wallendorf and Sherry (1989, p. 1) observations are: “highly charged encounters suffused with meaning. Because these incidences are directly experienced by the researcher, the significance of the phenomenon is more fully appreciated”.

The observation gave me an opportunity to gather live data from the field and I was able to look directly at what was taking place *in situ*, and therefore had a better understanding of how the participants functioned in their roles as middle managers in the secondary school context, a procedure supported by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011, p. 456) and Gubrium and Holstein (2009, p. 34). My role as a researcher in the field was that of an observer-as-participant, a description used by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 457). My role as a researcher was clear and overt as far as the participants were concerned and I tried not to intrude in their activities at school. If the participant was engaged in teaching, I would sit at the back of the classroom and observe the lesson. The classroom observations offered insight into the interaction between the learners and the participants and the participants’ practice as an educator and manager. The dual role of the participants as educator and manager would often ‘play out’ in the classroom scene, as the participants would be interrupted in their teaching, to attend to a management function.

I did not want to observe factual details such as the number of students in a class, or the number of books being read, rather, my intention was to observe the practice and behaviour of the participants in their role as HoDs. Therefore, my observations were not highly structured and I did not have observation categories worked out in advance nor a prepared observation schedule, instead my observations were semi-structured. I had an agenda of issues that were gathered in a less predetermined or systematic way than the structured observation, as described by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 457).

My agenda was based on the various issues that I was concerned about observing. Some of these were: What does the participant do as a middle manager? How does the participant interact with the members in her department, the learners and the senior managers? How does the participant manage and lead her team of educators within a changing educational context? My observations were recorded in my reflective

journal. Through my observations of the participants, I was able to have informal conversations with them about their management practices.

The conversations I had with the participants were informal and my thoughts around the conversations were recorded in my reflective journal, as these conversations were not recorded. The conversation is “more a way of composing a field text in face-to-face encounters between pairs or among groups (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 108). My conversations were individual conversations with each participant. These conversations took place during my week of observation of the participants in their schools. The conversations were generally about the observations made and were more informal and relaxed. I borrowed the idea of guided conversations from Cole and Knowles (2001) who distinguish guided conversations from other conversations. Guided conversations have a research purpose and have to end at some point due to limited spatial and temporal resources. I would then take my recordings in my journal as part of my field text. While in the field, I found that my research relationship with my participants grew closer. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p.110) also reflect on conversations when they state that interviews between narrative researchers and their participants can become conversations, noting that “even when they begin with the intention of conducting interviews, the interview often turns into a form of conversation.”

The agenda of issues that I observed for the week helped to guide what was being observed and I then used the observations to direct the subsequent interviews according to the functions and practice of the participants as middle managers.

### ***Interviews***

The overarching technique that was used in the study for the generation of data was the interview. Although there were ongoing conversations between the participants and myself on the area of research, when I had observed them for a week in their roles as HoDs, I was able to conduct at least three formal interviews with each participant on separate occasions (see Appendix G). During semi-structured interviews and conversations I heeded the warning (Reinharz & Chase, 2001, p. 225) that the participant has something important to say and should not be interrupted in the process, and noted that this type differed from interviews that were highly structured and guided by the researcher. Each interview was at least ninety minutes long and was

only conducted at a time and place that was suitable for the participants. The interview sites were either the participants' classrooms, offices or their homes. I considered what Cole and Knowles (2001) felt were ideal settings for interviews, namely, locations where there would be no interruptions or distractions and that were physically and emotionally comfortable. Interviewing is important in feminist research because:

interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher. This asset is particularly important in the study of women because in this way learning from women is an antidote to centuries of ignoring women's ideas altogether or having men speak for women. (Reinharz, 1992, p. 19).

Interviews therefore formed the major technique for data collection in this study.

Interviews appear to be the most commonly used source of storied narratives (Polkinghorne, 1995) and, in order to generate storied data, the interviews are either semi-structured or unstructured. Interviews are conducted between the narrative inquirer and participant, transcripts were made available for further discussion, and they become part of the ongoing narrative record, following Connelly and Clandinin (1990, p. 5). Feminist research also uses semi-structured and unstructured interviews (Reinharz, 1992, p. 18).

I used semi-structured interviews in this study. I had prepared an interview guide prior to the interviews with suggested questions as this helped to structure the course of the interviews to follow. The interview guide was prepared using themes such as the practices of the women HoD, family and professional relations, functioning of the woman HoD and responses to their journal entries (see Appendix J). Kvale and Brinkman (2009, p. 130) suggest that an interview guide for semi-structured interviews should include the outline of topics that are covered in the interview with suggested questions. Each topic was broad and therefore was guided by open-ended questions. For example, a question such as "What are the positive aspects of your role as HoD?" is able to elicit a richer and more in-depth response from the participants than a closed question which would require a single word reply. I did not stick strictly to the sequencing of the questions, because, sometimes the participants' answers opened up new directions in the interview process. The open-ended questions allowed for a more spontaneous exchange between the participants, as Reinharz and Chase (2001, p. 225) too mention.

My interviews with the participants were recorded and then transcribed. Transcripts or important segments of the previous interview were discussed in the following interview. The mutuality of the interviews allowed for deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants in their roles as HoDs. Using multiple interviews allowed me to get a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences because I was able to "ask additional questions and to get corrective feedback on previously obtained information" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 37).

A technique that I used in one of the interviews was the photo elicitation technique which used photographs to recall past events in the participants' lives (see Appendix K). According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000, p. 114) photographs mark "a special memory in our time, a memory around which we construct stories". Photographs are one of the many artefacts we collect as we live our lives. An artefact is a physical object and is something that can be handled and observed. It usually has a temporal quality, which means that it "speaks" of actions in a certain time and place (Cole & Knowles, 2001, p. 85). Photographs are artefacts that are a representation of a life that has been lived. Sometimes verbal questions may not adequately elicit the required data. According to Johnson and Weller (2001, p. 510), "[p]hotographs, artefacts, actual items of interest, or virtually anything that can be visualized can be used in the elicitation process".

Therefore, I decided to use photographs as an elicitation tool, as it would enrich my insight into my participants' personal, social and educational experiences. My purpose in using photographs was that the participants would be able to go back in time to their early childhood experiences and move forward to the present and narrate a story about their educational experiences and how this had impacted on their roles as teachers and HoDs.

In crafting this particular data collection activity, I decided to interweave the use of a timeline with the photographs which would be used in the interview. The interview was the life history interview that focused on the educational and social lives of the participants. I called this the life history interview (Samuel, 2009, p. 4) because I chose to identify a specific dimension of the participants' lives that focused on their family and educational experiences. A personal narrative, within the experience-centred tradition, could also be a life history narrative that follows a sequence and has

meaningfulness, as in telling the story in which the research participant follows a life event or theme (Squire, 2008, p. 42). Using the timeline and the photographs as a stimulus in the interview, allowed the participants to tell their own stories of their social and educational lives, in their own way, in which case the participants' intentions are uppermost as explained by Anderson & Jack (1991).

Thus, using the timeline as a basic frame, the participants selected photographs from their early childhood education, primary, secondary school education, tertiary education and finally from their professional lives as teachers and managers. Each participant told me their story of their educational and social lives from early childhood up to the time they began to work as a teacher and HoD. Using the timeline, the participants organised their photographs sequentially to build up their life histories. Although the timeline was linear, the participants moved back and forth in time and place while narrating their stories. The life history interview was tape-recorded and transcribed and then discussed with each participant.

I used a second photo-elicitation technique in my week of observation. For each participant, I photographed them in their various school settings. The photographs captured moments of the participants in class, in their offices (if they had one) and of them teaching. I had to obtain their permission first, and assured them that the photographs would only be used for discussion and would not be made public. The photographs were used as a stimulus for the next semi-structured interview. I asked the participants to study the photographs and to talk about the spaces they occupied. The following types of questions were asked: Which is your favourite space and why? Tell me about the learners you teach. What do you like/dislike about your office/classroom? These photographs and questions helped me to further understand the participants as HoDs and middle managers, and were especially useful as a stimulus in the interviews that focused on the practice of the participants as middle managers. The photographs were not used as data for analysis as they were only used as a stimulus for the interviews and were therefore returned to the participants after the interviews.

#### **4.4 Analysing the Narratives from the Study**

According to Polkinghorne (1995, p.5) Bruner distinguishes between paradigmatic and narrative modes of thought. This distinction identifies two types of narrative inquiry, which Polkinghorne (1995, p. 5- 6) describes as:

- a) analysis of narratives, that is, studies whose data consist of narratives or stories, but whose analysis produce paradigmatic typologies or categories and
- b) narrative analysis, that is, studies whose data consist of actions, events, and happenings, but whose analysis produces stories (e.g. biographies, histories, case studies).

In my study I did what Polkinghorne (1995, p. 5) refers to as the “analysis of narratives” because the data I collected were narratives that I analysed initially by finding code words and common themes. In the paradigmatic analysis of narratives, common themes or concepts are located within the stories that are collected as data, and most often this approach requires several stories rather than a single story (Polkinghorne, 1995). This study had nine participants and each participant told her own story, therefore, I had multiple stories to work with. The common concepts and themes were inductively derived from the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 205) state that the theory or explanation must fit the situation that is being researched, thus, my findings emerged from the data, rather than me predefining and testing a hypothesis. I analysed the data that consisted of interviews, the unsent letters to the role models and mentors, and the reflective journals, by searching for code words and common themes. While reading and rereading each data set, I tried to identify the merging patterns and themes in the data (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 428). Squire (2008, p. 50) contends that the theories selected should be able to give a “predictive explanation” of the data.

In analysing the data, in the form of written texts, such as the interview transcripts, the journal entries and the unsent letters, I first read through these texts several times, to get a holistic impression of the overall data content. As I analysed my data, I moved backwards and forwards between the data and theory, until I found the best fit between the data and the theory. In my data the common theme of affiliation emerged which is a human functional capability in Nussbaum’s (2000a) list of capabilities. I

searched for code words within this theme and words such as relationship, interaction, friendship, discrimination, respect and violence emerged from the data. Within the theme of affiliation various forms of relationships were identified between the participants and the people with whom they interacted either in their personal or professional lives. I moved between my data and the capability approach and transformational leadership theory to understand how these relationships developed the capabilities of the women middle managers and how these informed their middle management practice and enabled their transformational leadership functioning.

Using the example of affiliation from Nussbaum's (2000a) list of central human functional capabilities and the professional capabilities devised by Walker et al. (2010), I searched for how the capability of affiliation was developed in the women middle managers from early childhood, during their teaching years and as HoDs. This involved searching for the types of relations the women middle managers formed with the people with whom they interacted, either in their private or professional lives. Thereafter, I searched the data on their practice as middle managers to understand how the affiliation capability helped the women middle managers to function in their role. This pointed to the relationships and interactions that were formed between the women middle managers and their colleagues while they managed their departments. The transformational leadership theory was used to understand how the women middle managers guided the people in their departments and the type of support they offered their departmental members.

In the first phase of their lives from early childhood years, within the broad theme of affiliations, a sub-theme of family relations was common and frequent. This was evident in the narratives about the personal and social interactions with family members. Some of the categories that emerged from the theme of family relationships were close bonds, broken bonds, single parents and influential mothers. Under this theme of family relations, the participants had told stories of how they either faced barriers or were encouraged in their emotional and social development. The theory that best explained the emotional and social development of the participants was the capability approach, as it highlighted the development of capabilities in people to function in particular ways. The transformational leadership theory helped me understand how the women middle managers were able to practise as middle

managers after having acquired their management capabilities to function in a transforming educational context.

In order to understand how the female HoDs developed capabilities for a management position, I explored their narratives about early childhood and adulthood within different contexts that were affected by race, class, and gender. According to Reinharz and Chase (2001, p. 230) social scientists believe that “a person’s social location shapes his or her identity, experiences, and perspectives”. The theory that best explained the management function of the woman middle manager in a changing educational and social context was the transformational leadership theory as it was able to describe how the middle manager could function in her role after having developed particular capabilities that enable management functioning.

The next step involved the sorting of the information from the themes that were identified into time, place and the type of interaction that was involved. I coded the data into the three dimensional inquiry space suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) which is continuity (time), situation (place) and interaction (personal and social). I used the three dimensional inquiry space as a sorting device through which I sorted the data into time frames. These were the early life experiences, tertiary education, early teaching practice years and the current years of the woman middle manager. I then situated the data into place that constituted the family setting (personal, social) and the school context (educational). The data was then sorted into the type of interactions that were involved, whether these were of a personal or social nature or whether they involved family or professional interactions. The following coding in the data reflected the three-dimensional space in the inquiry:

<b>Code</b>	<b>Three-dimensional Inquiry Space</b>
T	Time
P	Place
I	Interaction

The theme of affiliation spanned from the participant’s early childhood to her current role as HoD. Therefore, the relationships and interactions that she experienced were both in her personal and professional domains. The social and educational contexts within which the participants experienced their formative and adult years is important, because this helped shape who the participants are as middle managers through the

development of their management capabilities. The participants' experiences are considered within the context of the cultural, familial, political and educational spheres (Cole & Knowles, 2001).

Once I identified the themes in the life history interviews, I wrote biographies for each participant to describe their critical experiences that pointed to the development of capabilities (see Appendix O). This level of analysis allowed for a deeper understanding of how and why the participants function as they do in their middle management roles. This led to the next step of analysis, which identified the capabilities of the women middle managers, such as having developed the capability of affiliation, emotion, practical reason, assurance and integrity and other relevant observations. In my analysis the freedom and agency aspects of the women middle managers were regarded integral to the development of capabilities and how this enables transformational leadership functioning.

Although I analysed the reflective journals and the unsent letters by open coding and categorising of the data, as I did with the interviews, the themes in the study were largely developed from the interviews that covered the participants' reflection on their early educational and social experiences, their tertiary education through their teaching years and finally to their present status as middle managers. The participants' journal entries supported their narratives when they spoke of how they functioned in their role as middle managers. For example, if they spoke of the long teaching hours of HoDs, their journal entries reflected the number of teaching periods they had. The unsent letters offered rich and detailed data about the participants' role models and mentors, and the letters moved back and forth in time and place, to the participants' childhood, to their teaching practice and to their present roles as HoDs. Their interactions within a personal, social and professional context were also highlighted in their letters.

#### **4.5 Ethical Considerations**

Ethics in research defines what is or is not legitimate to do, or what "moral" research procedures involve (Neuman, 2006, p. 159). According to Cohen et al. (2011, p. 75) a major ethical dilemma arises when researchers need to strike a balance between their role as researchers in search of scientific truth, and their participants' rights and values

which can be threatened by the research. A researcher who is ethical will guide, protect and oversee the interests of the research participants (Neuman, 2006). As a researcher espousing ethical practice, I first sought the permission from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to access the sites and their employees (see Appendices B and C). Second, I sought the permission from the school principals (see Appendix D), and third I sought the informed consent from each participant (see Appendix E). Neuman (2006, p. 135) describes informed consent as “[a] statement, usually written, that explains aspects of a study to participants and asks for their voluntary agreement to participate before the study begins”.

Before the women HoDs agreed to participate in the study, I explained to them in detail the purpose of the study and the data collection methods and techniques that I would use to generate data. The participants were given detailed accounts of the various research instruments and what was required of them (see Appendices F, G, H, I, J and K). The participants were therefore well-informed of their role as participants and the researcher’s role during data generation chosen for the research process. After this, they were given the opportunity to either participate in the study or not. Once the women HoDs agreed to participate in the study, they signed a written agreement that also outlined the research procedure and data generation methods (see Appendix E). The informed consent agreement included the following information that: participation was voluntary; the participant could withdraw from the study at any given time; the participant could refuse to answer questions; participant anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed; details of the various research methods to generate data and what was expected of the participants; and participants would be given the opportunity to check the interview transcripts and read the researcher’s journal entries on request.

Confidentiality is upheld when information from a participant is not disclosed in a way that might identify the individual or that might enable the individual to be traced (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 92). The issues of anonymity and confidentiality were discussed with the participants. I therefore set out to protect their identity in the write-up of the thesis by assigning each participant a fictitious name. The names of schools and locations were also changed or not mentioned in the narratives. These actions allowed for the confidentiality of the participants that was further ensured by not

publishing the photographs used in the life history interviews and the photographs taken of the various professional spaces occupied by the participants in their role as HoDs. These photographs were used only as a stimulus for the interviews and returned to the participants afterwards. The photographs did not have the status of data and were therefore not analysed in the study. Adhering to these ethical issues ensured that the participants' rights and values were maintained in the research.

Authenticity and dependability are important in research because they concern the rigour of the study. These are discussed in the next section.

#### **4.6 Authenticity and Dependability of the Research**

Authenticity and dependability in qualitative research are synonyms for validity and reliability in quantitative research. These issues are addressed differently in qualitative and quantitative research. Although the words validity and reliability are associated with positivist research they are important in qualitative research even though they may be expressed differently. Validity is to demonstrate that a particular instrument can measure what it sets out to measure (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 133). Validity means truthful and qualitative researchers are more interested in authenticity than in a single version of the truth (Neuman, 2006, p. 196). Maxwell (1992) states that qualitative researchers should not work within that sort of positivist agenda that strives for predictive, convergent, criterion-related, internal and external validity. Rather, Maxwell proposes that validity should be replaced by authenticity. Blumenfeld-Jones (1995, p. 28) refers to fidelity which requires the researcher to be as honest as possible in the self-reporting of those being researched. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the key criteria of validity (authenticity) in qualitative research are: credibility, validity, transferability, dependability and confirm ability. They contend that rigour can be achieved in qualitative research by including member checking/respondent validation where transcripts are confirmed by participants after coding and categorising results and by structural corroboration (or triangulation).

As a feminist researcher, I wanted to present a fair and honest account of the women middle managers' experiences in their roles as HoDs and therefore collaborated with the participants during the data generation process by requesting that the participants be actively engaged in it. The participants were asked to write unsent letters and keep journals of their experiences as HoDs for a week. The life history interview also

allowed the participants to tell their personal and educational life stories in their own words, supported by personal photographs they had selected for the interview. The participants were invited to view the transcripts of the interviews and comment on these texts. When I began analysing the letters and journal entries of the participants, using codes and categories, the participants were presented with findings from the first level analysis and their responses were requested. I also triangulated the research techniques in this study by generating data through letter writing, reflective journals, observation and interviews in data generation. Maree and van der Westhuizen (2007, p. 40) state that “crystallisation” in qualitative research refers to the practice of validating results by using multiple methods of data collection and analysis. Through triangulating and crystallising the techniques, I was able to get a more varied and detailed and holistic view of how the participants function in their roles as middle managers which helped to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

Reliability is a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability over time and applies to the instruments and the control over a group of respondents (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 199). According to Cohen et al. (2011), reliability is concerned with precision and accuracy in quantitative research. However, Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p. 48) suggest that in qualitative research, reliability can be viewed as a fit between what the researcher records as data and what occurs in the field. Reliability should be a comprehensive and accurate account of the research occurrence (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 202). Feminist research encourages subjectivity of participants and is not concerned with how they depict reality (Mannah, 2008, p. 89). As a researcher, I ensured dependability of the data through crystallisation of the four research techniques in data generation and by inviting participants to validate my initial analysis of the data. My findings also echoed with the works of other scholars who studied women in middle management such as Naidoo’s (2003) study on the gendered experiences of women managers in commerce and Zulu’s (2011) study of women middle managers in academic departments in universities. The leadership styles of the women middle managers in my study resonated with the styles of leadership of women middle managers in the other two studies. The findings of this research will also be reviewed and validated by examiners in the research peer community.

#### **4.7 Concluding Remarks**

My purpose in this chapter was to discuss the methodology I used to study the lives of women HoDs and how they develop capabilities to function in their roles as middle managers and I achieved this in several ways. Working as a feminist researcher, I sought to use a methodology that would ensure that female participants would be given a voice, as women are often invisible and are on the margins in educational research. How feminist knowledge is produced depends entirely on the choice of techniques made by the researcher. Thus, I was also mindful that the methods I chose would value participants' subjectivity, their personal meaning and definition, and would give them voice. Through narrative inquiry the participants were able to voice their experiences as HoDs.

The field texts that were used in the study allowed for a collaborative relation between the participants and the researcher. The reflective journals and the unsent letters allowed the participants to express themselves in an unobtrusive way. The participants were treated as equals in the research relation as narrative inquiry created the space for a collaborative and equal relation between the researcher and participants. Narrative inquiry allows for interpretive research, because the researcher focuses on individuals and sets out to understand the participants' interpretation of the world around them. Narrative inquiry concentrates on the individual's interpretation of the social and personal milieu as experienced. Therefore using narrative inquiry in my research brought to the fore the subjective nature of the female participants and the complexity of their experiences as female HoDs and middle managers in secondary schools.

The methodology allowed for a detailed and nuanced study of the personal and professional lives of the women middle managers and in the next chapter I will discuss how the women HoDs were able to develop capabilities from their early childhood years and through their teaching years in order to function in their roles as middle managers.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **FROM EARLY CHILDHOOD ON: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CAPABILITIES OF THE WOMEN HEADS OF DEPARTMENTS**

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the social and educational trajectories of the lives of the nine women middle managers participating in this study in order to uncover the development of their capabilities during their formative and schooling years that were influential to eventually function as managers. A manager functions as a result of her capability set amongst other things. This chapter is based on the premise that capabilities for later professional life need to be developed in early childhood and schooling. Sen (1999, p. 18) states that development is “the expansion of the “capabilities” of people to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value”. Basic capabilities acquired in childhood are fundamental and needed for other more complex capabilities in adulthood (Nussbaum, 2000a). It is a hunch that in childhood, building capabilities, overcoming adversities and coping strategies are precursors to transformational leadership. In this chapter I use accounts from women to show that the capabilities they needed for their management function, were developed in their early schooling and life experiences. To do this I analysed the narratives of the women middle managers about their social and educational life histories. These narratives were mainly generated through photo elicitation interviews (see Appendix K). From the narratives of the women middle managers I identified capabilities that were developed in early childhood due to the freedoms and opportunities that they had.

Although Sen (1999) does not prescribe a list of capabilities in his capability approach, I use the lists of capabilities given by Nussbaum and Walker et al. as I track the development of the women participants. I will refer to the achievement of several capabilities as a capability set following Hicks (2002, p. 140). A capability set acquired in the formative years, that can underpin a woman’s future functioning as a middle manager, might include being able to regulate emotions, having the basic educational skills, being able to reason, and being able to form affiliations.

## 5.1 Developing Capabilities

The racial, cultural and linguistic diversity of the nine women participants in the study suggests that they experienced life differently and although they might all function in a middle management position in the same way, the freedom to function in these positions might be different for each participant. Some may have a strong capability set and others may have a weak capability set. The weak capability set could be due to barriers that constrained their freedom and development as women, while a strong capability set might represent the opportunities and freedoms that enabled their development.

Nussbaum's (2000a, p. 41) view is that that a universal framework should not be used when assessing women's quality of life. She argues that culture, diversity and paternalism should be considered because different groups of women value different rights and liberties. The capability approach is important because it considers the equality of the freedoms and opportunities that people have or do not have and not only their ability to function. Its focus is on the capability to function and it is this that should promote women's well-being. Sen's definition of a capability is "a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being: [it] represents the alternative combinations of things a person is able to do or be" (Sen, 1992, p. xi).

In the capability approach Sen refers to education as "basic, elementary education, and mainly expressed in term of levels of literacy" (Terzi, 2007, p. 26). Although I agree with Sen that basic education is important for an individual to reach a meaningful state of being, I suggest that social interaction in education and within the family is also important in developing an individual to reach this state. I therefore trace the experiences of the women participants from childhood, via school and tertiary education and early teaching experiences. The experiences of the women HoDs are set within the context of race, class and gender and these play a part in the choices they make and also provide a basis for their future leadership roles as HoDs. Within this context there are freedoms and unfreedoms (barriers) to the achievement of capability that form either strong or weak capability sets. The person is able to choose one way of living from her capability set (LeBmann, 2009). The capability approach shows how the capability set is able to reflect a person's freedom to live one way or another (Sen, 1992, 1999).

For all people there are experiences and circumstances that are obstructive. I refer to these as barriers. Barriers to capability achievement may be both in the social and educational milieu. Having choices to live a particular way of life is essential for well-being, as a lack of freedom to choose will affect a person's well-being. The lack of freedom, seen as an unfreedom, to choose one way of life or another forms barriers to a person's development. The types of barriers that a person might face can be due to factors such as poverty, violence, emotional insecurity and discrimination based on race and gender. According to Larson and Murtadha (2002, p. 155), the capability approach suggests that, by receiving educational and material support, people can become fully capable of human action and expression. However, people also have barriers to their capability achievements.

These barriers or unfreedoms (Sen, 1999) contribute to poor performance at school or in later life and weak capability, such as not having the freedom and opportunity to advance in one's career. The effect is that individuals are prevented from functioning in a way that is "truly human" (Nussbaum, 2000a). Exposure to unfreedoms can contribute to the inability to function and experience well-being. However, through choices and responses to barriers people either succumb to a weak capability set or they are able to offset this with a strong capability set. My analysis of the women's narratives identifies several barriers. The first barrier is emotional insecurity but the capability of resilience is able to offset the barrier of emotional insecurity. The capability of affiliation, developed through relationships within their family units, was also important for counteracting emotional insecurity. The capabilities of emotion, affiliation and resilience are discussed in the following section.

### ***5.1.1 Emotional Well-being***

Family relations contribute either positively or negatively to the emotional well-being of the family members. In this section I discuss how women middle managers experienced either barriers or freedoms affecting their emotional well-being. I argue that the freedoms developed their capabilities and the women acquired the capability of resilience in adverse situations or when they encountered barriers.

The relationships that the women middle managers developed with their family members is the capability of affiliation which, according to Nussbaum (2000a, p. 79), is the ability to "live with and towards others" and to "show concern for other human

beings”. The capability of affiliation also deals with empathy, caring, respect in relation to diversity and being people-centred (Walker et al., 2010). The capability of emotion deals with the ability to have attachment to people and things and to care for and love others (Nussbaum, 2000a). The narratives I was told during the interviews highlighted the capabilities of emotion and affiliation, revealing how emotions and affiliations can form a barrier to, or promote human development and the well-being of the women. The participants’ emotional well-being and capability to form relationships and work with other people as managers depends on the development of the emotional and affiliation capabilities over the years. I found that emotional insecurity led to weak capability and obstructed the capability of emotion and affiliation; emotional security led to strong capability and enabled the capability of emotion and affiliation. The capability for emotion and affiliation, can however, be developed if there are opportunities that favour their development, such as the capability of resilience, which can strengthen a person’s ability to resolve a weak capability.

The following extracts from narratives highlight the emotional insecurity the participants experienced in their formative years.

I saw my father in 1993, ten years later. And ten years later, he still didn’t show much of an interest in me. The problem is I needed money for university fees. And he owned taxis... he had money. I thought he would be willing to assist me in terms of fees, but he was not. You know what he said to me? ‘I’m not interested, because at the end of the day all the praise will go to your mother, so I’m not even interested. So I just decided that I will have to forget him. Since then, since 1993, I don’t know if he still alive. (Mandisa, photo-elicitation interview, 13 September)

If my parents got married and lived together, maybe I would have had a different personality. Maybe if I had a stable home and a stable family I could have been a different person. (Mandisa, photo-elicitation interview, 13 September).

My father was a calm, quiet and gentle man at home and was never verbally abusive. My sister and I had to always conduct ourselves with respect when in front of him. And he was much older than my mother. He was not a boisterous man and very set in his ways. And my mother was the exact opposite of my father. She was not an unloving person, but, was far harder to love. She was a very, very hard task lady. She ruled us with a rod. You know if she said be home at six, one minute past six was not good enough and she would be standing at the door with a strap. (Gene, photo-elicitation interview, 17 September)

My mother was a teacher and my dad had a shop in Lamontville. He was separated from my mother and on Friday he would come to fetch me and return me on Monday morning... I had a troubled childhood (Thembi, photo-elicitation interview, 22 August)

I always say that it is because of the fact that she was so strict with us that our lives didn't grow on a personal level. So I didn't have it easy... (Valerie, photo-elicitation interview, 31 August)

My elder sister and brother were very high achievers. They were given the Dux awards when they were in high school, they got their A passes and they excelled academically at school. I sometimes felt left out because I was not the high achiever. Both ended up being medical doctors and at times I felt that because I was not the high achiever like them I was not given the preferential treatment they received (Rita, photo-elicitation interview, 19 April)

These extracts from the participants' narratives show how family relations and interactions contribute to emotional insecurity. Nussbaum (2000a, p. 79) states that a person's emotional development should not be blighted by overwhelming fear and anxiety, or traumatic events of abuse or neglect as the capability of emotion is crucial to development. Mandisa's father's lack of interest in her well-being alienated her from him whereas having a stable family would have contributed to her sense of well-being. Thembi's "troubled childhood" also posed a threat to her emotional well-being as she too would have thrived in a stable family situation. Valerie, on the other hand, was unable to develop emotionally because of an over-bearing and strict mother. Gene also had a mother who was a disciplinarian and she was unable to reconcile her mother's display of "tough love" with her father's gentle nature. Rita's insecurity stemmed from the lack of confidence she suffered because she was treated differently from her other siblings. Not having the freedom to choose can negatively affect the capability set and the well-being of a person since a capability set reflects a person's freedom to live one or other type of life other (LeBmann, 2009). The well-being depends on achieving certain levels of functioning (LeBmann, 2009, p. 451) and in these narratives the participants' emotional insecurity and instability reflect weak levels of functioning and a narrow capability set.

However, the narratives also show how the participants in their youth made choices to resolve the emotional conflicts they felt. This highlights the capability for resilience that is developed in the participants as they sought to overcome adversities in their lives. Resilience is the capability to persevere in difficult circumstances (Walker et al., 2010). Women middle managers were able to persevere in family relationships even though their ability to function within those relationships was often constrained. Mandisa chose to "forget" her father, whereas, Gene chose to concentrate on the loving nature of her father. Thembi chose to acknowledge and accept both her parents

in her life, although she found the separation difficult to cope with, and Rita chose not to compete for the attention she clearly lacked from her parents.

The capability for emotion and affiliation, can however, be developed if there are opportunities that favour their development, such as the capability of resilience that can strengthen a person's ability to resolve a weak capability. Other participants had strong emotional capability and therefore they were able to achieve higher levels of emotional functioning. The emotional stability, offered by family relations, influenced the participants' capability to be happy and secure. This emotional state of well-being promotes the capability of affiliation, and the ability to form relationships. The following anecdotes describe the emotional well-being of the participants:

I had a very good childhood. A glorious childhood. My regret is that my mum worked all her life. Worked when women did not work. This was in the 1960s. She worked in order to supplement my father's income. She was very determined and was able to stand with men and bid for the land that we built our home on. (Neelam, photo-elicitation interview, 3 July)

I had a very happy childhood. You can see we were spoilt. We were short of nothing and my brother and I became the mascots for the family. We were very happy children. We grew up being not only with children but with teenagers and the whole political hype and their ideology filtered down to us because we were part of young adult company throughout our childhood. (Hema, photo-elicitation interview, 6 June)

He was an entertainer and a clown. He was very strict but very entertaining, even at home. Everybody just loved my father. (Irene, photo-elicitation interview, 4 September)

My family's previous generation has been highly educated.... So there is this backdrop that we have, you know. You know when you have those strong kinds of backdrops, you will tend towards that generation. For instance, now we have set in place certain educational standards, and all of us sort of enjoyed success in our generation and we expect our children to do as well and so it progresses. (Arthi, photo-elicitation interview, 12 July)

These accounts show that family relations help support the capability of emotional security when family members interact positively with them, thus reaffirming their strong self-image. The words that indicate the strong capability of emotion, because of positive family relations, are "glorious childhood", "happy childhood", being "spoilt", having "strong backdrops" and having "success". Each participant shows a different reason for feeling emotionally secure within her own individual family. Neelam's security stemmed from her mother's economic and social agency. Hema's emotional security stemmed from the economic security she was provided with and the social and political freedom she was allowed in her formative years. Irene felt secure in her father's love and his ability to make her laugh, and Arthi felt emotionally secure because of the "illustrious" nature of her family.

The capability of emotion was experienced differently by the participants because they all came from different family backgrounds. Some family relations can promote wide emotional capabilities and other relations can form barriers to capability. As young girls the participants gained the capability to feel emotionally secure and experience emotions such as joy, happiness and love, which contributed to a strong capability set.

Nussbaum (2000a, pp. 84–85) differentiates between internal and combined capabilities. She describes the internal capabilities as the developed states of a person for the exercise of requisite functions, and the combined capabilities as internal capabilities that are combined with suitable external conditions for the exercise of function (Nussbaum, 2000a, p. 84–85). Every person has these internal capabilities, but not everyone can function at a particular emotional level, because of the combined capabilities. A difference in the achievement of the capability of emotion and affiliation can be explained by the balance of the combined capabilities. Their accounts revealed that each woman participant had different external conditions. Thus, Valerie could not develop on a “personal” level because of the strict environment in which she grew up, although she had the internal capability to experience emotions that would contribute to her state of well-being, whereas participants like Irene and Neelam had a balance between their internal capabilities and the external conditions. They were able to develop emotionally because they had strong family relationships. Thus these conditions either affected the capability of emotion and affiliation positively or constrained it through instability within the family relations.

In their stories it is evident that women middle managers exercised their agency when faced with external conditions that would restrict their capability development. One such external condition that can limit a person’s capability development is poverty. Poverty, like family relations, can also be an indicator to assess a person’s state of well-being. Poverty is an external condition that can thwart human development. In the next section I discuss how women middle managers were able to develop their agency even when facing poverty. Their perseverance to get an education showed their agency as women middle managers. Through their agency women middle managers were able to develop their capabilities of sense, imagination and thought and knowledge, imagination and practical skills which I refer to as their educational capability.

### ***5.1.2 Overcoming Adversities***

Women middle managers were able to endure economic constraints and achieve their agency. Agency in this study refers to the achievement of goals and values women have reason to pursue, even though those goals and values are not connected with their own well-being (Sen, 1992, p. 56). Although the women middle managers were faced with unfreedoms and barriers to the development of their educational capabilities, they were still able to practise their agency and achieve the goals they wished to pursue.

In this section I discuss the barriers that poverty forms in the educational lives of the women. The women participants experienced education and their economic situation differently from men and from each other because of their diverse and subjective natures. According to Sen, (1992, 1999), a person's well-being should not be judged by the possessions or incomes she holds, rather, a person's well-being should be judged by "what she is able to do or to be". In terms of utilitarianism, development is evaluated according to income and growth of income (Hicks, 2002, p. 139). Sen's capability approach therefore rejects a focus on money and commodities (Sen, 1985, 1992) and focuses rather on what a person is able to be and to do within her society.

One of the unfreedoms or barriers that the women middle managers encountered in their early lives was that of poverty. Poverty can be measured according to low income (Sen, 1992) and being poorer than others within a society. Kabeer (2003, p. 1) sees poverty as being gendered because women and men experience poverty differently and unequally. Kabeer (2003) goes on to say that women and girls are more disadvantaged than men and boys, both across societies and among the poor.

Most of the participants came from working class backgrounds in their formative years and suffered the ills of apartheid. For some, the poverty linked to their racial subjugation led to their lack of resources in all spheres of life. This meant that they had less access to education. Education, as one of Sen's basic capability attributes, is essential for growth and development. Access to education also helps to empower women (Kabeer, 2003, p. 175) and this promotes the agency of women. My finding is that the women participants' capability to persevere in their formal education, in spite of the economic unfreedoms, developed them into capable women, who were able to effect change in their lives through their capability of agency. The ability to persevere

against adversities highlights their resilience. Such resilience can be defined in terms of “the presence of protective factors (personal, social, familial, and institutional safety nets)” that enables individuals to resist life stress (Kaplan, Turner, Norman & Stillson, 1996, p. 158).

The unequal freedoms and opportunities a person has contribute negatively to that person’s human choices and agency and lead to life stress. In order to explore the educational opportunities of the participants, it is important to assess how education contributed to the development of their human choices and agency. By using the capability approach, it is possible to examine the state of education, rather than by judging the success or failure of an education system through literacy levels or the enrolment of learners within a country. It is important to look further than those two components and see whether education has developed human choices and well-being (Saito, 2003). Education is an integral part of human development as: “it emphasises the development of human choices and returns to the centrality of people and is reflected in measuring development not as the expansion of commodities and wealth but as the widening of human choices (UNDP, 1990, p.1)”.

Although education is meant to promote the well-being of people, because it helps in the expansion of capabilities (Saito, p. 27), the process involved in acquiring a formal education, can present weak capability sets that do not allow for freedom and opportunity. Many of the participants did not experience wide capability sets in their schooling years, as they lacked resources and opportunities to allow them to make choices concerning the education they would receive. The question to be asked when the women middle manager narrates her early educational experiences should be “What is the women middle manager actually able to do and be and what are her opportunities and liberties?” These questions should point to what the women middle manager is capable of doing and not only about what she does and how satisfied she is with what she does (Nussbaum, 2000a, p. 71). Therefore it is important to consider how the resources in her midst are put to work to enable the woman middle manager to function in a fully human way. The woman middle manager faced many challenges in her educational journey, and therefore lacked opportunities and liberties. I refer to three strong capsules from narratives to show the common plight of black people trying to get an education during the apartheid regime. It shows how poverty can contribute to educational deprivation and vice versa.

My life is very, very different from my own children. I moved a lot. I grew up in a rural area in a farm and I attended the rural schools. And it is very different from these schools. My child, she attended pre-school, of which I never attended. I attended primary school; it was a local school from Grade 1 to Standard 2. My aunt, that is my mum's sister, was a teacher in a local school, so I attended that school. Then from Standard 3 to Standard 5 I went to stay with my granny and I attended a local school there. From Standard 6 to & 7, ya, it was one year; I stayed with my uncle to go to school there. From Standard 8 to Standard 10, I went to boarding school. And then finally I went to university and stayed on the campus. (Mandisa, photo-elicitation interview, 13 September)

It was only when my father died, my brother was in Fort Hare so it was a bit tough because there was no money. We didn't know what happened. Because my father died under mysterious conditions.... My sisters were already working, had to help my mum out. I was in boarding school when I was in high school and there were no other schools around and my brother was studying so it was tough. (Thembi, photo-elicitation interview, 29 July)

You will see from these pictures that the children were exceptionally poor at the time. The Indian children were poor at the time. It was a small Indian community in the town of\_\_\_\_\_. Both my parents worked so hard and I could say that we had a low income, but we were still better off than ninety percent of the learners in my class (Neelam, photo-elicitation interview, 3 July)

The above extracts highlight the socio-economic standard of many black people during the apartheid era. Mandisa's and Thembi's accounts indicate the challenges they faced while trying to formally educate themselves. The apparent lack of resources led to their constant displacement in trying to receive a formal education. Having grown up in a rural area in South Africa, during the apartheid regime, meant that the indigenous African people, and the other population groups (coloured, Indian) were given an unequal share in the country's resources. Education was separate for all race groups, and the Bantu Education Act ensured that black education was tightly controlled by the white government that offered poor quality education and poorly resourced schools (Kallaway, 2002). The extracts highlight the lack of educational resources experienced by black learners and the hardships they faced while trying to educate themselves. The lack of schools and resources for African and Indian learners is evident in the three narratives. Both Mandisa and Thembi had to attend boarding schools when they were completing their secondary school education because the schools were a distance away from where they lived. The extracts highlight the displacement of learners from their families. Mandisa's movement to different locations every few years meant that she was deprived of a stable family life, particularly in her formative years. Her story also highlights the apartheid government's ploy to ensure that black people remained economically dependent on the whites and to continue with work that required no skills. By making access to education difficult, and by providing poor quality education, a lack of educational development in people would be ensured. Not being given the opportunities and the

freedom to develop knowledge, skills and critical thinking would promote illiteracy, a catalyst for poverty.

Indian and coloured learners were also affected by the apartheid educational policy. Although their plight was not as severe as the plight of the black learner, the Indian and coloured learners also suffered unequal educational opportunities during this period. The lack of educational resources forced learners to relocate in order to have access to educational institutions. The accounts below highlight the displacement of learners which could be an obstacle to the development of various forms of potential capability.

At high school, all the Coloured children from \_\_\_\_\_ had to go elsewhere because there were no high schools at the time. The Coloured kids went to Uitenhage boarding school and all the Indian children were shipped up to Durban because that is where their families were. (Hema, photo-elicitation interview, 6 June)

We lived in a tin house, and from what I remember we lived here in the back of this house which was sub-divided in half and we lived here for a while...Most of us lived like this...We had to attend only Coloured schools even though we lived in an Indian area (Valerie, photo-elicitation interview, 31 August).

Because \_\_\_\_\_ was declared an industrial area, we had to relocate and we moved to \_\_\_\_\_ which was an Indian area. I was in the midst of my grade two year and had to go to a new school called \_\_\_\_\_. ...from here, I think I was in Standard 3 then I moved to \_\_\_\_\_ Primary School. When I was in standard 5, I had to choose a high school, and the closest high school was \_\_\_\_\_ High (Rita, photo-elicitation interview, 19 April)

In Hema's narrative, the Indian learners being "shipped" to Durban, recalls the first group of Indian settlers who crossed the "dark waters" to come to South Africa as labourers in the 1860s (Ebr.-Vally, 2001). It was a time of uncertainty and fear as it was a new, unknown land to which they had come. Similarly, these young people, who were "shipped" from other provinces to Durban to continue their secondary school education, would be leaving their nuclear families and all that was familiar to them. The coloured learners also had displaced lives as they were sent to boarding school to complete their secondary education. Valerie's and Rita's extracts show how the Indian and coloured communities were displaced during the apartheid era. Although Valerie lived in an "Indian area" she had to attend a school for coloured learners. Rita on the other hand, could no longer attend the school she was attending because the area was declared "an industrial area" and the Indian community that lived there had to relocate. Rita's extract demonstrates further the displacement of the Indian learner as she moved to different schools through the course of her schooling.

Not all the participants experienced the effects of displacement or lack of resources during their schooling days. The insecurities that these learners experienced as a result of them being displaced from their families, do not resonate with the stability of a learner who had a strong educational capability set, which is seen in the next narrative.

School days were happy for me. I enjoyed it. Again I think it was my mother's influence, if you are going to do things, do it properly. We had to ensure that our grades did not drop. After school we were expected to take up things like ballet and music. I had a very happy school life. (Gene, photo-elicitation interview, 17 September)

Learners, who have better educational opportunities, do not seem to suffer similar plights as those with less freedom and fewer opportunities. Schooling offers security and new opportunities for learners with more resources. Gene's narrative highlights a strong educational capability set as she has a larger bundle of educational functions to choose from, like the learning of new skills and knowledge in the arts. Gene's narrative shows the application of Nussbaum's (2000) contention that, by being involved in self-expressive works and events of one's choice like ballet and music, the capability of sense, imagination and thought is further expanded. According to Nussbaum, (2000a, p. 81) human functional capabilities are related to one another as much as they are separate components. Therefore, Gene's strong educational capability set ensures that she feels positive emotions such as happiness and enjoyment that contribute positively to her emotional capability. Both Gene's and Mandisa's narratives highlight how women can exercise their agency when they are given the freedom and opportunity to be educated.

A component that appears in the Human Development Index (HDI) that is used to measure human development is life expectancy. Life expectancy is highly influenced by education. Maternal education helps to increase child survival (Saito, 2003, p. 23), but I want to expand on this in order to draw this point from the above narratives. Mandisa shows how education empowered her to work and earn a salary, which allowed her to look after her own and her family's well-being. The stability she offered her own children, ensuring that they did not travel distances to school and remain rooted at home, indicates the agency she had received from her education. She was able to provide for her own children, and increase their educational opportunities. Her narrative also highlights the power an educated woman has to effect change in her family's life. This can be noted in the influence Gene's mother had in encouraging her

to expand her educational capabilities, and in Mandisa's ability to give her children new opportunities, like a pre-school education, which she did not experience as a child. The autonomy the women participants received through education helped them to expand their own capabilities. Through education, the participants' were able to develop the capability of senses, imagination and thought and knowledge and practical skills. Through the achievement of the educational capabilities, the women participants have become empowered and are able to form choices concerning their lives.

The narratives also highlight the capability of resilience as the participants persevered to gain an education although they faced barriers that could have hindered their educational progress. The narratives confirm that schools were not within easy travelling distance but the freedom of mobility and the ability to move to different locations enabled the participants to continue with their education. At the time the participants were young girls so having family members who allowed them the freedom of mobility and movement in order to access education shows the perseverance of family members who helped them in their pursuit of educational development. Gene's narrative also highlights the capability of perseverance, as the achievement of good grades was significant in her educational record.

Although education can achieve long-term development goals and can improve both social and economic standards of living (Subramanian, 2007), gender discrimination within social and educational structures can still contribute to a person's capability set in a negative way and constrain development. Women and girls are treated less than equal to men or boys in some educational institutions even today. The next section will look at the effect of the women participants being given fewer opportunities and freedoms than the males during their schooling years and discusses the capabilities of affiliation, social and collective struggles, assurance and confidence.

### ***5.1.3 "Boys more academic than girls"***

Social relations within the family, as discussed earlier in the chapter, either promoted or formed barriers to the emotional capabilities of women. Schools can also form barriers to the capability of affiliation. This became evident when the women talked about how they were discriminated against based on their sex. This shows how the meaningful relations that the women middle manager experienced as a young girl at

school developed her capability for affiliation for forming relationships within the work environment.

If the relationships were based on unequal treatment of people based on their gender, there would be mobilisation of social and collective struggles with women fighting for their basic human rights. The family and schools are two institutions that often permit unequal gender practices that tend to limit opportunities for women and girls. Connell (1996) refers to the gendered regimes of institutions, which recreate ideologies that are oppressive to girls and women. The sexual division of labour in these institutions reinforces the perception of males as the figures of authority. One participant's narrative indicates how women are given fewer educational opportunities than men because of the perception that men are superior to women. The narratives also show how women middle managers were able to develop their capability of social and collective struggles because they were consistently discriminated against through the nature of their early social and educational experiences.

At that time it was my brother and I and my uncle. We were at school together, so it was more emphasis on the boys to pass Matric and to do well. I was to make sure that the housework and the washing was done and then I had to do my homework. I was determined to prove them a point, that I would do all of this, plus I would make sure that I pass Matric. I was probably the first one from the whole family of the girls, to get a good Matric pass with an exemption. I think that was a bit of a bitter pill to swallow, because I showed them that a woman can do it too. (Hema, photo-elicitation interview, 6 June)

It doesn't matter what colour you are as a woman in this country, I think that we are all disadvantaged. I think we come from a tremendous male domineering community. The wife had to be in the kitchen, she wasn't allowed to show any initiative or she couldn't come forward and say, "This is a good idea."... I don't know! What does a woman know? ... They would look at you and say you don't really know what you are talking about. It's that kind of prejudice I struggled against (Gene, photo-elicitation interview, 17 September)

I had to follow in the footsteps of my mother and sister and become a teacher or a nursing sister. My brother was given other opportunities because he could go and study science at Fort Hare. My mother worked hard to provide for us, but somehow the girls had fewer opportunities (Thembi, interview, 29 July).

The three accounts reflect the different freedoms and opportunities males and females have, particularly in respect of education, and the affiliations the women middle managers have within social structures like the family. It reflects how society and the family can perpetuate the unequal treatment of women in education. According to Subrahmanian (2007, p. 42), "it is often parents who make trade-offs between schooling for their children and their livelihoods or position within the community". There is a "reproduction of social roles and ideologies" within the families that

underpin how children of a particular gender should be brought up (Subrahmanian, 2007, p. 42). Hema's narrative emphasises the perception that education is the domain of the males who are given more opportunities than women to achieve educational capabilities, like going to university to study for a professional degree. Similarly, Gene and Thembi also claim that women are disadvantaged in society as they have fewer opportunities than their male counterparts. Gene's and Hema's narratives reveal how girls and women are assigned different roles and tasks from boys and men and the dominance men have over women in society.

These accounts highlight the roles assigned to males and females because of their gender. Men are seen in terms of the paid workforce, and need to be skilled, hence the emphasis on their education. Women are perceived in terms of the unpaid workforce, and work that involves housekeeping and reproductive work (Kabeer, 2003, p.43) that involves the bearing and caring for children. Therefore, there is an emphasis on the participant's housekeeping role. The division of labour explains the gender inequalities of human capabilities (Subrahmanian, 2007, p.38) and being dominated by males at home or school, maybe because of the patriarchal structures within these institutions as these could explain why women's capabilities are unequal to men. Hema's narrative shows males in a dominant role, where their educational needs are to be considered first, and women in a submissive role, first attending to others' needs and then to her own. This reinforces the view that women's education is of secondary importance. The outcome of completing her secondary school education, and proving to those around her that women are just as capable as men if given the opportunity and freedom to perform, highlights the unequal treatment of women in education. The bitter pill to swallow lies in the fact that the perceptions people have of women's ability to be successful in education still remain suspect.

The prevailing norms in society about what men and women do, and how their roles and activities are to be valued, determine what opportunities they have in education (Subrahmanian, 2007, p.42), therefore, women have fewer educational opportunities than men, because their role is seen as secondary to men. These perceptions that men are more capable than women are held both by men and women. This can be due to the "undervaluation" or "devaluation" of what women do (Subrahmanian, 2007, p. 43).

The narrative also indicates Hema's vision for the future. She is able to imagine an alternate future other than what is already commonly mapped out for women. She has a vision to improve her social arrangement and therefore transform her present situation to one that offers her a wider and more meaningful set of choices, through her educational success. This shows her ability to resist the social norms that favour the education of boys and men at the expense of girls and women.

The next extracts reflect the perception people have of women's educational abilities and the capability of social and collective struggles:

You know in those days the boys were more academic than girls because we were in the A class and it was mainly the boys. They were sharp. We were only a handful of girls and we had to show them we were powerful. (Irene, photo-elicitation interview, 4 September).

More respect is accorded to a man than when a woman speaks. ... We are seen as emotional beings...that cannot deal with and resolve issues rationally.... I do not see myself as such a person. I see myself as being very rational. ... To be a woman in society in general is to occupy a marginalised role, a role of subservience in many ways.... I see my gender personally as being very spiritually uplifting.... as a woman you can acquire a degree of spiritual evolution more easily than a man (Neelam, interview, 1 April)

I don't know why but it seems like men or boys command more respect than females. People think they know more and they can think better than us. I don't know why because I think some women are much stronger than men emotionally and therefore we can make very good leaders (Mandisa, photo-elicitation interview, 13 September)

My mother was very adamant that a woman should be educated. Because again she also came from a family where there three daughters and the one son, and the son got everything. The daughters were expected to marry and have children. So that is another reason that I never did what I really wanted to do (Gene, photo-elicitation interview, 10 September)

Irene's narrative shows how boys are given preference over girls in school and are perceived to be academically more capable. All four extracts indicate that women are collectively prejudiced against in society, but the women appear to support each other in their struggle. This is evident when Irene states "we had to show them we were powerful", when Mandisa declares that "women are much stronger than men emotionally", when Neelam states that "as a woman you can acquire a degree of spiritual evolution more easily than a man" and when Gene admits that her "mother was adamant that a woman should be educated". Irene describes the ability of boys as "sharp" and suggests that boys deserve to be in the "A" class. Her perception of boys as being "sharp", suggests that she views them as more capable than girls, as she is silent about the abilities of girls. The labelling of the class also emphasises the institutional practice of discriminating girls from boys, as "mainly the boys" are in the prestigious "A" class and only a scattering of girls are allowed in. Those girls who are

given the opportunity to be part of the male-dominated class, have to prove themselves to be deserving of their place within this elite group of males. However, they are not given the same recognition as their male counterparts which is evident when the participants say that “more respect is accorded to a man than when a woman speaks”, “people think they (men) know more and they can think better than us” and “where there were three daughters and one son, and the son got everything”. The power that Irene refers to could be related to the power of knowledge, because through education, an educated person has more opportunities, autonomy and the capacity to act as an agent and to make decisions concerning their life (Sen, 1999; Subrahmanian, 2007). By implication, Irene is suggesting that men are the decision makers and women are generally the followers, with the decision makers having “power” over the followers. Irene’s narrative reflects the capability of social and collective struggles when she remarks that the girls had to act together in common solidarity to prove that they were capable learners.

Being able to make decisions emphasises the ability to make choices and to be resilient to external conditions that could form barriers to one’s development. The following narratives show how the participants were able to emotionally reflect on the restrictions placed on women by men.

After high school, I was determined not to stay at home like my mother did. My father forced her to stay at home. I was not going to do that. I was going to work. And I think that is how my career took off from there. Because I had made that mental decision that I was not going to stagnate and be with my mother day in and day out. And do the same thing over again. And I think that it pushed me and forced me and drove me to where I am today. (Valerie, photo-elicitation interview, 31 August)

My mum worked all her life. Worked when women did not work.... She drove a vehicle at that time when women did not drive. She did a lot of things that broke out of the stereotype of the role of the Indian woman. And I think that has rubbed off on each of her children (Neelam, photo-elicitation interview, 3 July)

The stereotype of how women operate and how men expect you to operate still exists... men are sterile, they can only do one thing at a time. But women multi-task yet they are seen as less efficient by men. Just be yourself. Just be who you are as a woman and you can overcome these challenges.... I don’t allow that to threaten me (Hema, photo-elicitation interview, 7 June)

The first two narratives reflect how women are forced into domestic labour and not given the opportunity and freedom to enter the paid workforce. This also stems from the lack of educational opportunities for women, as shown in the previous four narratives. The narratives highlight the expansion of capabilities through education,

and not just basic education, but further education at secondary school level and beyond. Irene's narrative indicates the gendered division of educational opportunities for girls and boys in secondary school, with girls receiving fewer educational opportunities. Valerie's narrative shows how education can create opportunities for women as they become empowered to make decisions concerning their own career paths and advancement. Through male oppression in many households, women are rendered "voiceless" as decisions are made for them. This is evident when Valerie's mother is forced to remain at home by the father. Valerie's decision to defy the patriarchal rule of her father, and plan a career for herself highlights her agency to act and make decisions. Her use of strong verbs such as "pushed", "forced" and "drove", to describe her movement into her career, emphasises her determination to be a professional woman. Similarly, defying the "stereotype" of an "Indian woman" and just "being yourself" to "overcome these challenges" prove that these women middle managers were able to make choices that were integral for their development, although they were faced with external conditions that restricted them. This determination, to defy the norms of society shows their resilience and agency.

Hema's previous narrative extract (dated 6 June) also shows her resilience as she refuses to conform to the norms in society. Her determination to complete her secondary education, with a good pass, and be the first female to receive a school leaving certificate in her family, reflect her determination to break free of the barriers to her advancement. Irene's narrative shows her determination to have the same educational opportunities as the males, as this would present more opportunities for her future. Valerie's determination to break free from the rule of her father and plan a career for herself also reflects her agency and her resilience. These women middle managers are able to critically reflect on their lives and plan for their future. The capability of practical reason emerges from this narrative as the woman middle manager is able to critically plan for her future.

The narratives also show that the woman middle manager, through her early life, developed the capability of emotions as she was able to be emotionally reflexive about her lack of educational opportunities. Yet at the same time she is rational because she is able to plan her future, one that involves having a career for herself and being able to lead the kind of life she wants to, and to be the person she wants to be which is an independent career woman. Hema realises that having a secondary school certificate

will create further opportunities for her. Irene acknowledges the importance of education as it is empowering and Valerie reflects that paid work and a career will allow her to develop and not “stagnate” like her mother. From these narratives we see that women are able to act and make decisions since they resisted the gendered norms within the family and the school situation. They are also able to plan a future for themselves through practical reasoning. Their ability to make choices, to be resilient and create opportunities for themselves, is largely due to them being agents of their own well-being and being empowered through education. The narratives show the woman middle manager’s assurance and confidence in her ability to want to change her circumstances in life so that she is able to lead a life that she chooses by being able to flourish as a career woman.

In this section I have shown how the participants were able to use their educational opportunities to benefit their future lives. Although the participants, as women, were given fewer educational freedoms and opportunities than men, they were nevertheless able to develop and progress with the education they received. The narratives also reflect the informed vision the participants had for their future success. They did not wish to conform to the societal norms in which women’s abilities are devalued or undervalued. They imagined improved social arrangements for themselves in order to transform so as to have more successful and fulfilling lives. For them education was developing the capability to reason, and to make choices, therefore, the participants were able to plan their careers and their lives, due to the education they received.

The educational setting of the school was also responsible for contributing to weak capability sets, whereas affiliations within the school acted as a barrier to women’s development. Affiliations that are based on violence too can form barriers to development. This is discussed in the next section.

## **5.2 Experiences of Violence in Schools and of Weak Capability Sets**

Violence within schools is an obstacle experienced by some women and girls. It constrains their capability development and advancement in education. The forms of abuse that learners can experience within schools can be sexual (physical, verbal, psychological or emotional in nature) or non-sexual (corporal punishment) (Leach, 2006). Abuse can prevent learners from participating actively in education and this in effect will lead to various forms of capability deprivation. Women in particular are

more deprived and given fewer opportunities than men. According to Subrahmanian (2007, p. 42), even when women are given the opportunities, gender inequalities are “institutionalised in the norms, processes and structures of interventions and institutions, and present barriers to equitable outcomes”. There are many factors within the school that can force females to leave school, such as harassment, violence and even the curriculum which may not be “female-friendly”. This can contribute to a female having a narrow educational capability set as she faces constraints to her educational capability.

The narratives from the participants included experiencing acts of violence while at school. Schools are primary social institutions, and therefore, must maintain standards of behaviour that can be upheld by other institutions and by children (Subrahmanian, 2007, p.114). Many of the perpetrators who inflicted punishment on the participants were their educators, as noted in the following narratives. When the participants were asked about their worst memories of their schooling, all participants referred to corporal punishment, as evident in the following extracts

You know, in our schools, the corporal punishment, is the one thing that I can say, you can either take it or leave it. Our teachers were very, very strict. And they were... I will say that I am kind... they were very unfriendly. I mean you can say whatever, they were very harsh, they were very mean, I got punished, but for a reason. But I think it was too much sometimes. In high school our Agriculture and Maths teachers would punish us severely if we did not know our work. My Maths teacher would make us stand against the wall and he would beat us here, on our legs. (Mandisa, photo-elicitation interview, 13 September)

...we were about eight girls and we had done nothing wrong. Even today I can tell him, “The day you punished me, you just punished me for nothing. I just hadn’t done anything wrong’. The way we were thrashed on our buttocks severely, I couldn’t sit. I couldn’t sit for two days. And I wasn’t at home. My parents were not there, my sisters were not there. I just wanted to pack my bags and go home. (Thembi, photo-elicitation 1 August)

I remember my Afrikaans teacher in high school having long fingers as he used to slap us across the face when we did not get things right. (Rita, photo-elicitation interview, 19 April)

In those days children did not open their mouths in class. You would get a crack with a ruler and a whip and all sorts of things thrown at you, (Gene, photo-elicitation interview, 17 September)

I recall getting into trouble with this teacher. He also complained to my mother about me... The teachers were good but they were strict and sometimes they were not fair in the way they dealt out corporal punishment (Neelam, photo-elicitation interview, 3July)

In these narratives it is evident that educators had control over the learners in class. Educators used their authority to instil fear, and submission, in learners. The narratives indicate that educators were often males, and their forms of punishment were physical and harsh. Violence against learners suggests that the capability of

freedom from bodily harm and bodily integrity had been violated. Not being able to secure the capability for bodily integrity, suggests that a life that is “truly human”, that is worthy of being human, had been denied. The capability to function in class is weak, as the participants did not have freedom of movement, speech or choice, because the educators restricted them through violence. The violence that confronted the participants rendered them powerless against the male perpetrators. They therefore had to submit to the punishment and accept the norm that males are the authority figures in society. Violence is used as a marker of authority and it also reminds the women of the power structures within society (Subrahmanian, 2007, p. 117).

In the narratives, the women middle managers in their early schooling, accepted the authority of their male educators and did not resist punishment. For example, Mandisa accepted a punishment as warranted, when she states, “I got it for a reason”. Gene also reflects on the passiveness of learners and how they were conditioned into silence. Thembi questioned the reasoning behind a punishment she received and said she wanted to leave school. Neelam recalls that teachers were “strict” and were “not fair” when they punished learners. Rita’s and Mandisa’s narratives reflect how learners were taught through fear and often through violence, notwithstanding the age of the learners. Authority is marked not just by gender, but by age, ethnicity and ability (Subrahmanian, 2007). Thus the male teachers reminded the older girls of their authority over them through physical violence. Women and girls were made to fear male authority and this was carried through into their adult lives. In these accounts we see that male aggression was “normalised” as an accepted part of school life, as Leach (2006) too records. Moreover, it constituted a school culture that tolerated violence against women and girls.

Not all the participants recalled physical abuse. Some of the participants stated that they were verbally abused by their teachers. Whereas physical abuse denies the capability of bodily integrity, verbal abuse, leads to loss of self-respect. Both forms of abuse, either physical or verbal, render the capability of emotion and affiliation weak. The women experienced fear and anxiety that obstructed the capability set for emotion and, through the lack of respect and the humiliation they experienced, the capability of affiliation was then constrained. The following extracts show how the participants experienced verbal abuse which led to weak emotional development and state of well-being:

I was pretty cynical about life in high school which was a painful experience for me. There were two incidents in high school that I can single out that were excruciating for me. When I was in Standard 8 I had a spat with my science teacher...And then when I was in Matric my mother had died in February, and I had missed a week and a half of school. When I got back to my Biology class, the teacher said something terrible about me finally making an appearance. He was a pompous, self-opinionated creep. (Arthi, photo-elicitation interview, 12 July)

In primary school a teacher would pick on me and will hit me every day. She would tell me that that I am a stubborn donkey. I'm stupid and that I would never get on. That motivated me because I wanted to prove her wrong. (Valerie, interview, 23 August)

These extracts reflect the anxiety the participants experienced because of verbal abuse. Arthi refers to the abuse as “the painful experience” that is “excruciating” for her. The verbal abuse that she experienced from her educators formed barriers for her own emotional capability so that she became “cynical about life in high school”. Her inability to show affection or care for those who taught her is evident when she referred to her educator as a “pompous, self-opinionated creep”. Valerie’s narrative shows that women educators are also perpetrators of abuse, although women, more than men, display the feminine qualities of care, affection and understanding. Her narrative reflects that the woman educator, like her male counterpart, is incapable of showing compassion for the learner, as she resorted to “name-calling” and physical abuse in order to suppress Valerie’s educational development. The narrative shows Valerie’s display of resilience, as she was inspired to “prove her (the educator) wrong” and develop into a person of worth. The narratives do not reflect the participants’ resilience to the physical abuse they received. This suggests that, as women, they were unable to retaliate against the tougher, more physically stronger-built male teacher. The participants were unable to defend themselves against the brute force of the male teacher and this could explain why they were not resilient in the case of physical abuse.

Nussbaum (2000a, p. 83) states that human beings can become fully capable of human functioning provided they receive the right educational and material support. She further states that humans have “basic capabilities” (Nussbaum, 2000a, p. 83) and only with material and educational support can people achieve the higher level capabilities that are featured in the list of functional capabilities that she provides.

The discussion thus far, shows how the participants acquired basic capabilities, like the capability to think. If this basic capability does not receive material and educational support, and is not nurtured, then the participant will not be able to freely

achieve the capability for sense, imagination and thought. The internal capabilities, which are the mature conditions of readiness (Nussbaum, 2000a, p. 84), like the capability for reasoned thought, can be prevented from functioning if the external conditions are not suitable “for the exercise of the function” (Nussbaum, 2000a, p.85). This Nussbaum (2000a) called the combined capability which includes the internal capability with the external conditions in which the capability has to function.

I have highlighted how the participants have internal capabilities, and the development of these capabilities depends on the support of the surrounding environment (Nussbaum, 2000a, p. 84). For example, the participants had the internal capability to communicate with others, but, if the external environment did not support open communication, like the educator who enforced silence through abuse, then the capability was not realised. When there are obstacles or barriers in the environment, that do not promote the realisation of a capability, then a woman has a weak capability set. If there are factors that promote the achievement of the capability, through freedom and opportunity, then she displays a strong capability set. My findings are that the participants developed weak and strong capability sets in their formative and schooling years because of external conditions in the environment, either the family or school, and at different stages and in different contexts, the capabilities were either threatened or promoted.

The development of the participants’ capabilities, through the years, enabled them to make choices concerning their careers. Although, the women participants experienced many barriers in their educational lives, they still decided to pursue teaching as a career. The participants had various reasons for following this route and these will be discussed in the next section.

### **5.3 Career Choices**

The participants in this study all pursued careers in education, however, their choice of career was prompted by various factors, based on the type of freedom and opportunity that each experienced in their own environments. The choices that the women middle managers made show their agency to act for change and improve their lives in order for them to flourish. The capability of practical reason is highlighted in this section. It is about being critically reflective about the planning of one’s life (Nussbaum, 2000a).

According to Bandura, Barbaranelli, Caprara & Pastorelli (2001, p. 187), the choices made during the formative years of development, help to shape the course of lives. The choices made “determine the aspects of their potential that people cultivate and which remain undeveloped” (Bandura et al., 2001, p. 187). Being able to choose a career reinforces the agent role of the women participants and their self-efficacy. Bandura et al. (2001, p. 187) state that people will only act or persevere to act if they believe they can produce desired outcomes by their actions. This is their self-efficacy. Therefore, perceived self-efficacy is central in career choice and development (Bandura, 2001). The participants had chosen their own careers that were guided by various factors within the social context. As women have been socialised into the caring and nurturing role, the career choices they make are limited to careers that entail care for others. This is noted in the following extracts:

I wanted to do archaeology, but it wasn't a profession women went into back then. (Gene, interview, 17 September)

I applied for teaching, social work and nursing, and then at the beginning of the year, the first thing that started was teaching. (Irene, interview, 20 August)

I enjoyed seeing my mother marking her children's work, and my younger sister getting into teaching, although the elder three are all nursing sisters. ... I decided I liked children; let me go with that (Thembi, interview, 29 July)

I did not want to be dependent on anyone and the House of delegates was offering bursaries for people who wanted to be teachers. So I swapped my BSc Degree for a B. Paed (teaching degree) because I realised that I wanted to teach (Rita, interview, 19 April)

There were few jobs available at the time...and I saw no security with a general BSc.... I incorporated my credits into a B. Paed (Neelam, interview, 1 April)

I got into teaching because of the incident with the teacher who would pick on me daily. She expected me to be a failure at things but I needed to show her that I could do it...and you know up to today I can't tell you why she felt that way. ... you have to be so careful how you handle children... even your facial expressions.... You don't realise how much of power you have as an educator (Valerie, photo-elicitation interview, 23 August)

Most of the participants chose teaching as a career as it was considered a suitable career choice for women. Many women perceive that they are confined to professions like, social work, nursing and teaching, which are seen as the “traditional” career choices for women. This was the case for Gene. She limited her career choice to teaching, because she believed that she would not be able to produce the desired outcomes in a male-dominated career like archaeology. The other participants too considered stereotypically “feminine” vocations that entailed a caring and nurturing role. According to Bandura et al. (2001, p. 188), women base their occupational

preferences more strongly on their perceived efficacy, than on the benefits the career may provide. Therefore, not many women choose occupations that are dominated by men, like science, such as archaeology in this case, and technology, as women are restricted by a sense of inefficacy in these particular occupations (Bandura et al., 2001). Rita, Neelam and Gene initially considered occupations that were male dominated; however, all three chose teaching for their various reasons. One of the reasons was that “there were few jobs available at the time”. This indicates that even if women were qualified and competent for certain jobs that were dominated by men, they would still be marginalised. Therefore, the women participants showed a high preference for occupations that are traditionally held by females in the social services and a low affinity for occupations that are dominated by males. Because women are disinclined to enter occupations in scientific and technical fields that favour males, there are fewer women role models for other women to emulate.

Even when women follow a career path that is dominated by men, certain barriers constrain the advancement of women in these occupations. Family responsibilities may constrain women’s ability to function effectively in certain occupations that are dominated by males, as these occupations may not be sensitive to the needs of women. Women who are successful in entering male-dominated vocations may not be able to function in these occupations, because they lack the freedom to flourish and therefore unable to achieve a sense of well-being. Occupations that are not gender-sensitive pay little attention to the needs of working mothers. The conflicting roles of parent and worker can form barriers to women’s progress in certain occupations. Some Women, therefore, abandon the idea of careers that are competitive and male-dominated and enter vocations that are considerate of and support their gendered needs. This is reflected in the following capsule:

I had completed a degree in Law, then I was married and had both my children, and I thought, rather than pursue a career in Law to instead just do the Higher Education Diploma. At that point because I had young children, I thought it would give me more time to be with them. I think many mothers think that way. ... It seemed such a noble thing to do (Arthi, photo-elicitation interview, 12 July).

The narrative highlights the perception some women have of teaching as being a suitable career because it supports their role as mother and homemaker. The working hours in teaching make it possible for women to have sufficient time to care for their children and families. The narrative also highlights the role of women as being the

homemaker and responsible for the caring and nurturing of family members. The caring role of the women participants extends from the home to the school, and therefore they consider a career that meets this need as a suitable choice. The self-efficacy of the women participants reflects that women's agency assists in the making of choices concerning their careers. Although, the women participants may have had a smaller bundle of career choices, the choices they made have given them a sense of well-being, because they were able to reflect positively on the choices they make.

#### **5.4 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter concentrated on the development of capabilities of women middle managers from their formative to their adult years disclosing the various external social and educational contexts to which the participants are exposed. Within the social and educational contexts, the participants' capabilities are either developed or constrained. Limited development of and constraints to the capabilities can be attributed to family relations, lack of educational and financial resources, violence at school and gender bias. Within the context of the family, the women middle managers acquired the capabilities of affiliation, emotion and resilience. Within the school context the capabilities of sense, imagination, thought, knowledge and practical skills, affiliation, social and collective struggles, assurance and confidence and practical reasoning emerged. The women participants had either weak or strong capability sets depending on the freedom and opportunity they had to develop the capabilities for their own well-being and working as middle managers. This indicates that the women participants developed their capabilities differently from each other.

The women participants were able to offset their weak capability sets through their agency and personal resilience against the adverse external conditions that could have restricted their capability development. In this chapter, how the women middle managers were able to transform their own lives to a state of well-being and achievement, despite lacking support when faced with different forms of barriers, is plain. The women middle managers staked a claim on their own well-being in the face of adversity and were able to resist the social and educational constraints that were placed on them. By resisting these constraints, women middle managers acquired capabilities from early childhood that were developed further over the years as the woman middle managers continued to interact with people in their social and professional contexts.

In the next chapter I will discuss how women middle managers developed further capabilities in their interactions with their role models and mentors.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **ROLE MODELS AND MENTORS IN DEVELOPING CAPABILITIES**

This chapter focuses on the role of mentors and role models in the lives of the women participating in this study and their capabilities to function as transformational middle managers. By role model I mean a person whose behaviour and attitudes other people try to emulate because they admire them. Bandura (1986) defines role models as a source of learning about behaviours for efficacy beliefs. Quimby and DeSantis (2006) define role models as people whose lives and activities influence another person in some way and who are similar to them either through their gender or race. Moorosi (2006, p. 46) asserts that women aspiring for leadership positions in schools lack role models and it is therefore easier for men to enter school administration since they see examples of other men succeeding in their aspirations to hold leadership positions. The imbalance in the availability of male and female role models therefore disadvantages women who aspire for a management career.

Mentors are defined as individuals with “advanced experience and knowledge who are committed to providing upward mobility and support to their protégés’ careers” (Ragins, 1997, p. 484). Mentors benefit protégés in three ways: they serve as role models, they provide career development functions such as career advice and feedback and they provide psychosocial functions such as emotional support and confidence building (Burke & McKeen, 1997, p. 54). Mentoring also involves supporting and training new head teachers and middle managers (Coleman, 1997b, p. 160). Women, like men, need role models and mentors “to increase visibility, share experiences, gain access to opportunities, network, increase knowledge, have someone to go to for advice, see an objective viewpoint, expand resources, boost self confidence, empathize, gain feedback, hear encouragement, and have doors opened that might have been closed” (Almestica, 2011, p. 92). Who were the role models and mentors to these women middle managers and what influence did these people have on developing their protégés’ capabilities for their management role? These are questions I posed when I reflected on the participants’ narratives.

In this chapter I base my findings on the unsent letters written by women middle managers to their mentors and role models (see Appendix H for an example of the

letter writing activity to be completed by the participants). The letters to the mentors or role models revealed that there had been a confluence of influences on women HoDs. Many people influenced the development of their management capabilities and their roles as middle managers. However, many social actors along the women HoDs' lives' journeys influenced their management capabilities in certain ways, enabling them to become the women managers they are today. I present the accounts of how their management capabilities were developed. I have categorised the mentoring and role modelling of the participants as formal or informal mentoring and role modelling. Some participants were mentored by their former HoDs when they were new teachers. Their letters reveal that the guidance the women received daily during those early years of teaching impacted on them and later affected their own management capabilities. Although they were mentored in their role as teachers when they initially began their teaching careers as novice teachers, none of the participants claim to have been formally mentored for their roles as middle managers, and were only mentored in their departments when new in the profession.

### **6.1 Identifying Role Models and Mentors**

The participants who did not claim to have had professional mentoring for their careers however, viewed significant people in their personal lives as their role models or mentors. These significant personalities guided them in their life journey that led them to being able to strengthen their management capabilities. The role models and mentors were categorised as either being distant or in close proximity to the women middle managers. The role models from a distance were individuals who did not interact personally with the participants; they were public or social figures who influenced the women HoDs indirectly. The role models or mentors who were closer at hand were individuals who had interacted directly with the participants and with whom they had had a personal relationship at some point in their lives.

In this section I will focus on the question of whom the women middle managers identified as their role models and mentors, and what the women said about how they influenced them and assisted them in developing capabilities beneficial for their middle management roles. To answer the question I asked the participating HoDs to write letters to mentors or role models informing them how they had influenced them in their role as middle managers (see Appendix H). The distinction between a role

model and a mentor was discussed with the participants prior to them writing their letters.

The basic definition of a mentor and role model which I gave to the participants was that a mentor is an experienced person who advises and helps a less experienced person, whereas a role model is someone whose behaviour, attitudes and various attributes are emulated because people admire them. Based on this distinction between a mentor and a role model, the participants were invited to write a letter to either their mentor or role model or both. Some participants wrote to a mentor whom they also saw as a role model that Burke & McKleen (1997) saw as a feasible option, while others wrote specifically to a mentor or a role model. To some participants their mentors were also their role models although both their roles are different. Valerie described her mother as both her mentor and her role model. In this regard Valerie's mother was the experienced older person who advised her and groomed her for life, and at the same time Valerie admired her and wanted to emulate her because of her strong character.

**TABLE 6.1 Locations of Mentors and Role Models within the Women Middle Managers' Professional and Private Domains and their Respective Sub-binaries**

Mentors/ Role Models in the Professional Domain			Mentors/ Role Models in the Personal Domain	
Names of female HoDs	Formal Mentors	Informal Mentors	Mentors/ Role Models from afar	Mentors/ Role models who were in close proximity
Arthi	No role model or mentor			
Gene				Grandmother
Hema		Present male school principal and former female colleague	Sociologist Ashwin Desai Women political activists	Parents Extended family members Friends
Irene				Father; friend and college lecturer
Mandisa				Mother; unnamed male role model
Neelam		Former female HoD		
Rita		Former male HoD		
Thembi		Former female HoD		
Valerie				Mother

Table 6.1 shows that one participant had mentors/role models in the professional and personal domains, three participants had mentors/role models in the professional domain, four participants' mentors/role models were in the personal domain and one participant claimed that she did not have a mentor or role model.

The mentors and role models were either associated with their professional or their personal lives and their relationship with the women participant represented either formal or informal mentoring. I categorised the letters further in the binary classification of whether the mentor or role model influenced the women middle management respondent from afar or was in close proximity to her. Table 6.1 presents the role models and mentors identified by the women HoDs and locates them within the binary of the personal or professional domains, and their respective sub-binaries.

A typical mentoring relationship develops when an experienced senior member of an organisation provides career and psychosocial support to a less experienced junior member including career and psychosocial support (McDonald & Hite, 2005, p. 569). Career support requires that mentors sponsor their protégés for advancement, coaching them, providing challenging assignments, protecting them and making them visible in organisations. This support is therefore viewed as primarily helping the protégé's hierarchical advancement professionally (Allen, Eby, Potteet, Lenzt & Lima, 2004; Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1997; Singh, Ragins & Tharenou; 2009). Psychosocial support entails the mentors providing their protégés with friendship and acceptance, counselling them and acting as role models and is therefore viewed as first and foremost helping protégés' emotional well-being and personal growth (self-worth) and only then, their career advancement (Allen et al., 2004; Kram, 1985; Ragins, 1997). Career support therefore is more related to career advancement than psychosocial support (Tharenou, 2005). This understanding outlines the importance of role models and mentors in women middle managers lives to help them advance in their careers and receive support psychosocially in the social domain. In my study mentors and role models were important because they helped to develop capabilities such as resilience, emotion, social and collective struggles, qualities needed to function as transformational leaders who should display behavioural attributes such as these when needing to support individual staff members in their departments in their tasks, or when fostering teacher participation in decision-making processes within the department structure.

From my reading of the letters and subsequent discussion with the participants, I found that none of the women HoDs were formally mentored for their middle management roles or supported or sponsored for any other management position in school. Even the role models or mentors from the personal domain were social figures who could only influence them indirectly. However, family members and friends were the role models and mentors who influenced these women directly. Family members identified as a role model or mentors included mothers or fathers. Some of the mothers were either working women or even if they were not working they were nevertheless dominant figures in the household. The fathers who were identified as role models or mentors were working men and who, not only provided for their families, but also displayed caring and nurturing behaviour in their interactions with other people. Other family members who were identified as role models or mentors were older people like grandmothers, who were emotionally strong, independent women. Some of the participants were informally mentored by former HoDs when they were novice teachers or a new appointee to a school. Therefore, some of the participants looked upon their former HoDs or senior managers as their mentor or role model. The participants without a mentor or role model for the professional domain looked upon significant people in their lives as their role models or mentors. These were usually family members.

Some of the women HoDs in this study laid claim to multiple mentors and role models, while others had only one. Higgins and Kram (2001) propose that it may be best for women to have a diverse network of mentors because female mentors provide more personal support while male mentors, in general, are able to assist women to advance in their careers. Therefore, having a network of mentors and role models forms a strong capability set as women have more support and encouragement to function as middle managers. In the context of role models and mentors, Hema's and Arthi's capability sets differed from each other with Hema having a strong capability set and Arthi a weak capability set. Hema indicated that she had many role models and mentors and there is evidence that this provided her with diverse forms of support in her career. Arthi on the other hand, indicated that she did not have a role model or a mentor. This absence could be a weakness if it lessens the career support that could be seen as essential for women's advancement in their careers. In the next section I

discuss the influence of role models and mentors in allowing women to be capable middle managers.

## **6.2 The Influence of Role Models and Mentors in the Personal Domain**

In the letters to their mentors and role models, the participants ascribe the type of leaders they have become to the influence and inspiration they received from their mentors and role models. The guidance they received from a young age helped develop capabilities in them to be the type of managers and leaders of departments they see they have become. Most of the participants in the study did not have mentors or role models from their professional domain. As if to compensate for the lack of professional mentors or role models, the participants claimed people from their personal lives as their mentors or role models, people who guided them in life, and those whose behaviours they felt inspired by and admired. Under the influence of their mentors and role models, the women middle managers' various capabilities from their early years developed into strong capability sets for their function as managers.

To sum up the participants had former heads of departments, parents, family members or people from the community as their role models and mentors. Most of the role models and mentors had only an indirect influence on the women. Nevertheless, I will show in the next section that through their interaction with their mentors and role models the women middle managers were able to develop the capabilities of resilience, integrity, emotion, affiliation and social and collective struggles.

### **6.2.1 “Persevering in my Toil”**

Walker et al. (2010, p. 13) define the professional capability of resilience as being able to persevere in a difficult situation and being hopeful or fostering hope in a person. They describe a professional person who is resilient as having a sense of career and security, and one who promotes development. The professional person who has developed the capability of resilience is also able to recognise the need for professional boundaries and leads a balanced life. Walker et al. (2010, p. 13) define the professional capability of social and collective struggles as having the ability or confidence to contribute to community empowerment, promote human rights and humility, contribute to policy formulation and implementation, train and educate others, allow for participation in public reasoning and listen to all voices in the conversation. These professional capabilities of resilience and social and collective

struggles are pertinent to what the women middle managers in this survey claim they learned from their role models and mentors.

Hema writes to the mentors and role models in her personal domain and what she says shows they helped develop her capabilities of resilience and social and collective struggles. Although both these capabilities should be discussed separately, I have combined them because Hema couples these in her letter. She indicates that she aspires to the capabilities of resilience and social and collective struggles when she addresses the achievements of particular South African women political activists and leaders, such as Mamphela Ramphele, Fatima Meer, Albertina Sisulu and Dr Goonam who were public figures in the South African anti-apartheid struggle for social justice prior to 1994. Hema writes:

You have inspired me in persevering in my toil. Your life, the hardships and the sacrifices that you've made inspires me not to give up in my struggle for gender justice. I may come across as passive and unassertive, but, I would not hesitate to voice my honest opinion and feelings – this I've learnt from you. Like you, I have thrown my energies into education, because I believe I can make a difference. Although apartheid has been abolished, the struggle continues. Social injustices still exist and many years into democracy we are still victims of sexism and gender discrimination. I consider it my mission in life to empower and develop young people into critical, independent thinkers. It is an upward battle to change attitudes and values that were designed to advantage male dominance. You have shown us guts and determination and have broken the conservative mould that society has drawn for us women. (Hema, Unsent letter)

In this extract from her letter we see Hema as a school leader acknowledging that there were unfreedoms (barriers) she faced in her leadership role. The most notable unfreedom that Hema highlights is gender discrimination and the dominance of men in leadership roles. Therefore, it is significant that Hema identifies women leaders who are able to resist male dominance and who strive to achieve gender equity as her role models and mentors and who she aspires to be like in her role as HoD. By aspiring to be like these role models and mentors who demonstrated the capability of resilience in their lives, Hema is inspired to persevere in the face of her own workplace adversities and difficulties.

Hema saw her task as trying to achieve gender justice in society as a challenge and therefore, like her role models and mentors before her, she asserted that she also had to persevere in her job and face the “hardships” and make “sacrifices”. The persistence and determination she writes about in her fight for the eradication of social injustices at school show that she had a vision for a better future society, one that

would be free of discriminatory practices. The strong ethical and moral convictions in her letter are the sort of attributes that Bass (1985) and Bass and Avolio (1994) associate with a transformational leader. Through calling on idealised influences Hema hopes to be able to empower and develop others to be critical thinkers. This she does because her role models and mentors influenced her to develop the capability of social and collective struggles. This capability allows her to promote human rights within her community. In her letter to her role model and mentor Hema indicates that, as a transformational woman middle manager, she had broken the “conservative mould” of women leaders who are passive. Instead she identifies herself as a leader who is assertive and determined.

Having developed the capability of social and collective struggles, Hema believes that through her leadership role she can empower young people, just as her role models empowered her into becoming an “independent and critical” thinker. Through her role as a middle manager Hema believes that she can change the mindsets of young people to embrace social justice issues and empower them to fight for human rights and welfare. In society both men and women are usually taught that men are the stronger gender, and therefore, that they dominate in all spheres of life, particularly in leadership roles. It is this mould that Hema wishes to break through her “guts” and “determination”. She does not want women to be seen as the weaker gender; rather they should be seen as equal to their male counterparts. These ideas chime with the ideas of scholars like Walker and her colleagues who have researched professional capabilities needed for social and collective struggles to promote poverty reduction (Section 3.3).

Some participants implied in their letters that a woman leader should be hard and tough and determined to succeed. Valerie’s letter to her mother, who was both her mentor and role model, is an example of this association of ideas. For Valerie that toughness and determination would make her a winner with resilience to constantly push herself “to the limit”.

When I had obstacles I had to deal with them. I did not allow people’s opinions of me and my drive in life to get me down. I was going to win...I will always be grateful to you as you inspired me to push myself to the limit. I have the opinion that nothing will get me down. Because you were such an excellent role model to me, I use the same tactics at school to drive my learners to succeed. I am able to place the cards on the table and tell them that life is not easy. Only the toughest will survive and this somehow motivates them. And as a result, I get 100% pass rates at

the end of the year exams. You were very hard on me and I hated you for driving me the way you did. (Valerie, Unsent letter)

This extract from Valerie's letter shows that, as a woman leader, she also faced barriers, but her determination to succeed in life, made her resist the "obstacles" that came her way. Valerie's resilient and determined nature is evident in the language she uses to address her mother. The phrases about her "drive in life", the ability to push herself "to the limit" and not allow anything to get her down, and that only "the toughest will survive", are an expression in words that suggest that Valerie is capable of resilience, perseverance and determination. Such capabilities are enhanced through a role model or mentor who has an idealised influence on her protégés. Through the effect of her idealised influence of her mother Valerie is, in turn, able to act as a role model for her learners and motivate them in the same as her mother did, through the means of "tough love".

Being a woman leader, Valerie's letter shows that she has to prove herself and has to always push herself "to the limit", suggesting that she perceives she has to work much harder as a woman leader to prove her worth than her male counterparts. She applies the lessons she learnt from her mother to her teaching practice. She endeavours to teach her learners to be survivors in a harsh world where the only way to survive is by being tough. This suggests that, for Valerie, being tough is dimension of the capability of resilience. The fact that she will not let anything get her "down" shows that Valerie has developed into a resilient person. The tough love displayed by her mother made Valerie "hate" her mother for being so hard on her and for "driving" her to succeed. Yet, she also describes her mother as inspiring her and being an "excellent role model" for her. Surviving the "tough love" approach helped Valerie become resilient as a woman leader. This shows that the capability of resilience can develop toughness and assertiveness in the woman middle manager.

In contrast to the tough love that Valerie received from her mother, Irene's father taught her to be kind and loving. These are qualities that are soft and associated with feminine behaviour, rather than the tough qualities of being unemotional and hard which are associated with masculine behaviour. In the following section I discuss how role models and mentors influenced the women to develop the capability of emotion.

### **6.2.2 *Interacting with Significant Others***

The capability of emotion, according to Nussbaum (2000a, p. 79) deals with the ability to have attachment to things and other people. It concerns the ability to care, to express love, hate, grief and anger. Similarly, the capability of affiliation is the ability to show concern for others and to engage in various forms of social interaction and to care and respect people from diverse groups (Nussbaum, 2000a, Walker et al., 2010). It is detrimental to the development of this capability in humans when people are exposed to overwhelming fear and anxiety, or traumatic events of abuse and neglect (Nussbaum, 2000a). According to Walker et al. (2010), the capability of emotion deals with empathy such as having a narrative imagination. This capability integrates being rational with emotions. It is the ability to be emotionally reflexive and compassionate. The letters to the role models and mentors show that the women participants developed into caring individuals through their affiliations with their role models and mentors. Although Tong (1989) asserts that a leader who displays androgynous leadership styles has qualities that are characterised as both masculine and feminine, some women middle managers choose to lead their departments in a stereotypically feminine leadership style. An extract from Irene's letter to her father demonstrates this:

Dad you taught me to be kind, loving and humble in life. You always said at home, in church and in the classroom, 'It's nice to be nice'. You were loved by people from all walks of life because you were so loving and respectful... At church, when visitors from other churches come over, they meet me and when they hear me sing, they always ask me if I am related to you. Some of the much older people actually tell me that I have to be your daughter, and that really makes me feel so proud! As a manager, I am approachable and understanding and I treat my teachers and students with respect and dignity always. (Irene, Unsent letter)

Irene's father, who was her mentor and role model, taught her softer and more nurturing qualities of being nice, loving, understanding and respectful. These are the caring qualities that became important to her in her management role. Developing this capability of emotion enabled her to function as an inspirational manager who was able to empathise and care for the members in her department. Irene is evidence that softer feminine qualities can be applied in a management role, rather than the harder more masculine qualities that are associated with management and leadership. Her father's nurturing nature instilled in Irene a loving and caring nature as well. Irene's mentor and role model had qualities that were stereotypically feminine, like being

“kind”, “loving” and “humble”. Hence Irene says in her letter that she embraces these qualities as a leader.

Irene’s father also influenced her membership in other institutions apart from school. From the above extract, it appears that Irene’s father was an influential church member, and Irene aspired to be like her father in church as well. Irene lays claim to being engaged in various forms of interaction in this regard with members of her cultural group. This shows how her father’s participation in society worked to develop her capability of affiliation. Her religious affiliation shows that she has developed into a caring and empathetic person who accepts the people with whom she interacts and treats them with respect and friendship.

The affiliations the women middle managers have extended outwardly into their communities. Like Irene, some of the other participants openly accepted religion in their lives, and they assert that their faith in their religious teachings helped them become the school managers and leaders they are. Like Irene, the religious teachings that Mandisa received from her mother helped to develop her as a person. In her letter to her mother she writes:

As a community member, especially at church, my spiritual life has changed and improved a lot because of your teachings. You instilled in us that we had to live, practise and apply faith daily in our lives. You have instilled in me to have courage, zeal and strength to face our challenges throughout our lives. We used interventions of supernatural powers to keep us going. I pray and wish that somewhere, somehow, I could touch people’s lives and better their lives the way you did to me. As a head of department, I try to better the lives of the learners and educators by offering them opportunities to grow. Once more I say thank you. (Mandisa, unsent letter)

Mandisa’s letter shows that she developed the capabilities of affiliation, emotion and resilience. The capability of affiliation comes to the fore when she says that she has become involved in the community and in religion. She used the capability of affiliation to foster opportunities for development in the teachers she manages. Mandisa, however, used a very self-righteous tone in her letter, unlike Irene. The type of person Mandisa has become gives the impression that she is somewhat elevated in her spiritual beliefs and morally uplifting and strong. As a woman, she seems to have been prepared to face the challenges she encounters in her life. Mandisa’s letter shows that not only had she developed the capability to be caring, she also had developed resilience. This is evident when she writes of the “courage, zeal and strength” she has in order to face the challenges she experiences in life. Her caring for others is brought

to the fore when she states that she would like to “better people’s lives”. She was not alone in facing the challenges as she refers to “our challenges throughout *our* lives”. This suggests that she perceives other women are also facing challenges in their lives and this is an ongoing situation. However, personally, she had developed the capability of resilience to persevere in the face of struggles. She appears to view her role model as a saintly figure who could “touch people’s lives and better their lives” just by interacting with them. This affiliation with her role model and mentor led her to develop as a caring and empathetic middle manager trying to “better the lives of the learners and educators” in her department.

Although the psychosocial support received from mentors may not help the women HoDs in career advancement as much as in career support (Tharenou, 2005), the women HoDs indicate in their letters that the friendship and encouragement that they received from their mentors and role models did impact on their roles as HoDs, and the type of managers that they have become. Through mentoring and/or aspiring to be like their role models, the women middle managers developed the capabilities of emotion, affiliation and resilience that would be useful for interaction with colleagues in the workplace. However, a leader and manager is also someone who must be well-organised and who plans ahead. Such skills relate to the capabilities of informed vision and of goal setting and these are discussed in the next section.

### ***6.2.3 Envisioning a Future***

The capability of informed vision is about an alternative future and improving social arrangements. Through informed vision women middle managers are able to create a sense of purpose in their lives to be pursued over many years (Leithwood, 1999). Through forming an informed vision, women middle managers can set goals for themselves. The goals that people set for themselves can take the form of pursuing desirable outcomes or avoiding undesirable outcomes (Lockwood, Jordan & Kunda, 2002). This means that people may be inspired by positive role models who represent a “positive self” and a “desired self” when they wish to be successful, or a negative role model who represents a “feared self” when they want to avoid failure (Lockwood et al., 2002, p. 854). Therefore, setting goals leads to increased performance for a variety of tasks. Gene in her letter shows how she used the teachings of her grandmother to envision a future of a more ambitious state for herself. She used her grandmother’s teaching to set goals for herself that led her to an occupation as a

teacher and later a HoD position. Yet Gene's letter brings the vexed issue of gender role stereotyping to the fore. By teaching her to do regular household chores, Gene's grandmother established a work ethic in her that she should always work at her optimum level. By being taught household chores such as ironing, Gene was able to learn the valuable lesson of commitment to work. Gene was able to learn how to be a conscientious manager, through the practical everyday work at home.

This family member taught me how to iron clothes. Yes, I know this can be regarded as strange. But, how many people can boast about learning to iron with a steel iron which can be heated on a coal stove? She could iron clothes from a very young age to perfection, and I was taught to do the same. This was the start of what I think was the art of starting something and doing it to the best of your ability right to the end. Even in my position as a HoD, I make sure that I do things to the best of my ability; there are no half measures with me. (Gene, unsent letter)

The above extract suggests that Gene was taught and prepared from a young age to accept a homemaker's role. It is apparent that Gene's role model and mentor viewed learning household chores as essential for a female. However, Gene did not restrict this learning to the home; rather she applied the lessons learnt to her workplace and her role in a school management position. Therefore, the letter shows Gene is able to imagine a future state that did not involve household chores. Instead, she had visualised applying what she learnt at home to her professional life. She learnt to set goals in her life that involved her working to the best of her ability and not doing things in "half measures". In the letter she reflected critically on what she was taught at home, and how she applied this knowledge positively in her middle management role. This capability which she developed under the influence of her grandmother was employed to inspire the team members at school and motivate them as teachers and members of a department. Gene is an example of a woman middle manager influenced by social actors in the home or the community. Other participants drew on people in their professions for their inspiration to develop the capabilities needed to be a middle manager in a school. Thus I turn to role models and mentors from the professional domain in the next section.

### **6.3 The Influence of Role Models and Mentors in the Professional Domain**

Some of the women HoDs were informally mentored by mentors who were in direct supervisory positions to them at their schools. Mentoring programmes can assist women to make career choices and thus promote advancement in their careers (Quimby & DeSantis, 2006). However, none of the participants refer to schools as having formal mentoring programmes for aspiring managers. Rather, colleagues in a supervisory position to the participants became guides to orientate the participants when they enter the school as new educators. Although such mentoring is informal in nature, it encompasses both aspects of the mentor functions, career development and psychosocial functioning. The participants, who were informally mentored at school, received both career development and psychosocial support from their mentors, although the type and amount of mentoring may have varied among the participants. Their letters to the mentors suggest that a close relationship was formed between the participants and their role models and mentors and this provided the opportunity for them to develop the capabilities of affiliation, integrity, knowledge, imagination and practical skills.

#### **6.3.1 “How Important You are to Me”**

Women middle managers learnt to feel a sense of obligation for others and be responsible, ethical and accountable for other people from their mentors. These are dimensions of the capability of affiliation and integrity (Walker et al., 2010). Mandisa’s mentor and role model was an unnamed colleague at school whom she addressed simply as “Dear Sir”. Despite the anonymity in this nomenclature, the salutation is infused with respect and deference as well as some warmth and affection. Her letter shows that the mentoring relationship developed Mandisa’s capabilities of affiliation and integrity. She writes that her mentor displayed concern for others and his ability to interact socially with other people inspired her. He developed in Mandisa the capability of being responsible and accountable to the teachers with whom she works. She writes to her mentor explaining how he had mentored and inspired her at school:

As a teacher you showed me that teaching goes beyond standing in front of the learners, marking scripts, compiling progress reports, but it’s caring, pasturing, mentoring and raising up a full individual to become a responsible and accountable citizen of tomorrow. As teachers, we have an eye of an eagle that penetrates what cannot be seen by parents. You taught me that always willingly go the extra mile to better the lives of our learners who become like our own children (Mandisa, Unsent letter).

Through reflecting on the mentoring relationship, Mandisa was able to consider her role as a teacher, not only in terms of the administrative and technical aspects of the role, but also in terms of the caring nature of the role. Her mentor was also her role model at school and, as she observed, his pastoral care of learners was an important aspect of teaching. Mandisa views educators as being highly intuitive, perhaps more so than parents. Thus she wrote about her role not being restricted to teaching, but also one that encompassed being nurturing and caring towards the learners, like that of a parent. Her mentor taught her to be mindful of the collective good of others and that, as an educator, she should help to improve the lives of the learners by going “the extra mile”.

Within the mentor/protégé relationship, a caring attitude of the role model or mentor helps to build the protégé’s confidence. The letters point to the support and encouragement given to the participants by their mentors and role models, as well as to the fact that this helped them to progress in their careers. Thembi mentions this in her letter. She writes that, when her former HoD, who also acted as her mentor, had greeted her with a caring and warm welcome when she had first arrived at her new school, she felt inspired to develop as an educator.

You’ll never begin to understand how important you are to me. I wouldn’t be where I am now were it not for you. I remember the first day I came to this school, you greeted me with a smile and you showed me around. That may seem just a petty thing to other people, but to me, it made such an impression (Thembi, Unsent letter)

Thembi’s mentor developed in her the capability of affiliation when she taught her to care and respect other people from their first encounter. Having this affiliation capability enables women middle managers to have an idealised influence in their department because they become admired and respected by their colleagues. Although the psychosocial support may not help the career advancement of women (Tharenou, 2005), the participants in this study refer to the friendship they received from their mentors and role models as having inspired them in their roles as middle managers. In the psychosocial sphere, the mentor offers role modelling, counselling, confirmation and friendship that help the protégé develop a sense of professional identity and competence (Kram, 1985). Therefore, learning to have a caring and kind attitude helped the female HoDs to be more considerate towards the educators in their department.

Your humane attitude towards educators and learners has inspired me to look at the personal circumstances of those with whom I work without becoming a 'softie'. I am able to execute my administrative tasks effectively, often before due dates. My interaction with members of my team is characterised by fairness, firmness and friendship. (Neelam, Unsent Letter)

In her letter Neelam writes that she is able to use a humane attitude towards the educators in her department. This means that she is concerned not only with their effectiveness as educators but also with their sense of well-being. This is evidence that Neelam has developed the capability of affiliation because she was able to show concern and respect for the teachers with whom she worked. This caring attitude is generally associated with women (Gilligan, 1982). Neelam, however, realised that being viewed as a caring manager can imply having a feminine style of management, and this could be construed as being less effective than a more masculine management style. Thus in her letter she distances herself from being a "softie" and takes on the more masculine attributes of being firm and fair. Unlike her mentor, who may have been viewed as a "softie", Neelam implies that she manages her department using an androgynous style of management whereby she is caring and friendly, yet firm and fair. It is clear that Neelam, as a manager, is not a carbon copy of her mentor and role model, but has developed her own style of management.

Not modelling themselves completely on their role models is a sign that some women managers are able to shape their own development as managers. As agents, they are able to identify their own values and objectives in shaping their development as managers. This suggests that they are able to actively engage with their own thoughts in choosing their sense of well-being. In the next section I will show how the capability of sense, imagination and thought was developed for some of the women participants by their mentors and role models.

### **6.3.2 "You've Taught Me so Much"**

In Thembi's letter to her role model and mentor she attributes her capability of knowledge, imagination and practical skills to her. Thembi says that, not only did her mentor inspire her through her psychosocial support, but she also supported her career development. Her mentor taught her the skills needed for teaching and also showed her the technical aspects of the job.

Coming to what brought us together, educating our learners, you've taught me so much. I thought I knew everything when I arrived, little did I know I still had so much to learn. Through you I learnt that I can make learners write tests fortnightly instead of once a month as I used to. I

did it and it worked. I learnt about the importance of remedial periods. I never had those before. It worked wonders. I learnt that when you have been absent, when you come back you announce your presence; you don't just head straight to the staffroom. \_\_\_\_\_, I can go on with my praises as the list of things that I learnt from you is endless. (Thembi, unsent letter)

Thembi's mentor imparted professional knowledge and conduct to her and she was able to integrate the theoretical knowledge she had about teaching into her practice. Having guided Thembi in the technical aspects of the job, her mentor also ensured that she developed professionally as an educator. The knowledge and skills that Thembi gained led to her being an effective middle manager. The guidance and feedback she received from her mentor during her early years as an educator became part of Thembi's own management style and she applied what she learnt to her own management role. Thembi's readiness to learn from her mentor shows the type of relationship that has existed between the two of them - one being the novice and the other being the mentor and guide with more experience in the field. Although Thembi had come to the school having thought that she "knew everything", her willingness to learn more from the mentor and role model she admired contributed to her development as a HoD. Because the capability of knowledge, imagination and practical skills was developed in Thembi she had the competence to intellectually stimulate the members in her department and set high performance standards for their performance.

Like Thembi, other participants were also supported in their career development by their mentors at school. However, some had mentors who led by example through their own management style and practical leadership skills and these women middle managers expressed the desire to emulate their mentors and manage their departments as their mentors had done.

As a manager, you did not hesitate to offer praise for hard work. Your preparation (administrative and curriculum related) was always thorough. Your ability to be honest with educators who shirked in their responsibilities has impacted on my tasks as a manager. I have understood the value of effective planning and ensuring that the tasks are not postponed unnecessarily. You have taught me about the dangers of procrastination which can cause a manager to become 'snowed under' very rapidly in a school situation. (Neelam, unsent letter)

Neelam's mentor had inculcated in her the skill of good time management and the benefits of effective planning and preparation for a job. Thus Neelam's role model and mentor developed in her the capability of knowledge and practical skills for her teaching and management role. Neelam acknowledges in her letter that the duties of a

middle manager can be intimidating and therefore, to function effectively, she had to have the knowledge and practical skills for the job. Not only does the job entail having knowledge about the learning area or subject being managed, it requires practical skills and knowledge to cope with management tasks. Rita wrote about this in her letter:

Your role as a HOD has inspired me for the manner in which your administrative and record keeping was done. I have tried to emulate you to keep a written record of all books and equipment that leaves my laboratory on a daily basis. Can you remember how you asked me for a book after you lent it to me for two years prior to the date of your asking and I said I do not have it? You asked me to look in my garage and yes, I did find it. I am battling a bit to be meticulous about this, and many other things creep into my day and disrupt my plans to keep proper records. Nevertheless, I catch up after a few days to ensure that proper records are kept. (Rita, Unsent letter)

Both Neelam and Rita were inspired by the administrative and technical functions of their mentors. Some of the qualities of a good manager that they outlined were having good time management skills, being well-prepared for the tasks of a manager and being organised by keeping detailed records. Through their interaction with their mentors, both participants and their mentors grew to know and understand each other. Neelam writes that her mentor had shown her the “dangers of procrastination” particularly as a manager, and Rita commends her mentor for showing her the importance of being organised and keeping meticulous records. The mentors helped to develop the women HoDs in the areas in which they needed to improve, and this was possible through the collaborative relationship that existed between them as mentors and the protégés where neither party held power over the other. The relationship should rather be seen as a supportive and friendly one (Fairbanks, Freedman, & Kahn, 2000, p. 102).

The supportive relationship and encouragement that some of the participants received from their mentors and role models inspired them to improve themselves in their careers. Most of the participants refer to studying further to improve their professional qualifications. Neelam and Rita are two examples of this.

I owe much of my drive to improve my qualifications, as well as the quality of my classroom delivery to you. You served as an excellent role model. Your recognition of my enthusiasm and acknowledgement of my efforts spurred me on. I draw strength from your encouragement up to this day. (Neelam, Unsent letter)

Your thirst for knowledge has kept me wanting to do the same. I have proceeded to do the B.Ed. (Curriculum Development in Biology) and am engaging in research based on science teachers' identities within the new curriculum (Rita, Unsent letter)

Having a senior colleague as their role model or mentor helped these two women to advance in their careers. Higher academic qualifications are needed for career advancement in many professions, including education. The women middle managers developed the capability of knowledge, imagination and practical skills by having a sound and critical grounding in disciplinary academic knowledge. A sound grounding in academic knowledge enabled women middle managers to intellectually stimulate the teachers and learners in the departments. Their mentors encouraged the women managers in this study to further their studies. In a study by Levinson, Kaufman, Clark & Tolle (1991) on women in academic medicine, it was found that the women with mentors had more publications in peer-reviewed journals, spent more time on research and had greater career satisfaction than women without mentors. Burke and McKeen (1997) found that the professional women who were mentored in their study experienced greater career satisfaction than women managers who were not. Neelam and Rita's letters are consistent with findings documented by Levinson (1991) and colleagues and Burke and McKeen (1997).

Ragins (1997) proposes that mentors' power in an organisation influences their ability to provide their protégés with career development functions such as sponsoring their opportunities within the profession regarding higher ranking positions, protecting them from adverse forces and giving them much needed exposure in the workplace. Through the guidance that Rita received from her male mentor, she was able to become very proficient as a HoD. Through her exposure as a highly skilled HoD, her capabilities did not go unrecognised by the education authorities and she reports being nominated to be a provincial examiner. As Rita states in her letter:

My compliments to you for guiding me on how to set an exam paper. This has ensured that the department I control also follows the proper procedures as set out the National department. You would be glad to know that due to your guidance, I was nominated to be the examiner for the Grade 12 Common Testing programme in KZN (where I set the March controlled test, June examination and the trial by examinations) and as Provincial Examiner for the KZN Senior Certificate exams. (Rita, Unsent letter)

Like Rita, Hema was also supported by her mentor and introduced to sports administration. The capability of knowledge, imagination and practical skills were not confined to the school context, but into the larger educational context, thus enabling the development of the women middle managers in other areas of leadership apart

from school based middle management. Hema's senior female mentor was involved in non-racial sports administration at national level for many years and being a female in a highly competitive, male-dominated arena, she was also a role model and mentor for Hema. This informal mentoring relationship developed spontaneously, with Hema's mentor willingly taking her under her wing and developing and guiding her in the field. This is outlined in Hema's letter to her mentor who was the matron at her school hostel:

...everyone was excited to have a Provincial Sports Official to take over the running of the school hostel. You were a real 'matron' who ruled with an iron fist. You taught me planning, organisation and management skills and I will always be indebted to you. I was introduced to the administration of non-racial sport at regional, provincial and national level. At times I was the only woman sitting at meetings dominated by men only. I earned their respect and trust. I was able to express my political convictions and energy in a constructive way by promoting and developing non-racial sport. This is my contribution to a changing society. You groomed me for those meetings; that's where you were before you retired. ..Your generosity to give and share, I will never forget. (Hema, Unsent letter)

This extract highlights the influence Hema's mentor had in developing her as a transformational leader because she was instrumental in "promoting and developing non-racial sport" in a "changing society". Hema's mentor introduced her to sports administration through sponsorship and networking. Having herself being a highly ranked sports administrator, had made it easier for her protégé, Hema, to enter this field as a woman. Tharenou (2005) makes a point that relates to what is illustrated here, which is that career support for women from female mentors translates most into advancement, perhaps because they gain from being sponsored, challenged and coached by someone like themselves, a person who had encountered the same difficulties that confront them. Thus, Hema could enter the field of sports administration with relative ease because of the support she received from her female mentor.

In her letter it seems that Hema's political convictions about gender are sidelined and channelled into the "constructive" issue of race and sport. She writes that sport and race were viewed as the more acceptable issues by her peers in meetings rather than gender issues which may have been viewed as "destructive" by her male peers who were in the field of sports administration. Within the context of a changing society, where race issues rather than gender issues are given more importance, Hema, through her promotion of non-racial sport was accepted and respected by her male peers. Hema's female mentor and role model appears to have decided to toe the line in order

to have been accepted into sports administration, thereby channelling her energies on gender issues into race issues within sports. Hema's mentor is constructed as carrying the traits of a masculine style of management when Hema writes about ruling with "an iron fist". She had groomed Hema to behave in a similar way that would be acceptable to her male peers. As a woman, by being willing to conform to be acceptable to the dominant group of male members at the sports meetings, Hema was able to move forward in the field of sport administration.

Rita's mentor also introduced her to organisations outside the school institution. Under her mentor's guidance, Rita committed herself to them and, by attending all the meetings, conferences and seminars she was able to advance in this field. Through her active attendance and participation, she was elected to an executive position in one of the organisations. Her inspiration was her male mentor who led by example. Rita states in her letter:

The other aspect of your career that has influenced me to keep myself informed is your presence in the \_\_\_\_\_ Biology Society, your involvement in workshops, seminars and conferences. I have been actively involved in \_\_\_\_\_ and have attended each of their conferences, workshops and seminars whenever they arise. At the \_\_\_\_\_ National Conference, I was elected the National Treasurer for \_\_\_\_\_. (Rita, Unsent letter)

From the letters I find that mentors within the professional domain helped to guide and develop the women HoDs, not only within the school organisation as educators and middle managers, but also in other fields closely associated with education. The mentors acted as role models as they led by example and the participants were inspired by them. The mentors offered the female HoDs career and psychosocial support which helped them cope as middle managers and advance professionally.

A few of the participants however, viewed some aspects of their mentoring relationship with their mentors as dysfunctional, particularly when the mentors obstructed the participants' development and progress as managers. In the next section I will draw attention to how mentors can act as barriers to career advancement and/or personal development of women HoDs.

#### **6.4 Mentors as Barriers to Advancement**

Nussbaum's (2000a) combined capabilities suggest that external conditions can affect the capability development of women negatively. This happens when external conditions constrain the internal capabilities of women middle managers. In this

regard mentors can act as barriers to women middle managers moving ahead in their careers. When there are constraints and barriers to one's advancement, the situation can be seen as having a narrow capability set (Sen, 1999). The data in this study suggests that some women HoDs have not advanced further in their careers, or in their personal lives, partly due to an obstructive influence of their mentors. As the literature indicates, a mentor provides a protégé with career enhancing and psychosocial functions (Kram, 1985). Mentors therefore ought to help their protégés develop and progress in their careers and in their personal development. Exceptions to this were found in some of the letters.

Hema's letter to one of her mentors indicates that he did not prove to be trustworthy or loyal to her. An extract reveals the anger she feels at his betrayal:

...you have given me the opportunity to be innovative and to grow. You never hesitated to compliment, praise and talk highly of me as a member of your SMT. However, when it comes to backing the women on your staff in terms of promotion or short-listing, you failed us all. You know for a fact, that it is the women on your staff that have brought all the accolades for \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary. You have still not given us a reasonable explanation as to why not one of the eight women from \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary who applied for the Deputy Principal post was not short-listed. You and the SGB short-listed one male colleague from our school. Mrs \_\_\_\_\_ and myself disputed this post and we both won the dispute. However, this post eventually went to a male, despite the fact that I am the only woman in the SMT. I feel aggrieved about this and feel that you, Mr \_\_\_\_\_ have let us women down. That post should have gone to a woman. (Hema, Unsent letter)

From the above extract, it is noted that although Hema's male mentor (the school principal) guided her in her role as a HoD and encouraged her as a member of the school management team, he acted as a barrier to her promotion into a senior management position at the school. This shows that Hema does not have the strong set of capabilities with freedom and the opportunities needed for promotion and this could allegedly be due to her gender.

The principal's selection of the male applicant over the eight female applicants for the management position suggests that this mentor may consider women to be less competent than males for senior management positions. According to Noe (1988), leaders differentiate between their subordinates in terms of their competence, the extent to which they can be trusted and their motivation to assume responsibility. Subordinates who have these characteristics are regarded as group members. Because women generally may not be perceived as possessing desirable qualities such as leadership, assertiveness, competence and emotional control, they are less likely to be

considered as worthy of being members of the group (Noe, 1988). Hema's complaint to her mentor suggests that, although the women were numerically more than the men at her school, the women were not part of the hegemonic leadership group that was dominated by men. Thus the leadership and the control of the school were in the hands of a few men.

Furthermore, Hema expresses the view that, despite the women in the school having brought "accolades" to the school, they remained the outsiders and needed to prove themselves worthy by twice as much effort as their male counterparts in order to be accepted by the dominant group or to be considered for senior management positions. She asserts that although women voiced their opinions through a dispute and won the case, their voices remained unheard, and they were further silenced into submission when the only male applicant was selected for the deputy principal post. By expressing these sentiments, Hema is demonstrating the capability of resilience as she is committed to persevering even when faced with obstructions to her promotion into senior management. The capability of informed vision is also evident in the extract as Hema believes that more women ought to be given opportunities and freedom to become senior managers in schools, as they are capable of doing so. In this way Hema is able to imagine an alternative future for women in school management, one that is free of discrimination against women seeking promotion in schools.

The extract from Hema's letter shows that even though a woman may be considered competent and fully qualified to take on a senior management position in school, her perception is of barriers to higher management positions. One of these barriers is the situation when men monopolise the promotion process and act as gate-keepers of the selection committees. Hema's account shows that while women may be welcomed into middle management positions in schools at the first tier of management such appointments do not carry as much positional power as the upper management positions do. Therefore, power in the form of decision making, control and authority still lies in the hands of a few select men in this secondary school, as is shown in the following extract from the letter:

...from my experience with how the SGB operates, the patriarchal attitude of the chairperson and his male counterparts and his underhanded, subtle, coercive manner of controlling and manipulating the outcomes of the interviews, no woman stood a chance. You were part of this selection committee. (Hema, Unsent letter)

Hema interprets her own experience as being about patriarchy, and the rule of members of the school governing body (SGB) and the principal over oppressed women in the school. This polarised positioning is a widespread phenomenon. Coetzee (2001) notes that men, through patriarchal rule, have complete power domination and authority over women. Women therefore lose their autonomy and subjectivity when they are bound by the decisions men make for them. In her letter Hema's autonomy and subjectivity appear to be at risk when she describes her struggles to stay in control of her position as a woman leader in the school. According to Hema, the patriarchal attitude prevalent in the SGB allows her male colleagues to employ ruthless tactics to remain in power. She describes these tactics as "underhanded, subtle" and a "coercive manner of controlling and manipulating the outcomes of interviews". Through these tactics she asserts that her male colleagues were able to control the flow of women into leadership and management positions in the school. The sweeping claim that "no woman stood a chance" captures the depth of her outrage against the might of this hegemonic group of men who, through their domination and control, render the women voiceless in the school.

Her resentment towards her mentor for being "part of this selection committee" points to this of her gender. That she berates her mentor in the letter suggests that he may not have been her ideal mentor as she regarded him as untrustworthy and biased against women educators.

In her letter Valerie also refers to a mentor or role model putting up barriers that do not allow the betrayal she felt when he overlooked her for the senior position allegedly on the basis of the career advancement of a woman protégé. This emerges in the following extract of a letter to her mother:

I feared you as a child and always thought you were cruel, especially when we got a hiding. ... Growing up was not easy as you did not allow us to have friends. You did not want us to be exposed to bad habits and thought that that would influence us. This made life difficult when I was on the outside world. I felt like an outsider confronted by people. I never knew how to communicate with people... My personal life is a mess, but I am at peace with myself. I rather concentrate on the professional side of my life because you always told me that success at work is what would put food on the table. (Valerie, Unsent letter)

Valerie's narrative shows how by fearing a "cruel" mentor or role model, her capability of emotion becomes underdeveloped whereby she finds it difficult to communicate with people and form relationships. The tough love shown by her

mother, however, strengthened the functional capability of senses, imagination and thought in Valerie as she had developed the necessary professional skills.

Valerie reveals in the above extract, that her mother as mentor, helped her mature and advance in her career, however, she failed to offer encouragement and support in Valerie's personal life. Instead, Valerie's mother, in trying to protect Valerie from the influence of outsiders, left Valerie feeling socially inept by having difficulties with sustaining relationships with others and always feeling like an "outsider". By focusing on guiding and mentoring Valerie only in her professional life, Valerie's mother overlooked supporting Valerie emotionally. To compensate for her lack of emotional support, Valerie concentrated her efforts on her professional life and career. The above extract indicates that in her mother-mentor relationship, there was limited psychosocial support.

The weak interpersonal aspects of the mentoring relationship contributed negatively to the protégé's personal growth despite her professional achievement. With an emphasis on the career development support in the relationship, Valerie was able to advance with greater ease in her career into her management position. Valerie's mother may not have guided and coached Valerie in her career per se, but she pushed Valerie to "concentrate on the professional side" of her life and to therefore make a success of her career.

Although the women HoDs may have experienced some barriers to their professional or personal development, they were able resist these obstacles and continue in their roles as middle managers. Their resilience to transform their weak capabilities to stronger capabilities or offset their weaker ones with stronger ones, thereby improving their sense of well-being as middle managers, is evidence of their transformational leadership abilities. While some women, as exemplified in the participants, may have been disadvantaged in certain ways through their mentors' actions, other women were disadvantaged by not having a mentor or role model to guide and inspire them. One such participant is Arthi and I present her account in the next section.

### **6.5 "I am My Own Inspiration"**

Mentors and role models are important in guiding and inspiring women who aspire for management positions (Godshalk & Sosik, 2000). What is apparent in this study is that none of the participants were formally mentored for their management roles. Only

Hema, Thembi, Rita and Neelam were informally mentored for their roles as new educators in the department by their supervisors at school. The other participants either had mentors or role models in their personal lives who inspired them in their role as middle managers. One participant, however, asserts that she did not have a role model or mentor and therefore she did not write the letter. In our conversation about this she said:

I'm sorry Sharitha, but, no one has inspired me in my career. Neither has anyone mentored me to be the manager I am today. In fact, I have motivated and inspired myself through the years. (Arthi, response to unsent letter)

At the outset one might assume that the absence of a role model and mentor would render a weak capability set. However, Arthi's claim is that she has developed the capability of resilience and perseverance through her own efforts and influence. Arthi did not see her lack of mentor as a barrier to her promotion into management. This is confirmed by Grogan and Crow (2004, p. 466) who assert that "mentoring can produce side effects of stifling innovation and perpetuating the status quo". Therefore Arthi claims that instead she "motivated and inspired" herself to become a manager. However, her lack of a mentor or role model may serve as a hidden barrier to her career advancement in that she lacks the psychosocial support that could be provided by a mentor. Sen's capability approach (1999) suggests that a lack of a mentor for women aspiring for management positions can be viewed as an unfreedom.

According to Sen (1999, p.3), one major source of unfreedom is social deprivation. Through the unequal treatment of women, which is socially generated (Sen, 1999), women face more barriers than their male counterparts when aspiring to management positions. Without a mentor Arthi would have been deprived of support. That she is in denial about this deprivation and the reasons for her denial may be found in her childhood history. Losing her mother to cancer in her teenage years and soon thereafter having her father emigrating to another country without his children, may have left Arthi feeling abandoned and lonely. This may have led her to needing to fend for herself from early on as she could not necessarily rely on her parents for support.

Arthi's discourse indicates the loneliness and isolation she feels as a woman manager when she says that "no one has inspired me". She has made the journey to management on her own and through her own determination. This required strength.

She has been resilient to any barriers that she might have encountered, particularly in not having a mentor or role model and she has exercised her agency for her own career development. This is confirmed by Sen's (1999, p. 189) quote when he states that: "women are no longer the passive recipients of welfare-enhancing help, women are increasingly seen, by men as well as women, as active agents of change: the dynamic promoters of social transformations that can alter the lives of both women and men".

Arthi's claim is that she was the solitary agent of her own career development and this implies she has the capability of resilience. Through her agency and determination to succeed, she has reached a state of well-being and is able to function as a middle manager.

## **6.6 Concluding Remarks**

To conclude this chapter that focused on how women HoDs were influenced by mentors and role models in their middle management roles, and the management capabilities that were developed in the women middle managers through their interaction with the mentors and role models, the main points are reiterated. The mentoring of women occurred either in close proximity or from afar. The mentors and role models were not confined to the women participants' professional lives; rather, they were part of their personal lives as well. Many of the HoDs did not have professional mentors or role models but they considered significant people in their personal lives as their mentors or role models. Through the mentor functions, I found that the women HoDs had received both career development and psychosocial support from their mentors. Although these women HoDs lacked professional mentors and a formal mentoring programme to assist in their career advancement, they were still able to use the guidance and support they had received from their personal and informal mentors to become the managers they are. I found that the women middle managers had different experiences from each other in their interactions with their mentors or role models. However, these interactions with the mentors and role models enabled the development of capabilities that would assist them in their management roles.

I found that mentors and role models could also be barriers to women's development. As barriers to capability development, the role models or mentors constrained the

development of certain capabilities, but the participants showed coping strategies that helped develop their resilience capability. The barriers of women not having a mentor and role model for their professional development or having a mentor who acts as a barrier to their development can restrict capability sets when women aspire for management positions in schools. However, I found that the women HoDs did not allow the lack of professional mentors to disadvantage them in their career aspirations; rather, they have become active agents in advancing their own careers and attaining a sense of well-being as middle managers.

Although some of the participants did not have formal mentors or role models, who prepared them for their role as middle managers, they were able to embrace the teachings and lessons learnt from their informal mentors and role models who influenced them from near and far. Their resilience shows that they do not accept oppression, and they are able to transform their state of uncertainties to certainty and well-being. My questions about the drawbacks that being without a role model or mentor bring to the advancement of women in their personal and professional development could find possible answers in observing the women in their practice as middle managers. The functioning and practice of the women in their role as middle managers will be discussed in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **LEADING FROM THE MIDDLE**

This chapter concerns the school context and how women middle managers function within the bureaucratic and hierarchical structure of the secondary school where they manage and lead their departments. I will argue that the way in which the women middle managers function is evidence of developed management capabilities from early childhood and that their experiences over the years have built on these capabilities. I propose that the women may function as transformational middle managers because they had developed enabling and significant foundational capabilities from childhood on. I do not categorically claim that capabilities are an automatic precursor to transformational leadership, but I suggest that it provides a good foundation for transformational leadership. My evidence in support of this claim are the excerpts from the narratives of the women middle managers participating in the study, generated via formal interviews (see Appendices G & K), observations and journal entries written over the course of a school week (see Appendix J).

To begin with, it is important to revisit the organisational context for schools in South Africa within which women middle managers work. School organisations are hierarchical authority structures with formal chains of command between the different positions of the personnel hierarchy (Bush, 1994, p. 36). As discussed in Chapter Two, the South African school principal is at the apex of the hierarchical structure. The deputy principal is subordinate to the principal, followed by the HoDs, the educators, and then the learners. It is within this hierarchical structure that women HoDs lead and manage their departments as transformational leaders. Working in the middle means that the women HoDs lead their departments within a particular set of organisational relations and dynamics. Although the women middle managers develop various capabilities through their social affiliations and education (Chapter Five), and under the influence of role models and mentors (Chapter Six), how they function as managers and leaders of a department often depends on the contextual factors and dynamics within the school. The contextual factors within the local school, such as the culture of the school and the type of relations among the senior managers, the educators and the learners, contribute to the way the leadership of a particular women middle manager is exercised.

Adopting the terminology of Sen's capability approach, I understand the practice of a HoD to be a "functioning" because it is an outcome that is based on the person's capability set. As explained in Chapter Three, capabilities are the potential to achieve a functioning (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 4). A manager needs to have a capability set appropriate for that job. Therefore, the human capabilities that the women middle managers achieved in their youth, together with the professional capabilities they developed as teachers, form a set of capabilities that I refer to in this thesis as the "management capability" set. It is this set that prepares and enables them to function as a manager. She may have a strong management capability set or a weak one, based on the external conditions in which she functions as a manager. I will argue that the external conditions are critical if the woman middle manager is to function as a leader.

This notion of the external conditions is based on Nussbaum's concepts of "combined capabilities," which she defines as the internal capabilities that combine with suitable external conditions for the functioning to take place (Nussbaum, 2000a, pp. 84-85). In this chapter I will attempt to show that women participants may lead and manage their department by adopting a transformational approach. However, there are challenges they encounter in their roles because of the external factors in the context in which they work. Nussbaum's (2000a) ideas are useful in explaining that when their internal capabilities are not in sync with the external conditions they would struggle to function as transformational middle managers. This indicates that the women middle managers may not display transformational leadership behaviours all the time in their management roles.

In the following section I discuss how the women middle managers use their management capabilities to function as transformational leaders within the changing school context. The matrix of the alignment of the sets of ideas in the capability approach and transformational leadership theory (Table 3.1) shows how they function as transformational leaders.

Firstly, I look at the development of knowledge and skills in a department and how the woman middle manager challenges and stimulates her colleagues intellectually, as advocated by Bass & Avolio (1994) and Leithwood et al. (1999), through her capabilities of senses, imagination and thought, described by Nussbaum (2000a); and

knowledge, imagination and practical skills, the concept devised by Walker et al. (2010). Secondly, I focus on the setting of departmental directions and how the woman middle manager builds a departmental vision, establishes departmental goals and sets high performance expectations, aspects suggested by Leithwood et al. (1999); as well as inspirationally motivating and influencing the members in her team through her capability of informed vision (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Thirdly, I discuss the leadership attribute of developing people in the department and the individual support and consideration given to the departmental members (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood et al., 1999); together with the modelling of best practice (Leithwood et al., 1999) as exemplified by the woman middle manager through her capabilities of affiliation, emotion (Nussbaum, 2000a; Walker et al., 2010) and resilience (Walker et al., 2010). Finally, I discuss the redesigning of the department and how the woman middle manager is able to form structures that foster participation in the department and to create a productive departmental culture (Leithwood et al., 1999) through her capabilities of practical reason (Nussbaum, 2000a), social and collective struggles, assurance and confidence, and resilience (Walker et al., 2010).

In the section following I discuss how, in the context of developing knowledge and skills in the department, the woman middle manager is capable of stimulating the members in her department intellectually.

### **7.1 Developing Knowledge and Skills in the Department**

The HoD of a school is responsible for a subject, learning area or phase. In Section 4, Chapter A of the Employment of Educators Act (RSA, 1998) it is stated that the aim of the HoD is to ensure that “the subject, learning area or phase and the education of the learners is promoted in a proper manner”. The promotion of the education of learners is an integral function of the HoD who must ensure that knowledge and skills are developed within the department. The HoD is not only responsible for the education of learners, but also has to control the work of educators in their department (RSA, 1998). Therefore, as HoDs, the women middle managers need to develop the appropriate knowledge and skills and create intellectual stimulation among the departmental members to ensure that effective teaching and learning take place. Bass and Riggio (2006) view intellectual stimulation within the transformational leadership

context as occurring when individuals are challenged through the introduction of new ideas and are encouraged to reflect on their work and be innovative.

The data I presented on the transformational leadership functioning of intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood, et al., 1999) earlier in Chapter Three, showed that this can be enabled through the development of the human capabilities of senses, imagination and thought (Nussbaum, 2000a), as well as the professional capabilities of knowledge, imagination and practical skills (Walker et al., 2010), all of which happens over the years, from early childhood. I found, as Walker et al. (2010) did, that having developed the professional capabilities of knowledge, imagination and practical skills, the women HoDs generally have a critical grounding in their disciplinary academic knowledge; they are therefore capable of being creative, flexible, open-minded; they are able to integrate theory and practice; and they are often problem-solvers. I see them applying their professional knowledge and skills in their practice as school middle managers when they provide the members in their departments with intellectual stimulation through their own creativity.

By means of their professional academic knowledge, the women middle managers, I found, can be problem-solvers and are able to guide the teachers they manage in their teaching practice. The extracts below are examples of how the women middle managers are able to be creative and find solutions to problems that may arise in their departments:

Since teachers are wholly unwilling to do anything that will involve meeting after school because professional development workshops necessitate meeting outside of school and after school, I've got to be creative enough to make the department dynamic through other means. I bring in books that I find interesting in terms of teaching practice and I send it around. I make them read and implement the practice in their classes and that kind of thing (Arthi, interview, 12 July).

If there are problems in the department like if there is a new teacher in my department who cannot teach, I personally go and show them how to teach a lesson. And if there are discipline problems, you show them, you stand in front of the class and you show them that you are in authority (Valerie, interview, 7 September)

I am constantly consulting with teachers about their work and the classes they teach. I found that if you don't then they can often be a bit too relaxed in their teaching. Like in my last school the learners told me the teacher, he refused to teach. I asked him why he was not going to class...he had no excuse... that case finally went up to circuit office (Mandisa, interview, 27 September)

You get some teachers who don't follow the rules. I supervise them very closely, their records, their teaching and their results. I show them what needs to be worked on, where they need to improve. Keep them on their toes and they do what is expected of them as teachers (Irene, interview, 4 September)

What I do is insist that everyone (teachers) has a daybook. What I have done is that I have actually enlarged our timetable so that on that day they put down what they are doing in the lessons (Rita, interview, 19 April)

The women middle managers use different methods to facilitate teaching and learning within their departments. As a manager who is creative, Arthi uses effective means, such as providing resource material, to motivate her teachers in their classroom practice. She goes to the extent of providing reading material to help guide the teachers as classroom practitioners. Valerie demonstrates how to teach and manage discipline in a classroom, Mandisa regularly consults with teachers and Irene and Rita closely monitor and supervise the teachers. Arthi's extract also shows that, as a manager, she understands the needs of the teachers and therefore does not arrange meetings or insist on attendance of workshops that are held after school hours, either at school, or at other venues, as the teachers would be unwilling participants in activities held. Therefore, she uses her capability of imagination and practical skills and, rather than imposing workshops within the department, Arthi is flexible as a leader and takes the initiative to find alternate ways to introduce new ideas into the department. In this way, Arthi develops the teachers professionally without resorting to a formal professional development programme. The other women middle managers also use their capability of imagination and practical skills when managing the teachers. Valerie's demonstration lesson and Irene "show(ing)" her teachers what to do are examples of how the women middle managers use their practical skills as managers. The women middle managers such as Mandisa and Rita show how they use their capability of imagination when the former ensures that she is "constantly consulting" with her teachers so that "they do not become too relaxed in their teaching" and the latter introduces a "daybook" in her department so that the teachers plan their daily lessons.

Using her capability of knowledge and imagination, the woman HoD is critical and evaluative in her practice and expects the teachers in her department to apply careful thought to their actions. This is evident from my journal entry written while I was observing Rita in a meeting she held for the members in her department and examples of interview extracts:

Rita asked her teachers for ideas on how to improve the performance of learners in Science and Mathematics. The teachers brainstormed ideas that would motivate learners. Rita asked

her teachers to assess their own teaching practice and how they could promote effective teaching and learning within the department (Journal entry, Observation of Rita, 20 April).

What is helpful is a personal growth plan which the teachers should have on themselves. We all complete this form for IQMS. So teachers are able to see what aspects they need to develop as teachers and how they can improve their teaching. I also need to be critical of my practices and how to improve my department (Gene, interview, 10 September)

I emphasise the need for commitment to their teaching and to evaluate their practices as teachers and are they doing a service or disservice to their learners (Arthi, interview, 12 July)

If I don't check the teachers' records and monitor the progress of learners regularly then I'm not doing my job... yes I have to be critical of myself as a manager and teachers have to be critical of their teaching. So I ensure that I follow policy and do my job effectively...so no one can say I'm asking too much of them. Then the teachers and learners perform well (Thembi, interview, 29 July)

My observation shows that Rita aims to stimulate the intellect of the teachers in her department by asking them to evaluate their classroom practice. Rita engages the teachers in evaluating their own teaching style and in finding ways to improve teaching and learning within the department. All the above capsules display ways in which these women middle managers stimulate critical thinking in their teachers. Through the critical thinking process, the women middle managers are using the capability of knowledge and imagination. Rita requests that her teachers "assess" their teaching practices, Gene makes use of the "professional growth plan" to develop teachers in her department, Arthi expects her teachers to "evaluate their practices" and Thembi "monitors the progress of learners" and expects the teachers "to be critical of their teaching". Since the women middle managers expect the teachers to become responsible for their own actions in class, thereby improving the process of teaching and learning within the department, they apply thought to how they themselves teach.

Professional development is another important issue demonstrated in the above extracts. By asking the teachers to be critical and reflective of their own practice, the women middle managers are promoting their professional development as they are encouraging the teachers to assess their strengths and weaknesses. This helps them to think more deeply about what they are doing as teachers. Other women middle managers plan formal professional development workshops in their departments to intellectually stimulate the teachers. The following capsules from interviews are examples of how the women middle managers plan workshops to do this:

So I had to run a workshop to give them all these ideas because they didn't know. Didn't know all these things in previous years. Then I had to start teaching them how to do all of this. (Rita, interview 19 April)

We have professional development not targeting those teachers in particular, we target the team, where each member of the team presents either an item about methodology, or about content, or about learner discipline in general or about management. ... (Hema, interview, 10 July)

Yes, because I walk, walk around and I supervise. I love that part. They say I make them work but everybody loves it. ... when I have my workshops they thoroughly enjoy it because they see the children who come from nowhere and where they are. They all love development (Irene, interview, 4 September)

Those are the departmental meetings where we empower other educators....and it is where other colleagues view their concerns ... We sit down and analyse results. ...and if learners are not performing well, we decide what strategies we are going to use to improve the performance of learners (Mandisa, interview, 27 September).

I found that professional development workshops are used to stimulate knowledge, skills and creativity of the educators in order to bring about high performance standards. The narratives reflect the importance of working together as teams to promote group performance. Hema's narrative shows her ability to promote higher levels of creativity amongst her team members by encouraging the participation of each educator in professional development presentations. Thus, through her capability of knowledge, thought and practical skills, Hema plans team building workshops rather than isolating individual teachers and developing them individually. It seems to me that through the team building exercise, Hema may actually want all the teachers to buy into a new idea, rather than only a few teachers, because this would improve the overall performance of the department. She also avoids creating a competitive atmosphere in which some teachers feel undermined or targeted (in need of development) and others "superior". Rita has workshops to impart new "ideas" to the teachers, Irene "walk(s)" around and supervises her teachers at workshops and Mandisa "empower(s)" the teachers when they "analyse results" and plan strategic interventions to improve learner performance. These techniques employed by the women middle managers make use of the capability of knowledge, thought and practical skills.

However, one of the women heads of department indicated that she did not have professional development workshops due to the challenges she faced as a head of department in her school. The resistance she faces from upper management is apparent in the following extract:

You know when you find that a teacher needs development in a certain aspect we don't really have that here. There is no finance. If you tell the principal you know that a teacher needs to go on a certain course she will tell you to use your own money. ... If I can help you with a specific

problem, I will discuss it with you. Other than that they have to do it on their own (Valerie, interview, 31 August)

Jung (2001) noticed that transformational leaders promote higher levels of creativity amongst the group members and he attributes this to their divergent thinking. I have similar findings among the women middle managers participating in this study. Rita speaks of the various innovative ideas she introduced in her department to develop the skills of the educators. The merit of this is captured in an opinion expressed by Bass & Riggio's (2007) that by introducing new ideas and new instructional methods into a department, educators are encouraging the educators to think "outside the box", an idea that would be important for effective teaching. According to Elkins and Keller (2003), transformational leaders encourage follower creativity and innovation by providing a climate that supports the innovative ideas of members. I found in these narratives that the participants acted as transformational leaders as they involved all their staff members in team building and professional development initiatives to improve the overall performance of the department.

Furthermore, these nine woman middle managers have mentioned that they are also involved in their own professional development in order to improve their teaching and management practice. This is reflected in the following examples:

I take every opportunity to go for workshops and meetings, so that I can learn and I receive all this information first-hand and then come to school and am able to guide my teachers as a more informed person. (Irene, interview, 27 August)

I am busy with the setting of the National Science Olympiad. During my free time, I look for materials which will help me with my work....I will have to set Provincial Exam Papers during the next week. I need to liaise with the other examiner and the moderator and I need to get the job going (Neelam, journal entry, 23 March)

I found that looking around me at the other heads of department I was doing so much more in the sciences and biology in terms of my involvement in what used to be the KZN Association of Maths and Science. I was involved in Olympiads and Science Expos and still play an active role in external organisations (Rita, interview, 19 April).

I don't want to stagnate, I see myself going further. ... Apart from going for the departmental workshops you know I have been deputy marker and chief marker for the matric exams. There is no higher you can go with matric marking (Valerie, interview, 31 August)

I enjoy going for workshops because I learn so much more especially with the changes in our curriculum in Economic Sciences. Then I workshop the teachers on how to apply themselves (Mandisa, interview, 27 September)

This type of engagement is acknowledged by Leithwood et al. (1999), who observe that a transformational leader is able to gather new ideas by going to other schools, attending conferences and passing on these new ideas to colleagues. In the extracts above, Irene is seen to be gathering new ideas through her attendance at workshops and meetings, which she sees as allowing her to become a more “informed person”, able her to impart the knowledge she has learnt to her colleagues. She is also seen to be interested in willingly seeking out new knowledge to benefit the department she manages. Three of the participants show their initiative to further develop themselves in their respective subjects by gaining more experience outside of the school environment. Their extracts also suggest that through their own professional development, they have gained sufficient expertise and experience to be selected for positions in other educational organisations. Neelam, Rita and Valerie have been accepted onto educational organisations at National and Provincial levels to be examiners or markers of examinations. Valerie shows how she has risen to the position of “chief marker”. Mandisa and Irene reflect on how their attendance at educational workshops inspire them as managers to develop the teachers in their teams. The above examples reveal how the women middle managers use their professional capabilities of knowledge and skills to develop themselves and the teachers in their departments. It is apparent that the professional capabilities of knowledge, imagination and skills develop through the years as the participants gain more knowledge and experience through professional development.

I found that the women middle managers are similarly creative and innovative in their management practice, as seen in the following extracts:

I have a structured programme where I expect all written records to be submitted to me on dates which I agreed upon. ...we also hold regular subject committee meetings. This helps me get a sense of what is going on and assists me in my supervision and doing other tasks in the department. Then I have co-ordinators in each subject, which is a new thing that I have introduced this year. Each co-ordinator is a Level 1 educator who will ensure that work necessary for that subject is done like assessments for the term that must be common practice, the assessment pieces which are to be clipped onto the report cards are common and so forth (Neelam, interview, 1 April).

My position has afforded me the opportunity to sort of bring changes to the teaching of the subject. While you can be proficient in the classroom, but there are so many things you can do for the learners rather than be confined to the classroom. ... and also being the head of department affords you the opportunity to interact on a wider level with other heads of department and other people ... You can look at possible changes that can be implemented toward the furtherance and progression of your subject. (Arthi, interview, 21 February)

And I can't blame them if they don't know what they are doing. Because that is what is happening in education today. I motivate my teachers into believing that they can do it. Like

getting the teachers in the Economic Sciences to do a computer course which helps us become computer literate (Gene, interview, 10 September)

The test and exam papers have to be set according to Blooms Taxonomy in Biology. You know so many percent of difficult questions and so many percent of not so difficult. This was not being done. I started to monitor tests closely. So I started writing reports on each test and hand this to the teacher which shows what needs improvement and so on. ... it is criticism I want you to use to better yourself (Rita, interview, 19 April)

This first extract endorses how Neelam, as a woman middle manager, through her professional capability of knowledge, imagination and practical skills, is able to bring fresh initiatives into the department. She can apply new ideas for the management of the department by introducing Level 1 educators to informal management roles. These educators act as “subject co-ordinators” and attend to administrative and routine matters related to the discipline. This creative management practice allows Neelam to have more time to attend to “other” management tasks in the department. At the same time Neelam has created opportunities for Level 1 educators to gain management experience and, in doing so, to share their expertise with their colleagues. The other participants like Arthi, Gene and Rita also display creativity in their management practice. Arthi believes that her middle management position offers her opportunities to advance her subject and to bring about “changes” within the department. She sees the holistic development of the learners as being integral and that learning should not only be “confined to the classroom”. Networking with other middle managers is another creative method that Arthi uses to develop her subject at school. Gene is innovative because she has introduced a computer course for the teachers in her department in order that they may develop their technological skills. This is also Gene’s attempt at professional development in her department and developing the professional capability of knowledge and practical skills in the teachers.

I noticed that these women middle managers also promote intellectual stimulation among learners in their departments via the teachers who are directly responsible for the quality of education that the learners receive. The following extracts point to the expectations of the woman middle manager of the teachers in promoting effective teaching and learning and developing the knowledge of learner:

The secret with the high school teacher is that the children have to see you doing the work; they have to see that you are doing something constructive. If that child comes into the class and they know you are faking and they know that you don’t know what you are doing in the lesson or you don’t know what you are teaching, then you had it with the lesson. You had it with that class. They will dislike you instantly. You’ve got to set a pace with them. If they are working every

day, they see that you are going somewhere, you are leading them somewhere, they actually enjoy their lessons and they want to learn from you. (Valerie, interview, 31 August).

All I ask of my team is to be dedicated to the learner. You have to be well-prepared and know your content as well. If the learners see you working, then they will work as well (Neelam, interview, 3 July)

As I said the teachers are closely monitored not to stifle them but just to ensure that proper teaching is taking place to benefit the learners (Thembi, interview, 29 July)

Just as I set an example for the teachers to follow in my department I expect the teachers to set examples for learners (Irene, interview, 4 September)

The above extracts show how the women middle managers expect their teachers to be committed to the teaching and learning process in the school and the need to promote the learner's well-being. Harris, Jamieson & Russ (1995) confirm that an effective department has a pupil-centred ethos, a view I agree with, as it helps to promote the development of the learners and offers learners more freedom and opportunity to expand their intellectual capability. The women middle managers participating in this research also focus on the learners; they time and again reflect on how educators can set a good example over commitment for learners to emulate. The extracts above highlight the need for capable educators who will promote effective instruction within the department.

It also became clear to me that having developed the capability of knowledge, imagination and practical skill and senses, imagination and thought, the women middle managers are able to critically evaluate the needs of the learners in their departments as they are able to "think and reason" about how learners should be taught in class, an observation made by Nussbaum (2000a, p. 78) too. These women middle managers do this to stimulate learners to learn in school and, importantly, to view their teachers as being integral to promoting effective learning. Because they have a firm grounding in their disciplinary academic knowledge, they are able to understand the needs of the learners, an exposition that concurs with the findings of Walker, et al. (2010). Having developed the capability of knowledge, imagination and practical skills for their management role, I noticed that they were able to assess the performance of the teacher in class and appreciate the dedication shown and value of the practice by teachers in planning their lessons well in advance in order to be well-prepared to teach the lesson.

Moreover, I could see that the development of learners depends on the capabilities and opportunities these women middle managers have in schools. Educators as a resource are important for learners' educational development. Therefore, my findings show that incompetent educators act as barriers to learners achieving a good education. The extracts of Valerie and Neelam show how the women middle managers were able to think and reason in trying to understand why learners underachieve. This they claimed was due to the underperforming teacher who they see as an obstacle to learning. Learners are able to identify incompetent teachers who are not well-prepared and in class. These extracts show that the middle managers acknowledge that the learners have what Nussbaum (2000a) calls their internal capabilities to be able to learn, but here the external factors in the form of underperforming teachers would constrain the learning that should be taking place. It is therefore necessary to have teachers who are adequately qualified to teach as professionals. Since learners themselves can have strong and weak capability sets, underperforming teachers would lead to a learner having a weak capability set in the educational context. Thus the women middle managers participating in this study clearly conclude that one way of developing the learners intellectually would be for their educators to set a positive example and act as role models.

In both Valerie's and Neelam's narratives I see that through their capabilities of the senses and thought, they are able to identify the resilience of learners who are exposed to ineffective educators. This is evident in Valerie's comment when she says that the learners "will dislike you instantly". Through their professional knowledge the woman middle managers were seen to be able to identify the practices of incompetent teachers as well as being able to stimulate these teachers to think more deeply about how they influence their students. The learners begin to "dislike" incompetent educators, yet they try to be like teachers who work well. The extracts of the four women middle managers also highlight the need for "dedicated" educators who set an example, as this will inspire the academic work of the learners. The narratives draw attention to the imperative of the need for committed and dedicated educators to promote intellectual development in learners, hence the fact that the women middle managers do not accept "second-rate performance" from their educators, which is in accord with the view of Leithwood et al. (1999, p. 69). The act of "leading" the learners somewhere, in Valerie's extract, suggests that the agency and the authority of the

teacher leads the learners from the known to the unknown in their educational journey. I find that the notion and act of leading from the known to the unknown reminiscent of a visionary leader. Valerie's narrative highlights the leadership capability of educators through which, and when applied in class, can promote the intellectual development of learners. Thus the women middle managers were seen to be able to critically assess the needs of the learners within their department because as professional women they had developed the capability of knowledge, imagination and practical skills to find solutions to promote effective learning and the intellectual stimulation of the learners. The solution they offer for effective classroom instruction is concentrated around being "dedicated", "well-prepared" teachers, who agree to be "monitored" by their managers to ensure that "constructive" teaching takes place and who are then able to "set the pace" with the learners.

The women middle managers were seen to be able to be intellectually stimulated within their roles if given the opportunity to develop and be involved in leadership practices not solely confined to the department. My findings indicate that freedom and autonomy to manage stimulates the interest of the women middle managers, evident, for example, in the following interview extracts:

There is more admin. work now than there used to be before you know. And the principals are delegating more of their stuff to us. Before the principals did a lot of paper work themselves. I remember when I was teaching, the principal did the timetable by himself. Now we do it together as a staff. ... We in the middle, we decide. ...We actually run the school because we even plan the timetable... We plan everything. (Irene, interview, 27 August)

I have helped the principal with so much. I mean with my experience, this is my 26<sup>th</sup> year. I know the game like the back of my hand. So whenever I see that we should have done something this way and not that, I suggest it to the principal and we change that. In the year 2000, when we were changing from weekly basis teaching to a nine day cycle, I helped out with the time-table and drew up schemes of work for the nine day cycle. (Thembi, interview, 29 July)

Basically as middle managers we have designed the policies in this school. Every policy has come from middle management. Admission, late coming, AIDS policy, everything. The vision and mission has come from the staff and middle managers. (Hema, interview, 19 April)

I mean upper management cannot function if I am not there below them. A lot of what we do is actually upper management's work. As I was saying I do much of the deputy's work (Rita, interview, 19 April)

So the educators just don't want to go to the office to sort out anything because the principal is just not interested. She's washed her hands of everything. And she feels that the HoDs must handle everything which we do (Valerie, interview, 7 September)

These extracts show how the external conditions within the school context contribute to the professional development of the woman middle manager. The narratives reveal how the collaborative culture of the school promotes the leadership skills and knowledge of the women middle managers. This is possible through the approach adopted by the school principal of distributed leadership, a concept posited by Grant (2010). The participants have “helped the principal with so much”, they have “designed every policy” in school as middle managers, they are able “to decide” and “plan everything” at school level. This shows the freedom and leadership opportunities that are presented to the women HoDs by upper management. However, Valerie’s narrative suggests that through the principal’s lack of interest in her own management role the teachers have little confidence in her as a manager. The HoDs are therefore expected to perform other management roles and “must handle everything”. It is inferred that the middle managers are not given leadership duties by the principal to develop them as managers through the process of collaboration. Instead there is a lack of collaboration in this particular school context and it is implied that the HoDs are coerced into various management tasks. Valerie does not resist the principal’s demands on them, rather she accepts and completes the duties with her colleagues. This shows that she is self assured and confident in her abilities to manage and lead.

West-Burnham, (1994, p.38) states that through the culture of collaboration and leadership distribution, the members of the organisation are given more authority within the school, authority based on expertise, rather than positional authority. The women participants in this study have been given leadership opportunities at whole-school level because of their expertise and experience. They claim variously to have been given the opportunity to “run the school” and to design the “school policies”. Their principals are seen to having been mindful of the need to foster participation of the women HoDs, having accommodated them in structuring the organisation of the schools. This highlights the management capability of assurance and confidence of the participants as suggested by Walker et al. (2010).

Two observations worth noting in this regard come to mind. First, woman middle managers possess assurance and confidence in their ability to perform higher level management tasks. Second, the principal has confidence in them to delegate higher

level management tasks to them. The narratives reveal the distribution of leadership from the top to the levels of management below. The extracts show that being part of the strategic planning of the school (planning of policies, planning the time-table and schemes of work) inspires and encourages the women middle managers as their expertise is acknowledged by senior managers. When the women middle managers are able to actively participate in the organisational matters of the school, their agency as women managers and leaders is being promoted. Being in the middle, yet being able to “run the school”, suggests the confidence and assurance the participants have of their leadership abilities. The confidence they have of their abilities is evident when the participants say that they “know the game like the back of my hand” and “we in the middle ... we decide”. I find that, since the participants had a strong capability set to function as creative and innovative middle managers, they have been able to develop their knowledge and skills as managers, involved as they have been in several tasks necessary for the efficient running of the schools. They are seen to be able to develop these skills for management tasks due to the opportunities their principals offered them.

In this section I discussed how women middle managers stimulated the knowledge, creativity and skills of the members in their departments, be they learners or educators. I also pointed out how the participants themselves developed their knowledge and skills as leaders through the freedom and opportunities they were offered by senior management, allowing them to be involved in the management of the whole school. Next, I will discuss how the participants set departmental directions through the practice of inspirational motivation, idealised influence, building a departmental vision, establishing goals and high performance expectations.

## **7.2 Setting Department Directions**

In this section, I will show that setting departmental directions involves transformational leadership functioning through inspirational motivation, idealised influence (Bass & Avolio, 1994), building a departmental vision, establishing goals and having high performance expectations (Leithwood et al., 1999). The professional capability that enables the practice of setting departmental directions is that of informed vision (Walker et al., 2010). This is explained in Table 3.1 in the matrix of

the alignment of the capability approach and transformational leadership theory. Through the capability of informed vision, the woman middle manager can imagine alternative futures for the department and improved social arrangements (Walker et al., 2010).

According to transformational leadership models, charismatic leaders have a vision for their own organisation (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1997; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). An inspirational or charismatic leader has a vision that refers to some idealised goal that the leader wants the organisation to achieve in the future (Conger and Kanungo, 1988, p. 85), which he or she proposes to the members in the organisation. Characteristically, the more idealised the goal, the more it deviates from the status quo (Conger & Kanungo, 1988, p. 85). Building a vision or mission and setting goals require the active engagement of all stakeholders in an organisation. In the next section I will show that the women middle managers in this study have been able to encourage participation of all their staff members in setting goals for the department, practising inspirational motivation, and idealised influence and built a departmental vision in this regard.

### ***7.2.1 Being an Inspiration as a Middle Manager***

Leaders use inspirational motivation to build emotional commitment to a vision or goal (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 36). Bass and Riggio (2006) further state that values, beliefs and responsibilities are encouraged by a leader who uses the transformational leadership approach. The transformational leader persuades followers to consider the moral values involved in their work (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Charismatic, transformational leaders are seen as visionaries (Leithwood et al. 1999). By setting a vision for the department, the leader encourages the followers to envisage a positive and exciting future (Carless, 1998).

The concept of a vision for an organisation originated in the business sector where it is apparently viewed to be most useful in achieving organisational success. Angus (1989), applying the concept to the educational sector, conversely claims that there is no evidence that having a vision brings educational success. However, in my study the participating women middle managers indicated that having a vision for the department, in their experience, helps to improve learner performance over the years. The participants reported that the broad school vision cascades into their departments.

The goals and objectives for their departments relates to learner achievement, classroom and teacher performance. They all spoke of assessing learner achievement through “results” which would reflect if the learning area objectives and goals achieved, which would serve as an indicator of the effectiveness of the educators’ instruction and the standard of teaching and learning within their departments. Therefore, the overall vision for the department has been the pursuit of effective teaching and learning within the department.

As departmental leaders, the women middle managers’ aim has been to improve student performance by monitoring the actual outcomes with the required teaching outcomes as suggested by Busher and Harris (1999). Therefore, as instructional leaders of the department, the participants inspired the educators to remain committed to a vision and goals to ensure that effective teaching and learning occurred in the classroom. These women HoDs *are* visionaries and set out to achieve the stated vision for the department. As Moloï (2002, p. 97) argues in this regard, visionary leadership can be achieved by developing strategic initiatives for the department and encouraging and inspiring the educators, which is what they do. The following narratives are examples of the vision the participants had for their departments:

There is waning interest in learners... There is a general sense of indifference to their work ...so it makes our job as management that much more difficult. Our vision is to ensure that all the languages in the department, English, Afrikaans and Zulu have a 100% pass rate every year. But then you have to constantly boost the morale of the educators that you are in charge of as they can lose sight of the vision. (Arthi, interview, 12 July)

Period 3: Biology class, Grade 12. Mrs P hands out tests that learners had written last week. She emphasises the good pass rate of the learners and she discusses how important the subject is and the benefits of hard work. She calls herself the “Grade Mother” and the girls listen attentively to her advice about how important a good pass is for their future. ... After the lesson my conversation with Mrs P indicated that she does not only want all the girls to pass, she also wants them to have strong passes (Journal entry, observation and conversation with Rita, 16 April)

The vision and goal for our department is that every year every learner should pass the subject. Our vision therefore is to have a highly functioning department and the goals are set accordingly to achieve that vision (Gene, interview, 10 September)

Obviously the school has an overall mission and vision and this filters down to my department. I think our mission is to ensure that we produce capable learners to go out into society and therefore our goal is to offer quality education to the learners so they can become capable individuals for society (Irene, interview, 27 August)

Arthi, Rita and Gene may be seen as women middle managers having an idealised goal of a perfect pass rate in their departments. Arthi also has the vision of providing the members of her team with a sense of purpose and seeks to boost their morale as

classroom practitioners. Through the “waning interest” shown by learners, the teachers can also lose sight of the departmental vision for academic excellence. However, Rita is able to inspire the learners in her class to have a vision for their future which can be achieved through “a good pass”. Irene’s departmental vision is to offer the learners “quality education” to develop them into “capable individuals” and Gene’s vision is that every learner should pass. The capability of informed vision enables the woman middle manager to practise her management role through inspirational motivation. Through the functioning of inspirational motivation these women middle managers are seen to be able to provide meaning and challenge to their colleagues’ work ethos, with a team spirit being purposefully aroused among the members, indeed, echoing the work of Bass and Avolio (1994). The following capsules from the participants’ extracts show how as women middle managers they provide meaning to the teachers’ work and have been able to arouse a sense of team spirit in the department:

It is like I don’t impose goals and things for the department. The overall goals deal with learner achievement in the department. I give them [educators] a chance to tell me what is to be done. Then I can see from there if it is okay, or if that is not right. ... and they are very co-operative you know. (Mandisa, interview, 13 September)

In my department there are ten female educators and we have a strong sense of team spirit because everyone is important in my department (Hema, interview, 19 April)

There is transparency, so nobody can say I’m favouring one above the other. ... You have to be careful when you are a manager, in that you have to treat everybody the same. The minute someone sees that you are favouring one above the other that is when your problems are going to start stepping in (Valerie, interview, 31 August)

So though you are given freedom to actually be your own being in the classroom, I will expect you to be a team player. I will expect you to step in if there is a problem (Gene, interview, 10 September)

During the lunch break, I asked my team to ensure that a co-ordinated, consultative process for determining the term mark was used (Neelam, journal entry, 19 March)

The kind of team effort that I have fostered within that department has offered us the capacity and the capability to actually produce very good results. We took our A symbols up to 28 at one point (Arthi, interview, 12 July)

Having the professional capability of informed vision enables the woman middle manager to improve social interaction within the department. Through this she creates opportunities for the teachers to make decisions concerning the main goal of the department, which is to improve the performance of learners. Giving the teachers a chance to suggest various ways to improve the results of learners shows that the

woman middle manager involves teachers in envisioning future states for the department and sharing in the total vision for the department (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Through this shared formulation of the vision, the woman middle manager promotes team spirit in the department and therefore expects a commitment to the vision and goals from all the members. Moreover, she is able to win the co-operation of the teachers because of her practice of inspirational motivation that relates closely to the influence a leader has on the members in the team. Idealised influence is effective when leaders act as role models for the people they lead because they are admired, respected and trusted by the followers (Bass & Avolio, 1994). The following extracts show how the women middle managers in this study have been able to build strong relationships with the members of their teams and to influence them through their leadership role. Having “co-operative” teachers in the department, ensuring that “everyone is important”, not “favouring one above the other”, giving teachers the “freedom” to be their “own being in the classroom” and ensuring that the team works in a “consultative” manner, verifies that the participants encourage team work when working towards a common goal and vision for the department. Arthi’s narrative illustrates the importance of team work in fulfilling departmental goals and in achieving quality education. However, that the women middle managers have been seen not to exercise extreme or excessive authority over the members in their team is clear. Instead, they treat their team members as equals and do not make a distinction between themselves and their educator colleagues based on their position as managers. These extracts show how the participants offer equal opportunities for all team members:

When I conduct a meeting to discuss plans and goals, which is usually at the beginning of the year, I’m not that formal. I don’t create that distinction you know. We have a proper meeting, agendas and what have you and they respond more. You will find they are quick to bring up a problem, or lets discuss this or show us this. ...I find that when you show them you are in authority, then they switch off and if you make it like a discussion, you show them we are looking for solutions, then they are open to you. That is why I have such a good relationship with my team. (Valerie, Interview, 7 September)

If we don’t see eye to eye about something with my team, we try and sit down and we see where we differ until we come to an agreement. We don’t leave it hanging like that or like I have the power to make all the decisions (Thembi, interview, 29 July)

I’m not an autocratic person. I don’t want people to feel that I’m a manager. I come down to their level as an educator....my colleagues are free to suggest anything. You know they don’t wait upon me to say something. They take initiatives. And this all helps in the upliftment of the department (Mandisa, interview, 27 September).

If you give people freedom in their own way to teach, if there is a crisis, they step in (Gene, interview, 10 September)

I found that behaviours practised by a leader such as avoiding the use of power for personal gain, considering the needs of others and demonstrating high standards of moral and ethical conduct, are qualities that are admired by the followers. According to transformational leadership theory, this type of behaviour in a leader amounts to the leader having an idealised influence in the organisation (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio; 1994; Bass & Riggio; 2006). In these four extracts, I sensed that Valerie, Themi, Mandisa and Gene as women middle managers, are seen to avoid using their positional power to make decisions in the department and differentiating between their colleagues and themselves by saying they “don’t create the distinction” of positional status in their departments. Instead, they consult with their team members and listen to the members’ ideas and views as well. The women middle managers “discuss” problems, work together to “come to an agreement”, admitting openly that they “don’t have the power to make all the decisions”, they come “down” to the “level” of the teachers and they give the teachers the freedom to teach in “their own way”. They have therefore been able to have a “good relationship with [their] team”. Through team work and consulting with her colleagues, the woman middle manager has been able to gain their confidence and trust, as well as forming strong bonds with her colleagues.

The narratives show that the women middle managers, through their capability of informed vision, have been able to share risks with their colleagues by inviting them to participate in the decision-making process of the department, rather than making the decisions for the department without any consultation with the members. I found that the woman middle manager was counted on to do the right things in the department and demonstrated high standards of ethical and moral conduct. Through their idealised influence, the women middle managers have shown that they are ethical and moral in their practice. They are committed to the well-being of the learners and their educational development and do not accept poor educator performance in their departments. The three narratives of Valerie, Rita and Irene show how these women middle managers monitor the practices of the educators as they are responsible for knowledge delivery in the classroom.

When the children complain about the teacher, and I find out then I will speak to the teacher and ask if I can sit in their class and I find out what the problem is. You know, when you sit in the class, you can see what is going on, and I call the teacher in and we will discuss the problem. (Valerie, interview, 31 August).

I could understand from a parent's point of view. If your child is not getting the education they deserve and your child could possibly fail the subject, it is problematic. You must understand why the teacher is not teaching as he or she should and create ways to motivate them to do the work expected of them (Rita, interview, 19 April)

When I walk around the classes are quiet and teachers are teaching. Teachers are teaching, so I can trust you (sic). You need to be able to say to that parent, that I really taught your child and your child just didn't perform well. ... It must not be lies. It must be the truth of what really happens in the class. (Irene, interview, 20 August).

The extracts show that the women middle managers have a moral and an ethical obligation to the learners, the quality of education that they receive and the type of service delivery from the teachers. I find that Valerie, Rita and Irene, as women middle managers have a concern for their members because of their ethic of care and a moral sense of duty towards the learners and the educators. Care is central to women's psychological development (Gilligan, 1982). Noddings (1992, p. 24) sees caring and the ethical self in feminine terms, stating that "[w]omen have learned to regard every human encounter as a potential caring occasion". Caring involves a relationship, "as the self is seen in relation with others" (Wetherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 5). Through the notion of the ethic of care, I was able to deduce that the participants felt responsible for the education of the learners in their departments. These three extracts show how the woman middle managers reacted "instinctively" to find solutions to help and motivate teachers who might have been performing poorly in the classrooms. I became aware of this when Valerie and Rita respectively remembered how they confronted the teachers and counselled them, seeking ways to motivate them in their teaching practice. Valerie observed the teachers' teaching practice and Irene made her presence known to teachers by "walking around" when teachers were engaged in teaching.

The extracts indicate that the women middle managers approach the teachers in their departments with understanding and care and look at ways to help the teachers rather than reprimanding them if they are not performing well in the classroom. This is due to the moral sense of duty the woman middle manager feels for the educators she is managing.

Closely related to vision building in an organisation is consensus about goals. In the next section I will discuss how women middle managers are seen to establish goals for the department.

### **7.2.2 Goal Setting**

The difference between vision building and establishing goals lies in the time frames and “the scope of concern” that these two types of practices require (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 64). Vision building is a fundamental sense of purpose that is likely to be pursued over a number of years, whereas goal consensus is accomplished in the short term and moves towards attaining the vision (Leithwood et al., 1999). Both vision building and goal consensus require the professional capability of informed vision that needs to be developed in a leader. This will allow the leader to envision an improved future state for the department (Walker et al., 2010). According to transformational leadership theory, establishing goal consensus is about promoting cooperation among the members of the organisation and getting them to work together towards a common goal (Leithwood et al., 1999). Goal setting activities are seen as motivational in that they “increase the clarity of goals and the perception of goals as challenging but achievable” (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 64). In Section 7.2.1 I discussed how the women middle managers set a vision for their departments, which often filters down into short-term goals. All the participants set high standards for their departments and expected quality education to be offered to learners. My journal entry records my observation of Arthi conducting a meeting with the teachers teaching English in the Language Department and shows how teachers work together to develop goals for the department, which in turn lead to the attainment of the departmental vision:

Arthi and her team of teachers discussed the learners’ needs to improve their literacy skills of reading and writing. Arthi identified the overall goal that the teachers should work together to improve the reading and writing skills of the learners. Then the teachers at each grade level had to set goals for themselves to develop the reading and writing skills at different levels. The teacher who taught English at the junior secondary level said that she will start teaching reading at the basic levels in grade 8 and move in stages to grades 9. She even suggested that she will network with the primary school teachers to acquaint herself with the teaching of phonics. (Journal entry, observation of Arthi, 19 February)

It is clear to me that Arthi is able to guide her teachers to set goals in order to improve reading in the department through her capability of informed vision. The extract describes how the teachers made changes in their instruction in order to improve the performance of learners by setting “goals for themselves to develop the reading and

writing skills” of the learners. Arthi provides the opportunity for teachers to review their teaching practices and to establish group and personal goals to help improve teaching and learning in the department. This is evident when the teachers “at each grade level had to set goals for themselves”. Through departmental meetings she engages the teachers in goal setting and in reviewing the progress being made to achieve those goals. The extract shows how Arthi is able to get teachers to establish and review their individual professional growth goals, as in the case of the teacher who wants to network with primary school teachers of English so that she is able to learn how to teach phonics to her secondary school learners to help them to improve their reading skills. The extract shows how the goals set by Arthi and the teachers reflect the overall vision for the department to achieve a “100% pass rate” in the future.

Transformational leaders act as important resources in helping their colleagues to achieve their individual and school goals (Leithwood et al., 1999). In this extract it is evident that Arthi is responsible for establishing departmental goals that seek to improve the teaching of reading in the department and to steer teachers towards attaining their individual professional goals that will lead to them developing themselves professionally in their classroom practice. The following capsules illustrate how these women HoDs have ongoing discussions with the teachers about their professional growth plans and goals.

Teachers should have their own personal growth plan and goals for their development. This is set out clearly in the IQMS document. The only way to do this is if teachers are able to be critical about their professional development and see where they need to improve and set their goals to develop in those areas. Through IQMS I monitor their development and if in this round of observations a teacher needs to improve in say record keeping or maintaining discipline in the classroom, then they need to work on their personal growth plan and show through their goals how they intend to improve themselves. (Hema, interview, 6 June)

Their professional growth plans are important because it highlights what they intend improving on and developing as teachers. I monitor these and see if they are following up. You also have to be very honest when completing this document (Gene, interview, 10 September)

I want my teachers to be critical of their teaching abilities and to write their strengths and weaknesses and how to improve those weaknesses. (Irene, interview, 20 August)

The teachers know that you have to show improvement in your abilities and it can only be achieved if you set goals for yourself. You have to improve on your qualifications, go for workshops, plan and present workshops and show initiative. That’s how you plan your professional growth (Thembi, interview, 29 July).

The extracts focus on the developmental process of the teacher and how this is facilitated by the woman HoD. Hema and Gene show that through their monitoring and on-going interaction with the teachers, they are able to discuss their personal professional growth plans. The extract shows that the woman HoD looks at specific goals that were to be pursued by the teachers, for example, goals to improve the teacher's "record keeping" practice or "maintaining discipline in the classroom". As an HoD, Hema had to monitor the teaching practice of the teacher, which she did by observing the teacher. Through observations of the teacher in the classroom, the woman middle manager was able to assess the needs of the teacher. Hema indicated that the teacher had to be "critical" of herself and her "professional development" needs. Gene and Irene also endorse that teachers need to be critical of their practices if they wish to develop professionally. Thembi believes that improvement in teaching "qualifications" and showing "initiative" as a teacher are essential ingredients for professional growth and development. The extracts show how these women middle managers can encourage their teachers to establish and review their individual professional growth plans by working "on their personal growth plan", and be guided by their personal goals. I believe that setting goals for the department and individual professional goals encourage high performance standards in an organisation. In the next section, I will discuss how the women HoDs in this study encouraged high performance expectations in the department.

### ***7.2.3 "I Demand a High Standard of Work"***

A high performance expectation, from a transformational leadership perspective, entails practices that demonstrate the leader's expectations for excellence, quality and high performance from the members in the organisation (Leithwood et al., 1999). Leithwood et al. (1999, p. 68) make a particular point of mentioning that a high performance expectation is motivational and helps teachers see the challenging nature of the goals set by the organisation. The following narratives reflect the monitoring of teacher performance in order to ensure that high performance expectations are met.

As an educator you have to have control over it [results]. ...Isn't that so that every educator is responsible for delivering and those subject committee meetings afford us the opportunity to be accountable for those results. ...So I give each educator, whether it is Afrikaans, English or isiZulu a slot to report back. They need to be creative in class to improve results and report their findings (Arthi, interview, 12 July).

I just pop into the teachers classes at any time, even in the middle of your presentation, I just pop in, because I'm dealing with people who have been teaching for so many years. ... and they

know what they are doing. ... as long as there is proof that work is being done (Mandisa, interview, 27 September)

I supervise their records, check on their personal growth plans to ensure development is taking place, and always monitor results of learners (Gene, interview, 10 September)

Arthi's narrative illustrates the role the HoDs have in stimulating and motivating the teacher's performance in the classroom. As a first line manager, the HoD is answerable to the senior managers. The learners' academic results are a reflection of how the department is functioning. The extracts show how educators are encouraged to "report back at meetings" on learner performance and to take responsibility for learners' achievements and their educational development. The narratives highlight the emphasis these women middle managers place on academic results and high performance expectations. These participants ensure that there is strict "control" within their departments. This is achieved through "report back" meetings, observation of teachers teaching "even in the middle of (their) presentation", "supervision" and the monitoring of the "results of learners". According to the capability approach, the results of learners are seen as the functioning, or the final outcome, of an achieved capability. Sen (1992, p. 31) would consider the achievement of the results of learner as what the learner actually managed to accomplish, rather than the real opportunity the learner has to accomplish what it personally really valued. Therefore, Arthi's extract shows that schools place great emphasis on the actual achievements of the learners, rather than the freedom the learner has to function in particular ways. As women in a middle management position the participants were also seen to be concerned about the learners' achievements in the form of their academic results. However, they also acknowledged that the results of learners depended to a great extent on the effectiveness of the teachers in the classroom.

These extracts also show how the women middle managers set high performance expectations in the department and monitored the performance of educators through the results of learners. The capability approach places emphasis on the freedom to achieve something that one really values, rather than what one actually accomplishes. In Arthi's narrative, although she focused on the results of learners, she also supported the idea that the teachers create opportunities for the learners. Teachers are therefore expected to perform at a high level; if they do not, the learners' education will suffer the consequences. This is what Nussbaum (2000a) refers to as external capabilities,

where the external conditions in the form of ineffective teachers do not contribute to learner achievement. Arthi makes it clear that she expects her teachers to be “creative” and to work hard at improving learner results, which she monitors consistently because teachers “report back” about the learners’ results at meetings. Through the practice of encouraging high performance expectations, the middle manager is able to maintain good results in her department. The extracts also show how these women middle managers demonstrated their commitment to the welfare of the students in their departments as they were concerned about their performance. Generally, the women middle managers expect the teachers to be hard-working and professional and demand excellence and quality of service from their colleagues which is further reflected in Neelam’s case:

I demand a high standard of work in terms of the curriculum, in terms of technical aspects of presentation of work, so the work ethic of my educators is something they have to look at very carefully. They do understand that I have a serious nature when it comes to my work no matter how menial the task might be. ... So I think the fussiness in respect of little things has precipitated right down to the level of the learner, to the benefit of all stakeholders. (Neelam, interview, 1 April)

“I demand a high standard of work” indicates the woman middle manager’s expectation for high standards of work from the educator. The woman middle manager espouses norms of excellence and quality of service no matter “how menial the task might be”. The woman HoD is seen to have expected high performance standards in the delivery of the curriculum and presentation of work by the educator. Through the capability of informed vision and envisioning a brighter future for the department, Neelam, as a woman middle manager, is seen to have expected the educators to have a strong work ethic and to remain committed to producing work of a high standard. Neelam is seen to consider all tasks to be treated with equal importance and to believe that this type of work ethic can infiltrate throughout the department, from the teachers “right down to the level of the learner”. The extract shows that Neelam has high performance expectations and is also clear about what she views as good for the department. Through the capability of integrity, the women middle managers in this research are seen to be able to act ethically and to ensure that the teachers have a strong work ethic and recognise the need to maintain high levels of performance as teachers.

Setting the direction for the department is an important leadership task of the woman middle manager and this task is possible through the professional capability of informed vision. The woman middle manager is responsible for a team of teachers. How she is able to develop them is dealt with in the next section.

### **7.3 Developing People in the Department**

Since people make up an organisation, it is important to ensure that they are developed to function appropriately for their roles within the organisation.

Transformational leaders pay special attention to the individual needs of followers to foster the achievement and growth of the latter (Bass & Riggio, 2006, p. 7). Leaders also need to set standards and set an example for their colleagues to follow. The transformational leader acts as a mentor and role model for the team members because of the example set for others to emulate. In the next section I will discuss how women middle managers offer individualised support to the members in the department through the capabilities of affiliation, emotion and integrity.

#### **7.3.1 “You have to know what the Human is made of”**

Teachers’ individual differences can be thought about in terms of their needs and desires (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Within the transformational leadership context, a leader respects followers and is concerned with the personal feelings and needs of colleagues (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 72). The leader displays behaviour that demonstrates an acceptance of the followers’ individual differences (Bass & Avolio, 1994, p. 4). Women middle managers in this study are seen to display a form of behaviour that supports the individual needs of their colleagues. This is noted in the following extracts:

I think you have to know what the human is made of, you have to know to be able to read moods, you must be able to read body language, you must be able to read that maybe this person has a problem today. (Gene, interview, 10 September)

...every now and then if a teacher is having problems, I will take her out and sit with her on a one-to-one and give her different strategies as to how to manage particular problems. (Rita, interview, 19 April)

So I am working with all women. I know I play a very influencing role. I can share what I have with them.... I know I have made a difference by building meaningful relationships with my staff, by being sensitive to them, by understanding their needs and giving them space to be who they are (Hema, interview, 7 June)

The extracts show how these women middle managers are mindful of the personal needs of the teacher. Comments like “knowing what the human being is made of”, communicating with the teacher on a “one-to-one” basis, “building meaningful relationships with my staff” and “being sensitive to them” are evidence of the individual support being given to a teacher by a woman middle manager. I note that these women middle managers have been able to recognise that human behaviour is never a constant and that people’s moods change. Thus Gene asserts that as a manager she has to be attuned to the needs of her colleagues and recognise when they require individual support. Through the capability of affiliation, the women middle managers are seen to feel a sense of obligation to the members of their departments (Walker et al., 2010). Hema understands that as a middle manager she plays “a very influencing role” in her department and is therefore “sensitive” to the teachers’ needs. Similarly, Rita is seen to be able to show concern for her team members through her capability of affiliation when she recognised that “a teacher [was] having problems”. Through the practice of individualised support Rita could counsel her colleague and offer solutions to the problem.

Not all the women middle managers felt supportive of their teachers, particularly if the teachers deviated from what was expected of them as professionals. The absence of support and encouragement is illustrated in the following three narratives:

I finally managed to obtain some of the money which was owed by the educator for the excursion. In my 21 year career, I have never experienced this type of devious, unsavoury behaviour. The school secretary threatened the educator and the educator coughed up the money. What a dreadful experience. (Neelam, journal entry, 22 March)

There are times in my department when I can lose my cool especially when somebody does not do as they are required to do, like I said, my \_\_\_\_\_ teacher. She is not somebody who follows through an instruction (Rita, interview, 19 April)

So if anyone doesn’t do whatever is to be done then he has to do that in writing. Write to me and tell me why the job is not done. When it comes to that level then it is a serious issue....There was a male teacher who was very resistant you know and he was not going to class...and that case went up to the Circuit Office (Mandisa, interview, 27 September)

Neelam, as a woman middle manager, is seen to have felt a sense of anger and betrayal through her capability of emotion when confronted by a colleague’s unacceptable conduct, Rita “can lose (her) cool when teachers “do not do as they are required to do” and Mandisa expects written evidence from teachers who do not comply with policy. Moreover, from these extracts, it is noted that the participants as women middle managers, refuse to support teachers who act unethically. The capsules

show that teachers who behave unprofessionally and seem to be without the capability of integrity, are not supported by the woman middle manager like Neelam, who clearly created a distance between the unprofessional teacher and herself by responding in an unapproachable and unwelcoming way and declaring him as being “devious” and having “unsavoury behaviour”. What is more, she decided to not take on further responsibility for the teacher by not trying to help him resolve his problem; instead she handed the matter over to the school secretary. Similarly, Mandisa has distanced herself from an educator in her department for not doing his duties. She referred the teacher to higher education authorities. This indicates that although these women middle managers do not support teachers in certain circumstances, they are ethical in the choices they make because they do not condone unprofessional behaviour in teachers. Therefore being a highly ethical individual is a characteristic of a transformational leader.

The women middle managers often support and praise those teachers who work well as a team and who produce good results. This is highlighted in the following extracts:

Today everyone worked as a team. It really felt good. No one waited for someone else to get things done. Educators participated in events which really showed team spirit. A great day! (Hema, journal entry, 13 February)

Look I give credit when it is due and if the teacher does well and produces good results I make it known to her. After all she is proving herself (Rita, conversation after departmental meeting, 16 April)

I work with individual teachers who need to be helped and in the team, I always recognise good effort, especially if you go the extra mile as an educator (Gene, interview, 10 September)

Of course, if my team members support each other more work gets done and there’s no friction. Then I don’t have a problem with conflicts, because that brings the department down (Thembi, interview, 29 July)

As a leader who believes in individual support and care, and acts accordingly, Hema, as a woman middle manager, also recognises good work and effort. The above entry in her journal demonstrates how Hema offers encouragement when her team members display team spirit. Similarly, Rita, Gene and Thembi motivate the teachers by acknowledging good effort. It is apparent in these narratives that a strong team promotes good relations in the department and this is conducive for effective teaching.

In analysing the interview extracts, I picked up that, as leaders of a team, the women middle managers promote team effort and recognise the contribution made by each member of the team. Leithwood et al. (1999, p. 73) point out that the practice of

supporting the individual should be accompanied by expressing “recognition of good work and effort”. In Hema’s journal entry, she is clearly seen to recognise the effort of the members of the team, recognising that each member of the team showed initiative and got “things done”. Through her writing, she offers praise to the teachers for this and encourages good performance. The three extracts show that individual efforts of members help to promote effective “team spirit”.

The work ethic of the manager and leader is important as colleagues often emulate the leader’s best practice. Modelling best practice is discussed in the next section.

### ***7.3.2 “I Lead by Example”***

Best practice is practice that sets an example for the members of the organisation to follow and is similar to the values of the leader (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 80). By acting as a mentor and role model, the transformational leader is able to support the educator’s career and psychosocial development. According to Sosik, Godshalk, and Yammarino (2004, p. 245):

[B]oth mentors and transformational leaders act as role models who encourage learning and development, and work to develop others’ self-confidence, personal identity, and well-being. Thus, transformational leaders likely serve as mentors, and mentors likely exhibit various degrees of transformational leadership behavior.

Sosik, Godshalk & Yammarino (2004) highlight that the roles of a transformational leader, a role model and a mentor, are the same as they develop the capability and well-being of team members. This explanation reflects the psychosocial support offered in the relationship between the mentor and the protégé, provided by the former to the latter. Godshalk and Sosik (2000) specify that transformational leaders mentor their team members by offering career development advice and networking opportunities. I pointed out in Chapter Six that mentors and role models influenced the women managers participating in this study in their management roles by developing the capabilities required for management. Similarly, I found that the women middle managers set an example for the teachers in their departments in several ways, trying to develop the teaching capabilities of the educators by offering them emotional rather than career advancement support, as Gail’s and Irene’s narratives indicate:

I lead by example and teachers follow my lead as I am committed and hard-working and only expect the teachers’ best effort. (Gail, interview, 27 August)

To me it [mentoring] is a step by step process. You can't do it quickly. So I won't say she was incompetent because for me now she is learning my style. (Irene, interview, 28 August)

These women middle managers expected the teachers to follow their ethic of hard work and best practice. Irene sees herself as a mentor and role model to her teachers, according to her, for example, one teacher in her department developed competency skills through her mentorship. Irene has confidence in her ability, stating that the teacher is "learning my style" and therefore is not "incompetent". Through best practice, the woman middle manager displays energy and enthusiasm for her own work (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 80). Both Gail and Irene show that they, as women middle managers, are proud of their classroom management practice, each seeing themselves as "hard-working", competent individuals who were able to lead by example.

The psychosocial nature of the relationship between the woman middle manager and the teachers is evident as the participants attended to the emotional well-being of the educators, echoing Kram's (1985) interpretation of this aspect of human nature. The participants were seen to be caring and nurturing as mentors, describing the mentoring relationship with their educators as "a step-by-step process" and with "one-to-one" attention.

The feminine qualities of leadership too are emphasised in the narratives. These feminine qualities of nurturing and caring for the individual educator's needs can be recognised as a strength in their management. The woman middle manager who feels assured and confident of her professional capabilities willingly opens herself up to the scrutiny of other teachers in her quest for effectiveness in the classroom. This is noted in the three narratives:

I invite Level 1 educators to observe my science lessons if they feel they are having problems in the classroom teaching. Through observing a more experienced teacher they should be able to pick up ideas to help them in their own teaching. (Neelam, interview, 1 April)

It is not easy to constantly demonstrate how things should be done. Because sometimes the people may become resistant, because they want you to be seen as a failure (Mandisa, interview, 27 September)

There are teachers who can't control their classes because the learners think that they are weak. I do step in and show them how to teach and control the class (Valerie, interview, 31 August)

I think that these extracts appropriately show that as women middle managers, they have the professional capability of assurance and self-confidence and that in guiding teachers in their classroom practice the participants willingly open themselves up to close scrutiny. Neelam knows her abilities as a teacher and feels confident to have teachers “observe” her lessons to the extent that she is sure that the less experienced teacher will be able to “pick up ideas” and learn from observing a teacher with more experience in the classroom. Mandisa and Valerie offer demonstration lessons to their teachers. Mandisa understands that the teachers may not be supportive of her, but she still has the confidence to demonstrate how to manage and teach a class. It is evident that if the women middle managers are open to feedback from the less experienced teachers about their own teaching practice, they display their commitment to their own professional growth as educators. The quality of *commitment to one’s professional development* is what these women middle managers are suggesting the teachers learn from them.

To sum up this section, I find that the women middle managers develop people in their department, and are able to do this by offering individual support to departmental members by setting a good example so that best practice is modelled by the teachers. Once people have been developed within the organisation, redesigning the department is necessary and should allow for the participation of all members in the department. This is discussed in the next section.

#### **7.4 Redesigning the Department**

Redesigning the department requires a change in the culture of the department. I find that that this entails collaboration among the members to promote effective teaching and learning. Leithwood et al. (1999, p. 82) assert that “a school’s success depends on its organizational culture”. The culture of the school depends on the norms, values, beliefs and assumptions shared by members of the school (Leithwood et al., 1999). Transformational leaders build school cultures that aim to promote the school norms, values, beliefs and assumptions that are student-centred, and that support teacher development (Leithwood et al., 1999, p. 83). I contend that the capabilities of practical reason, social and collective struggles, assurance, confidence and resilience enable woman middle managers to practise their management roles that lead to creating a

productive departmental culture and structures that promote participation and decision-making skills of all members in the department.

#### ***7.4.1 Creating a Productive Department***

I have observed that a productive departmental culture depends on collaboration among the members of a department. Since the department is a smaller unit within the whole school, most of the teachers within the department have similar values and beliefs about the learners' education and therefore find it easy to collaborate with the woman middle managers as they all work towards a common goal within the department. Collaboration within the department helps to enhance the motivation of teachers to change because of the social support they receive within a collaborating department (Leithwood et al., 1999). I have found in this study that the teachers within the department worked towards the common good of the department, and therefore woman middle managers were able to confront conflict in the department and act to resolve it through the use of shared values and beliefs. The following extract from my journal shows how one of the woman middle managers confronted conflict with a teacher and then resolved it because they both worked for the common good of the department.

Rita called Miss X, one of her Grade 12 educators, to her classroom to discuss her records which were not updated. These records had to be taken to the cluster meeting to be signed by the cluster co-ordinator and departmental representatives. Learners' portfolios also needed to be in order because these records would also be moderated against the teacher's records. None of the records were in order. Rita was upset at Miss X for being unprepared for the moderation and confronted the issue with Miss X. (Journal entry, observation of Rita, 19 April)

I notice that the woman middle manager confronted the conflict openly with the teacher as she understood that the reputation of the department was at stake and that the incompetence of the educator would impact negatively on the common good of the department. Through her professional capability of assurance and confidence in her ability as a manager, Rita was able to express and assert her views that the teacher changed her attitude to her work because she had the confidence to act for change that would benefit the department. The value espoused by Rita that everyone should work towards the common good of the department was being defied and to protect the department's reputation, Rita resorted to confronting the teacher. In this way, Rita was able to reinforce the norms of excellence required from the teacher not only for her own work, but also that of her learners. The extract also shows that by reprimanding

the teacher for her incompetence, Rita was acting in a manner that is consistent with those beliefs and values shared by members in the department and the whole school. The professional capability of resilience also enables the woman middle manager to persevere in helping to change the work ethic of the teacher so that the latter is able to improve in her record-keeping and classroom practice. There are other times when women middle managers act in ways to share power and responsibility with members of the team (Leithwood et al., 1999). This is noted from the following extracts:

At the beginning I allocate a person to be in charge of a subject in each grade and that person then is responsible for every aspect you know of running out notes, tests, projects, etc. So that person [educator] controls everything and then disseminates the information to everybody else. The other thing I've done is that I have worked out the timetable where everybody in that particular grade is free and they will meet and however often they need to meet to ensure that everything has to be done according to specified requirements. (Rita, interview, 19 April).

Grade co-ordinators were requested to assist the team to determine the term marks to be used. I have a sore throat. At home I have little energy to serve my family (Neelam, journal entry, 19 March)

I find in these extracts a demonstration of how these women middle managers, through their professional capability of assurance and confidence, are able to have the confidence to act for change by having created the role of a subject grade leader and “grade co-ordinators”. Through this, teachers are given the opportunity to build their management and leadership skills because they are assigned informal leadership roles by the women middle managers. However, it is clear that these women middle managers defy the assumption that only those in formal leadership roles can make decisions and function as leaders. Instead, they have created a new ethos in the department, that of collaboration and shared leadership. By devolving leadership to the level of the educators, the participants are empowering the educators to take on informal leadership roles in the classroom and beyond, a point noted by Grant (2010, p. 49). Busher and Harris (1999) also observe that middle managers promote collegiality and group identity within their departments. In Rita’s extract the educators are encouraged to “be responsible for every aspect” of a particular grade in the school, and through this, are given leadership duties and are required to oversee the organisational matters of the subject in a particular grade. Neelam trusts the ability of those teachers who are chosen as grade co-ordinators to assist the team without her supervision. It is clear that she did not participate in the discussions because she had “a sore throat” and left the decision-making to her team of teachers. The participants are seen to encourage creativity and extend the imagination of the educators through

distributed teacher leadership within the department. In this way, they are seen to be developing the educators' technical and leadership skills. I found that through the capability of practical reason, Rita, as the woman middle manager, was able to form a conception of the common good and therefore justify her act of creating new leadership roles within the department.

The conception of the common good benefits the functioning of the department as a whole because more members within the department begin to feel responsible and accountable for the management aspects of the department through their informal leadership roles. The professional capability of social and collective struggles also enable the woman middle manager to distribute leadership because she is seen to be concerned about empowering the members in her team and affording them opportunities to develop professionally. Rita exemplifies the notion stated by Leithwood et al. (1999) that through the capability of practical reason, a person is able to alter certain working conditions so that the members have time for collaborative planning and decision making. This is evident in Rita's action as she organised the timetable for the particular grades in the school so that teachers within that grade in her department were free at the same time and that time was used for planning.

Closely associated with a collaborative departmental culture, is the creation of structures within the department to foster participation. This will be discussed next.

#### ***7.4.2 Fostering Participation in the Department***

Leithwood et al. (1999, p. 86) assert that the dimension of structuring the department to enable members to participate in leadership is aimed at "providing opportunities for members of the school to participate in decision making about issues that affect them and about which their knowledge is crucial". By creating such opportunities, teachers are given autonomy to use their expertise in class as teachers and in their decision-making roles. Thus, the women middle managers allow members of the department to share in discussions concerning decision making for the department. The following extracts by Thembi, Hema and Irene show evidence of shared decision-making power and shared leadership among the teachers that I propose are common strategies implemented by the women middle managers:

I give people a chance to express themselves. I give people a chance to prove to me how much they know. How good they can be in whatever they do. I give them that chance. Like in a meeting when they give suggestions, I don't ignore their suggestions. I take them into consideration, I put them into practice, I implement them and they become happy... I empower people, maybe that is why they like me because I give them the chance to grow and I listen to them. (Thembi, interview, 22 August).

Hema distributes her leadership role among the members in her department. She has assigned important events to different teachers who have the responsibility of leading and organising these events at schools. One such event is the drug awareness programme. The teacher who was responsible for this planned and organised the event on her own without the assistance of Hema. It was a very successful programme (Journal entry, observation of Hema, 12 February 2007).

I do believe that the Level one teachers should be given duties to them to empower them. Like when we have important days at school, like certain events, many teachers are very capable at organising and planning. I make sure the teachers are involved and they do everything from beginning to end (Irene, interview, 28 August)

In these extracts I see that the opportunities presented to the educators were to empower them to make decisions and to become more accountable. The participants are seen to be devolving leadership to the educators. This is evident in Thembi's statement that she "empowers people" and that, "[she] give[s] them a chance to express themselves", in Hema's claim that she "distributes her leadership role" and in Irene's declaration that she "make[s] sure the teachers are involved" in the "organising and planning" of school events "from the beginning to the end". This form of leadership is distributed leadership, which helps to promote effective teaching and learning in schools (Grant, 2010; Gronn, 2000; Harris, 2003; Spillane; 2005). The women middle managers practised distributed leadership that promoted the empowerment of teachers because they possessed the capability of collective struggles. The participants' use of innovative leadership as a strategy for distributed leadership helped them to intellectually stimulate members in the department. This is evident where members were given the opportunity to "lead and organise" events and when they were given the opportunity to make informed "suggestions" at meetings.

Distributing leadership to teachers helps to empower them and creates a climate of trust and innovation (Grant, 2010). This is evident in Thembi's extract which shows that by her accepting the teachers' "suggestions", she trusts their decision-making abilities.

I found that Thembi's implementation of the educators' suggestions in her department points to her innovative and creative leadership style. By moving away from a traditional form of management where decision making is in the hands of those in

formal leadership positions, Thembi, Hema and Irene are seen to have adopted a leadership style in which leadership hierarchies are flattened and all stakeholders in the school work collaboratively “towards a shared and dynamic vision of their school within a culture of fairness, inclusion, mutual respect and trust” (Grant, 2010, p. 50).

In setting directions for the department, the women participants were able to acknowledge the expertise of the educators in their departments and draw on this and their talents for the benefit of the department. According to Grant (2010), it is the role of the principal and the SMT to enable teacher leadership in schools. Grant (2010, p. 44) states that teacher leadership can be encouraged through a culture of collaboration in the school by identifying the strengths and talents of the teachers and allowing them to lead in these particular areas. Coleman (1994, p. 61) states that leadership in a school organisation is not confined to the head teacher and can be assumed or dispersed to others, including the deputy heads, the curriculum leaders, the team leaders and the class teachers. However, Leithwood (1999) states that principal leadership is more influential than teacher leadership although principals can create the culture of collaboration in schools. By encouraging their educators to participate in department leadership, the participants in this study are seen to have created opportunities for the educators to develop leadership skills for their own career advancement.

The educators became “co-operative” they “respond[ed] more” and mutual “agreement” between the women managers and their team members prevailed. By engaging in consultation and participatory management practices, the women middle managers revealed a more democratic leadership style. On the other hand, a bureaucratic management style would pursue goals that were determined by the official or formal leaders (Bush, 2003). The transformational leadership approach that the participants adopted allowed for goal setting to be undertaken by everyone in the department. The participants’ narratives show how working towards the common good of the department through consensus and participatory management helped to inspire the staff in their departments. Common goals were set for the department through inspirational motivation and shared decision making. I noticed that the women middle managers also did not openly display their authority and, in so doing, appeared informal in their management role, as they did not wish to create a distinction between the educators and themselves. The equality in the professional

relationships between the women managers and the subordinates is highlighted in Thembi's and Hema's narratives above.

An equal relationship between the members and the women manager therefore allowed for informal interaction. According to Shakeshaft (1987), women managers tend to have more interaction with both subordinates and superiors and therefore are more likely to be informal in leadership style than their male counterparts. This form of leadership has been seen in this study to support communication between the leaders and the members of the organisation more freely. I found that the women middle managers are also informal in their interaction. As Thembi states, she gives teachers "the opportunity to express themselves" and Valerie states that she does not "create the distinction between herself and the members in her team", although as middle managers, they have more positional power and authority than a Level 1 educator.

This section discussed the redesigning of the department by the women HoDs to create structures within the department to foster participation and create a productive departmental culture that allows for collaboration among the members of the department. The capabilities of practical reason, social and collective struggles, assurance, confidence and resilience was seen to have allowed women middle managers to practise with the aim of promoting collegiality and participation among the members of the department. The women middle managers, however, experienced their role in their own particular way, which will be discussed in the next section.

### **7.5 Working in an External School Context**

Although the women middle managers are able to successfully manage their departments and lead their teams, they do face challenges and tensions in their workplace. These are the external conditions within the workplace which can prevent the effective functioning of the department. Nussbaum (2000a) refers to capability as basic, internal and combined capabilities. The basic capability is the innate capability that a person needs for developing more advanced capabilities. The internal capability is a more "mature condition of readiness" (Nussbaum, 2000a, p. 84) that is possessed by a person, which develops with the support of the environment in which one is reared. The combined capabilities are the internal capabilities combined with the external conditions for the "exercise of the function" (Nussbaum, 2000a, p. 85). While

they function in their role as middle managers, the women HoDs also work within an external school context that may constrain their functioning as transformational middle managers. They might have the internal capability to manage and lead a department, but the external conditions may not facilitate this functioning. This demonstrates that the internal capabilities of the woman middle manager are combined with the external school context. This section looks at how the woman middle manager understands her role and how the combined capabilities facilitate her in her management functioning.

In order to understand what middle managers do, the participants were requested to keep a journal for a week and to make entries on a daily basis of their role as HoDs. What became apparent in my findings is that many of the participants expressed a lack of time to do their management tasks, as much of their time was taken up doing routine tasks or teaching. Although the participants can be viewed as effective middle managers and leaders of their teams, they are often challenged by time constraints in their roles. The routine administrative tasks of a middle manager also does not support their leadership role. The following brief journal entries of Gene, Arthi, Irene, Neelam and Hema are examples that reflect the routine matters that occupied them daily as middle managers.

Conducted the morning assembly at 7:30

Prepared to photocopy test papers

Retyped the exam time table

Subject meeting with colleagues

Taught six 47-minute lessons in Accountancy

Returned to school at 6:00 for Open Meeting for prospective Grade 7 learners.

Left school at 8:00. (Gene, journal entry, 6 May)

Period 1 – taught Grade 9 class and was interrupted in my lesson with a parent visit in relation to a discipline problem. The learner was not behaving in the Afrikaans class. This took about 20 minutes. I called the educator concerned and discussed the problem with the parents. The matter was resolved with both the parties satisfied. The learner has promised to reform his behaviour.

Period 2... (Arthi, journal entry, 12 February)

28-08 Tuesday – 7:30: Grandmother of Innocentia 11C who's always absent or late. Also very rude to a number of educators. Met with her and the principal. She has been given final warning. Needs to find another school for next year (Irene, journal entry, 28 August)

20/ 3 - I sign learner and educator portfolios (grade 12) for CASS moderation. Some information is missing even in senior educator's files. I send for an educator to complete details on her CASS form (Neelam, journal entry, 20 March)

09/02, 9:25am: Got to school at 7:15 today. Shortened academic day. Speech and Awards from 12h00-14h00. Charles (DP) gave us the latest time-table proposal – needed it back after perusal by 1<sup>st</sup> period. Satisfied with educators in my department, but was not happy with my load 27 periods. ... too high for a HoD who is supposed to be the school counsellor as well...(Hema, journal entry, 9 February)

My own journal entry on Hema reflects the busy day of the woman middle manager:

Hema's time management amazes me. She is able to accomplish so much in a day. Most of her day is spent teaching. She had two counselling sessions with learners, as she is the school counsellor. While she taught one of her Geography lessons, she was interrupted by a learner from another class. The educator had sent the learner to Hema, as he needed to be addressed by her due to his poor behaviour in class. (Journal entry, observation of Hema, 9 February)

The above journal entries show how the women managers function within the day. Most of their days are occupied with teaching or routine administrative matters, rather than purely management or leadership functions. The entries made by the participants indicate the routine nature of their daily tasks. Some of the participants, like Gene and Arthi, recorded their entries in a similar style – they numbered each period or wrote the time indicating how ordered, controlled and uncompromising their days can be. Their tasks of “marking, typing test papers, overseeing of the stock room, photocopying tests papers”, “signing learner and educator portfolios” all indicate routine tasks that do not require the participants to be active agents in their departments where they could be engaged in decision making and strategic planning. Hema's entry shows that as a HoD she is over-burdened and has too many duties assigned to her, such as being the school counsellor and she has limited time to perform all her duties.

Therefore the time and effort they put into their teaching and the maintenance tasks in their departments do not make optimal use of their management or leadership abilities. The time constraints they have act as barriers to their management practices as it is evident that more time is required for these. Therefore, lack of time is the contributing external condition that constrains the women middle managers' management function. Other conditions in the school context also contribute to the women middle managers' weak capability sets, especially when they initially took up their middle management positions. The following extracts show the perspectives of the women middle managers with regard to being able to overcome barriers to efficiently execute their role:

You find the black males they don't respect females so you got to actually earn their respect. And if you don't earn their respect as a teacher, you can't teach them. They will tell you that. And they will tell you that they rather be taught by a strong female. (Valerie, interview, 31 August)

At our school, I am the only woman among the male SMT, so although there may be one or two who are more approachable and sympathetic, you find the African males are still very dogmatic and patriarchal. I don't allow that to threaten me. I just maintain who I am and I do things the way I want to. ... but the general staff, I have their respect by just being who I am, and not being this manager as males portray it, but being a manager like everybody else by delegating and doing things with respect. I think those are the key words: trust, respect and being who you are and being humble. ...and what makes me accomplish all this is the love and a passion for people and a passion for the things that I do. (Hema, interview, 7 June)

In the transforming schools of South Africa, there is a diversity of learners coming from different racial, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Schools are multicultural institutions. The HoDs, in particular, have to manage the changing contexts of the schools. As an educator, Valerie understands that in certain cultures women are perceived as secondary to males. Ngcongco (1993, p. 6) observes that in a "typical African tradition men lead and women follow". This is what constitutes patriarchy where the male is in control of the woman. Women are oppressed through a system of power, dominance, hierarchy and competition (Tong, 1989, p. 2) and are seen as deficient when compared to men. Valerie's narrative highlights not only the unequal treatment that women managers face, even by the learners, but also that it is only through proving their worth as managers and educators, that women managers can gain the respect of those within the school. The two narratives show that these women middle managers are able to cope with the challenges they face with some team members. Through the capability of affiliation the woman middle manager is able to show her respect for diverse teachers and learners in her department and is able to communicate professional knowledge in an accessible way (Walker et al., 2010). This form of respect is indicated in both Hema's and Valerie's narratives when the latter speaks of "earning respect" in the department.

It became clear to me that not being able to form meaningful relationships because of male domination and male bias can pose as a barrier to the capability of affiliation. The narratives reveal that male domination of society and culture is applied to all areas of life, including the school. Shakeshaft (1987) documents similarly that through male domination, male values and male culture are deemed to be more worthwhile than female values and experience. Valerie's and Hema's extracts show

that these women managers obviously have had to prove their worth as managers in order to be accepted by the males in the organisation.

Although these women middle managers experience the various challenges within the school context, they are nonetheless seen to have a strong sense of values concerning their management roles and leadership abilities. Through the capability of assurance and confidence in their management ability, the women middle managers were able to offset their weak capabilities and lead their departments effectively. Through the professional capability of integrity, the participants were seen to be capable of acting ethically in their middle management roles, because they felt accountable and responsible for the members in their departments and for the position they held as middle managers. They did not succumb to the barriers that were formed in their interactions, instead, they were able to resist the pressures they felt and act with integrity while doing so. Thus, Valerie had to prove herself to be a “strong” teacher before being accepted by the male students. Hema is seen to have remained true to herself and continued to act with “respect and trust” and maintained her “humble” character.

If women managers are able to break through the male barriers, it is still evident that some males cannot accept women as their equals. According to Davidson and Cooper (1992, p. 106), men are unable to work with women as equals because they have been conditioned with the “stereotype of women being mothers, wives or at the ‘very most’ secretaries””. The resilience of these women managers is evident, because they are able to win the respect and trust of the other staff members, which is an essential characteristic of transformational leaders. These women middle managers have demonstrated their ability to change the mindsets of some of their staff members to accept them and respect them as their managers, accomplishing this through the professional capability of assurance and confidence, because, through this capability, they are able to express and assert their own professional priorities and terms (Walker et al., 2010).

The participants showed confidence in their ability to resist succumbing to the male norm of leadership. Their resilience as women middle managers enables them to maintain their own form of leadership and management in their departments. These women middle managers bring to management their own femininity and do not

succumb to the “masculine” style of management of being dogmatic and threatening. The feminine characteristics of respect, trust and passion change the masculine image of management and through these characteristics, the women middle managers are able to lead their departments and influence their members.

I found that some of the women middle managers had established a reputation for themselves, not only in their own schools but in the wider educational context. This is due to behaviours that display their charismatic and idealised influence, which may be noted in the following extracts:

I have a lot of respect from the male people that I have interaction with when you go to meetings and so on. Everybody knows me, everybody gets to know me. You know I arrive and I’m there, it’s like a presence. And I have a lot of subject advisors that are male and have heard that they respect my ability as a manager and the fact that I run a department pretty well. (Gene, interview, 10 September)

I was promoted as a HoD to a school in a place like an informal settlement. Shoo, the learners were rude. That is where I began to have this strong feeling that whatever that comes, if I know that whatever I’m saying is correct, I stand by it. ... The principal there was very autocratic. And people there used to say I’m strong. ... I would stand my ground. It ended up the Principal was chased away by the community. And that is where I ended up being the Acting Principal at that school. (Mandisa, interview, 30 August)

The two narratives are examples that reflect the capability of the woman middle manager to form strong professional relationships with other members in the education field. The relationships are based on trust and respect. The participants are seen to have been able to establish themselves as capable leaders of successful departments through their integrity and strong work ethic. Unmistakably, these women middle managers can be viewed as charismatic leaders. Gene’s narrative highlights her charismatic qualities, which she herself expresses in terms of possessing a special “presence” at meetings, through which she is able to command the respect of important people within the Department of Education, such as her male subject advisors. Mandisa’s extract emphasises her charismatic nature when she acknowledges that “people used to say I’m strong” and that she “would stand her ground”. The fact that the community “chased away” the former principal and replaced him with Mandisa as the Acting Principal, indicates the trust and confidence they had in her abilities to lead the school. Both these narratives are indicative of the idealised influence of a strong, charismatic leader. Having the capability of informed vision enables the woman middle manager to have an idealised influence on those members with whom she works and interacts.

The experiences of the women middle managers within the school context have been discussed, and how these external conditions at schools can form barriers to their management function. These barriers can impinge on their transformational leadership attributes. However, through the development of internal capabilities the women middle managers may be able to offset these barriers in the external school context. The participants may have the capabilities to function as transformational middle managers but all these attributes do not come to the fore when they are faced with barriers. Therefore, there are instances when some of the participants may be more transformational in their management practices than others because they display more transformational behaviours and attributes than the others.

## **7.6 Concluding Remarks**

In this chapter I discussed the role of the women middle managers who display attributes of transformational leaders. I found that women middle managers often function as transformational leaders and show behaviours of intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, idealised influence, high performance expectation, charisma, visioning and inspiration, goal consensus, individual consideration, structuring to foster participation and creating a productive school culture. All of these I call transformational leadership functions. In order to operate at these levels, the women middle manager has to develop capabilities that she acquires from early childhood to the present time in which she possesses managerial status. I call these capabilities management capabilities. The management capabilities and transformational leadership complement each other and have been discussed by looking at how the woman middle manager develops knowledge and skills in the department, sets departmental directions, develops people in the department and redesigns the department. The capabilities that enable transformational leadership functioning are: the senses, imagination and thought, knowledge, imagination and practical skills, emotion, informed vision, practical reason, assurance and confidence, social and collective struggles, affiliation, integrity and resilience. My findings show that, over the years, these women middle managers have developed capabilities that now enable them to function as leaders displaying transformational leadership behaviours.

The participants are seen to have been able to encourage the learners and educators in their departments to be creative and apply themselves to developing knowledge and

skills through intellectual stimulation. However, they too developed leadership skills when given the opportunity to participate in planning and decision-making for the whole school, rather than remaining confined to just their departments. As middle managers who often demonstrate transformational leadership behaviours, they set high performance standards in their departments.

By being inspirational motivators, I found that these women middle managers are seen to be able to motivate the educators in their departments to work towards a common departmental vision and goals in order to achieve high standards of teaching and learning. Having personal knowledge of each educator's needs in the department, these women middle managers can act as mentors and develop the educators' capability for teaching. Mentoring enabled these women middle managers to empower the educators as they encourage teacher leadership within the departments. My findings show that these women middle managers are generally self-assured and confident of their capabilities as middle managers. Through idealised influence, the participants act as role models and are able to lead their departments by example with integrity and a positive work ethic. A collaborative culture often prevails within the department since they are able to structure their departments so as to give their teachers opportunities to serve as leaders. However, I did find that the participants do not always support the teachers in their departments, particularly when the teachers act in an unprofessional manner. This is due to their integrity and ethical standards which emphasise their transformational leadership attributes.

My final assertion is that these women middle managers do face constraints to their leadership and management roles in the school context, although they may possess the internal capabilities to function as leaders and managers. The external conditions can form barriers to the women middle managers functioning as transformational leaders. I have found that not all the attributes of transformational leadership come to the fore in the women participants. This happens when the conditions within the school context form barriers to the management functioning of the women middle managers. But through the development of their management capabilities and their ability to overcome adversities, these participants are able to offset the external barriers and are able to continue efficiently performing their function in their role as middle managers within the changing educational context. However, within these external conditions that may form barriers, these women middle managers may demonstrate

fewer transformational leadership attributes and behaviours which are in stark contrast to conditions that allow them to flourish in their roles

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **CONCLUSIONS ABOUT THE MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES OF A TRANSFORMATIONAL MIDDLE MANAGER**

In this chapter I draw conclusions based on my study about the capabilities developed in women HoDs at secondary schools and how these capabilities have enabled them to function as transformational middle managers. Using the capability approach of Sen (1999), Nussbaum (2000a) and Walker et al. (2010) and the transformational leadership theory proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994) and Leithwood et al. (1999), in this research study I explored which capabilities were developed in adult women middle managers in their various social and educational contexts from early childhood to date. I described how these capabilities have allowed the women to function in their careers later in life as transformational middle managers and leaders of school departments.

I began the study by asking three questions: first, what the narratives from women HoDs reflected about how they had developed their capabilities in a transforming and contested social context; second, the capabilities that enabled the women middle managers to function as transformational managers; and third, the way in which the capabilities of the women middle managers allowed them to function as transformational middle managers in secondary schools. My findings about capability development in this study suggest that women middle managers undergo a process of growth in which basic capabilities, such as acquiring freedom from malnourishment or a basic education and literacy, can lead to more complex capabilities such as the capability to have good bodily health or the capability to become transformational middle managers respectively. Having the basic capabilities under control therefore makes more advanced capability achievement possible. The findings in my study are that, while women middle managers acquire capabilities from early life experiences in the social and educational contexts, they also experience unfreedoms such as poverty, discrimination based on race, class and gender bias, disadvantage, marginalisation and exclusion. The women middle managers have been seen to have responded to these obstacles through their capabilities and to have been able to offset the weak capabilities through their capability of resilience.

Many authors have written on women in management. However, the literature review indicates that much less has been written on women in middle management, and on the capabilities needed for management positions in the transforming educational contexts in South Africa. My research responds to this gap in the literature and provides empirical evidence on how capabilities are developed in women middle managers. It names the capabilities that were developed in women middle managers through an analysis of their narratives and shows how the capabilities that developed over the years enabled them to function as transformational middle managers of secondary schools. In Chapter Two, I also discussed the role of the middle manager by looking at the role of the HoD with reference to policy imperatives and information about leadership and management in South African schools, particularly in the post-apartheid, transformational era.

I made use of narrative inquiry as the research methodology to explore the experiences of nine women in middle management to investigate how they had developed their capabilities and to identify these in terms of transformational leadership. As a feminist researcher, I privileged the voices and participation of the women middle managers by giving priority to them telling their own stories. This distanced me from a positivist, quantitative research methodology which is common in management and leadership studies. I employed interviews, observation, letter writing by the women middle managers and reflective journal writing as narrative texts to unfold and explore how the women middle managers acquired their management capabilities, what these capabilities were in relation to those advanced by Nussbaum (2000a) and Walker et al. (2010), and how these capabilities enabled them to function later in their careers as transformational leaders. Transformational leadership behavioural components, as isolated by Bass and Avolio (1994) and Leithwood et al. (1999), served as evidence. In my analysis of the women middle managers' narratives, I investigated their management capability development and demonstrated how these capabilities enabled them to function as transformational middle managers in secondary schools. My discussion of how narrative inquiry is used as a research methodology in my study is found in Chapter 4 and the subsequent chapters constitute my analysis of the narratives.

In the next section I answer my three research questions according to my findings as presented in chapters Five, Six and Seven.

## **8.1 Narratives about the Women Middle Managers in the Study**

The first research question I posed was: *What are the narratives from women HoDs about how they developed their capabilities in a transforming and contested social context?*

The narratives from women middle managers were based on interviews (see Appendix G) and a letter to their mentor and role model (see Appendix H). The interview, using a time line and photo-elicitation techniques (see Appendix K), and the letter to the mentor and role model, provided the core information in the narratives about how the women middle managers developed their capabilities.

My finding is that the South African women HoDs in my study had stories about their childhood and their young adult years that showed that they acquired their capabilities in a social period and situations in which they faced various challenges and complexities. Their narratives are about intricate social, economic, religious, ethnic and educational contexts. The challenges and complexities they faced in the years from childhood to young adulthood and in their professional lives concerned their relationships with family members, and they told me stories about how these family relations contributed either positively or negatively to their emotional well-being. They also spoke about the limitation that poverty placed on many of their lives during their formative years, the discriminatory gendered practices against them in educational and social contexts and the lack of professional role models and mentors available to them to groom them for management positions in schools.

The narratives highlighted the complex nature of how the capabilities that would eventually allow them to function in their role as middle managers developed. I found that the foundation for management capabilities started from early childhood and continued for many years, and that a basic capability set was enhanced through various interactions and experiences within the social and educational contexts as they grew older and became young adults. For example, I found that a woman middle manager may develop the capability of affiliation in her early years when she learns to interact with family members and form relationships with them. This capability develops and is enhanced as she interacts with other people over the years and as she forms various types of relationships with them whether in the social or educational context or whether it is personal or professional. The stories told by the participants,

therefore, show, for example, that the capability of affiliation develops via a complex life journey, because it is through many types of relationships and interactions that capabilities are formed over time.

From the narratives and stories of the women middle managers I was able to identify the internal and external capabilities of the women that arose from external conditions that contributed to or formed obstacles to the development of capabilities and the well-being of the women as middle managers. The narratives showed that the external conditions surrounding and within the family and the society in which they interacted, as well as the educational institutions they attended, paved the way for the development of these capabilities. Women middle managers may have an internal capability to function as transformational middle managers, however, their internal capabilities combined with the external conditions can be a constraint on their functioning as transformational leaders. Therefore as Nussbaum (2000a) contends, an internal capability requires favourable external conditions in the social and educational context.

The social arrangements and institutional conditions that Walker et al. (2010) have written about either help to build and expand capabilities or constrain capability development. The social arrangements mentioned in the women middle managers' biographies signalled for them that gender and racial inequalities existed not only in the broader society but also within the family. In the first instance, the women were subjected to discrimination and bias and were rendered voiceless within the family and in educational settings because men often made the decisions for women in households. For example, Valerie's narrative and story showed women can be constrained in their own households. In her case, her mother was not allowed to seek paid employment because her spouse did not approve of her working outside the home. Mandisa's story tells of women being dependent on men. This was also true of Rita and Hema who needed their father's financial assistance for their university studies. The findings show that men can treat their responsibility lightly and neglect the well-being of the female members in their family, or they can promote the well-being of the females by giving them opportunities to develop their capabilities. Mandisa's story shows that her father refused to assist her with her university funding, thereby constraining the educational objectives she had set for herself and her future career prospects. The narratives of Hema and Rita point to the benevolent nature of

men when they did help to develop women's capabilities by funding their education. The stories told by the women participants also signalled the unequal opportunities given to women in educational institutions. The schooling conditions ensured that men and boys were dominant figures in the classroom, and were often attributed with superior intellectual abilities compared to women and girls.

The narratives implied that as girls the women were given few educational choices and were confined to school subjects that were stereotypically feminised. This was evident in Irene's narrative about boys being streamed into the "elite" classes, which only a few girls were allowed to access. Through the narratives and stories I identified external conditions in the environment that formed barriers to women's development. A significant external condition in the educational context that constrains women middle manager's capability development is violence. My finding was that violence in the form of corporal punishment inflicted by male teachers on female students was used as a means to silence females in classrooms and render them helpless. I found that the silencing of women was also perpetuated in broader social structures, such as in the family or in the workplace. Through the capability approach, I was able to reflect on the women middle managers' situation when they attended school, and it was evident that within the school and educational context, these women were offered very little protection from harm. Moreover, the educational policies failed to secure equal access to education for the women vis-à-vis their male counterparts and failed to guarantee their security and safety within the schools.

The disadvantages women middle managers faced were not only due to their gender but also due to their race. Through their stories the women participants were able to speak openly and honestly about how their racial classification within South Africa acted as a barrier to their capability development. Women middle managers who were classified as black during the apartheid legacy had fewer freedoms for the development of their educational capabilities than those women middle managers who were classified white. The separate development of people according to race during the apartheid legacy rendered women middle managers who were not white, poorer than their white colleagues. Poverty or lack of financial stability is another external condition that formed barriers to women middle managers' capability development. The evidence in the narratives reveals that women middle managers in the adverse

conditions of the apartheid system developed capabilities through their endurance and resilience against those harsh political, educational and social arrangements.

A further finding is that the women middle managers developed capabilities when they interacted with their role models and mentors in their personal and professional domains. The women tapped into memories of a lack of formal mentors and role models in the professional domain which constrained their ascent to management positions.

## **8.2 Management Capabilities of the Women Middle Managers**

The second research question that I posed was: *What are the capabilities that enable women middle managers to function as transformational managers?*

The interviews (see Appendices G and K) and the letters to the mentors (see Appendix H) informed this particular question. I began the research by using Nussbaum's (2000a) list of central human functional capabilities and the list of professional capabilities conceived by Walker et al. (2010) to devise a list of ten combined capabilities that I refer to as management capabilities. I found evidence that women middle managers developed their capabilities within the school and family. There is a full discussion of this in Chapter Five. Within the family context, three capabilities come to the fore: emotion, affiliation and resilience. The capability of emotion means being able to form attachments to other people and to love and care for others, to grieve and feel longing and anger that is justified (Nussbaum, 2000a). The women middle managers developed the capability of emotional attachment in their families through conditions within the family that supported the development of this capability. These external conditions were strong family bonding, stable relationships within the family and a happy home environment.

Family relationships supported the capability of emotional security. The women middle managers participating in this study had a strong self-image due to the emotional security they experienced. The capability of affiliation involves being able to form relationships with members of the family and to show concern and love for them. The women middle managers developed the capability of affiliation through their relationships with family members. Relationships that were based on love, dignity, respect and care supported the development of this capability. Within the

family context, the women middle managers developed the capability of resilience by coping with weak family relationships. Later this attribute enabled the woman middle manager to persevere in adverse situations to offset any weak capabilities that she might experience. Through her capability of resilience the woman middle manager was able to exercise her agency to make informed choices concerning her life and well-being.

I found that the capabilities which the women middle managers developed in the educational context were the capabilities of sense, imagination, thought, knowledge and practical skills. I refer to these capabilities as the education capabilities and they are: affiliation, social and collective struggle, assurance, confidence and practical reason. Although these women middle managers were able to develop educational capabilities, they faced obstacles in their social and educational contexts. My analysis of capability development in the educational and social context found that the structure of the political, social and educational institutions did not promote Nussbaum's (2000, p. 75) "threshold level" of all the capabilities in the women middle managers. The political structure within the South African context presented fewer opportunities and freedoms to black race groups as compared to those of whites during the apartheid era. This factor therefore constrained the development of the education capability for the women in their early years because they were not given equal opportunities and freedoms to make their own informed educational choices as some others were able to do. The lack of opportunities meant a lack of resources.

Though the women middle managers faced a lack of educational resources in their early childhood and in their later educational experiences, the way in which their limited resources were put to use allowed the women to function in a fully human way, which is important as it answers the central question in the capability approach: "*What is [a person] actually able to be and to do?*" (Nussbaum, 2000a, p. 71). The women middle managers were able to successfully pursue their educational goals and follow a career path even though their educational opportunities were limited. The pursuit of their educational goals was driven by the informed vision and practical reasoning they had and through which they planned a bright futures for themselves. Having attained their education capabilities, the women middle managers were able to make informed decisions about their circumstances, the capabilities allowing them to practise their agency and make choices concerning their lives. In contrast, a lack of

resources is debilitating for the women. However, the narratives reveal that the women were resourceful in their actions as they were able to forge ahead and shape their own lives through their human power of practical reason and thought, and through the core capability of education.

The capability of resilience was developed within the educational context when the women middle managers were able to persevere and achieve their educational goals, although they faced obstacles such as poverty and gender discrimination. Gender discrimination contributed to a weak affiliation capability because the women had their human dignity and respect blighted, as the relationships that promoted gender discrimination stunted capability development and well-being.

The capability of affiliation was further developed in the women middle managers while they were at school and these relationships that the women formed within the educational setting were either supportive or discouraging. Supportive relationships were formed when teachers and family members supported the development of the educational capabilities of the women middle managers. The affiliations that presented constraints to the achievement of the educational capabilities were discouraging. Affiliations within the school context that involved violence and physical or emotional abuse of the women middle managers, presented barriers to the development of capability of affiliation, emotion and education.

Although the women middle managers had the internal capability to be educated, to form relationships and to experience emotions such as love, care and respect for others, the external conditions within the school context formed barriers to the women middle managers attaining these capabilities. We see this in the stories of Mandisa, Thembi and Rita who faced barriers to their capability formation of affiliation and emotion in the school when their male educators inflicted corporal punishment on them. Violence was a means of maintaining control over the female students in class who were silenced into submissive behaviour.

The women middle managers developed the professional capability of social and collective struggles in the educational context which meant being able to promote human rights and the empowerment of people. The women middle managers developed this capability through their own experiences of gender and racial discrimination in the school context. We see this in the stories of Hema, Valerie and

Irene who were discriminated against because of either their race or their gender. Hema was discriminated against as a female when she was overlooked for a promotion post and a male educator was instead groomed for the role. Valerie was discriminated against by young black male students because she was perceived to be less capable than a male teacher. Irene was able to work collectively with the girls at school as they needed to prove their capability to be in an elite class of boys who were stereotyped as being academically more capable than girls.

The discriminatory practices against the women middle managers did not confine them to a role of servitude, rather these women middle managers, through their capability of informed vision and practical reason, were able to make informed choices through their vision and thought and to act in a “truly human” way (Nussbaum, 2000a). The professional capability of assurance and confidence came to the fore when the women middle managers were confident about their educational abilities, pursuing their education although they faced obstacles to their educational development. They proved that they were capable students within the school context.

I found that the role models and mentors also influenced the development of management capabilities of women middle managers, either in the personal or professional domains. The capabilities of resilience, social and collective struggles, emotional affiliation, informed vision and goal-setting were developed in their interaction with their mentors and role models from their personal lives. The women middle managers developed the capabilities of affiliation, integrity and knowledge, imagination and practical skills from their interaction with their mentors and role models from the professional domain. This is evident from Hema’s story when her mentors and role models within her personal domain groomed her for life and taught her basic values, ethics and practical skills. Rita, Neelam and Thembi were able to be mentored in their professional domains, although this was done informally. Through their informal mentoring they were able to expand their capabilities of integrity, knowledge, practical skills and affiliation.

The capability of resilience was developed in Valerie when her role model and mentor taught her certain behaviours, such as being tough and uncompromising in order to endure the challenges she might face in society as women. In this regard, some of the women middle managers’ mothers, who were their role models and mentors, taught

their daughters to be tough in order to resist the challenges they would encounter as women, particularly with regard to gender discrimination. Valerie and Mandisa are examples of women middle managers who were mentored by their mothers and through the act of tough love groomed to become resilient and determined women middle managers. The capability of resilience developed in them the determination to succeed in a country that was governed by racial and gender inequalities. I found that due to the many obstacles encountered by the women middle managers while on their road to the middle management position, most of the women wrote or spoke of having acquired the capability of resilience, which accounts for this particular capability featuring so often in the participants' narratives.

The capability of social and collective struggles emerged in the women middle managers through role models who are or were social and political figures aspiring for social justice and the well-being of all people in South Africa, particularly during apartheid rule. The women middle managers sought to be as resilient as their role models who were able to stay true to their convictions, resist the challenges around them and fight for social justice.

The women middle managers were inspired by their mentors' and role models' ability to feel compassion and care for those around them. The care and love that the mentors and role models shared with the women inspired them to be caring and compassionate, thereby developing the capability of emotion in the women middle managers. The capability of affiliation was developed, based on the relationships that were formed between the women middle managers and their role models and mentors. The women middle managers learnt to engage in various forms of social interaction that were based on trust and respect for others, qualities that were inspired by their role models and mentors. The capability of affiliation was nurtured by the types of social interaction the mentors and role models were involved in, for example, being affiliated to religious and community organisations such as the church. Through these affiliations the woman middle manager learnt to accept diverse groups of people and to feel a sense of commitment to other groups. The stories of Irene and Mandisa shed light on their community and cultural affiliations and they were able to feel a sense of commitment for diverse groups of people.

Informed vision is another capability that was developed in the personal domain and this capability is about envisioning alternative and improved states of being. The vision one plans extends over many years, however, the capability of goal setting spans a short period. The capability of informed vision developed through the years as the women middle managers were able to envision improved lifestyles for themselves from a young age, and this was carried forward into their management roles. Basic teachings within the household were used as a catalyst by the women to imagine improved lifestyles for themselves. For example, being taught how to tackle household chores from an early age trained the woman middle manager to be disciplined and hard-working, qualities which were applied to their role as teachers and managers. The capability of goal setting was developed by the role models and mentors who taught the women to set and aspire to goals in their lives, and ultimately to the vision they had planned for their lives.

Within the professional domain the women middle managers were informally mentored for their role as teachers by former HoDs or management members. Through this informal mentoring the women middle manager developed the capability of affiliation. The woman middle manager learnt from the mentor how to interact with others and to feel responsibility for other colleagues. The narratives indicate that the relationships formed by the mentors were caring and nurturing relationships, demonstrating how the mentors worked selflessly to promote the well-being of the women middle managers. The mentors also supported and encouraged the women in the mentoring relationship. This helped develop the capability of integrity in the women middle managers when they learnt how to be accountable and responsible towards other people. The capability of integrity helped to promote their work ethic and to expect high quality service as teachers.

Therefore the capability of knowledge, imagination and practical skills was an integral part of effective teaching and managing within the school context. The women middle managers learnt how to integrate theoretical knowledge about teaching with actual practice, being guided in this by their mentors. The mentors pointed the women in the right direction in their teaching and administrative tasks, and cultivated in the women middle managers teaching practice skills involving classroom teaching, time management and record-keeping. This intellectual stimulation inspired them not only as teachers, but as managers as well. The mentors and role models at school inspired

the women middle managers to improve themselves professionally, either through professional development or through improving their professional qualifications.

Role models and mentors present strong capability sets for professional development and the advancement of women in education management. This happens when the role models and mentors also inspire the women middle managers to extend their management abilities out of the school context into the larger educational landscape. In so doing, the women middle managers were able to develop their knowledge, imagination and practical skills by becoming involved in structures such as sports administration and external examinations. However, role models and mentors can present weak capability sets when they pose as barriers to the advancement of women in their careers.

I found that some of women middle managers perceived their mentors and role models as barriers to their advancement, either personally or professionally. For example, a mentor who did not support his protégé in her career advancement because she was a woman, would raise questions whether the mentor was a suitable mentor and could justify his mentoring relationship with the woman protégé. Although the woman middle manager was aggrieved by the male mentor's lack of support and sponsorship for promotion into a senior management position in the school, the woman middle manager still regarded the male colleague as her mentor because of the informal mentoring relationship they had shared. But the male mentor fell short of his mentoring role, albeit informal in nature, when he abandoned her and did not support her promotion to a senior management position. Similarly, some women middle managers looked upon their mothers as role models and mentors, but when the mother as a mentor was unrelenting and tough with her daughters, it came across as being detrimental to the development of capabilities in that person. For example, Valerie was able to develop her professional capabilities to be an effective manager because she was mentored by her mother in such a way that she became resilient and could therefore develop her own educational capabilities of knowledge, imagination and practical skills. However, Valerie could not grow on a personal level and her capabilities of emotion and affiliation were weak because her mother, as her mentor and role model, taught her not to be an emotional person and restrained the relationships she formed as a child, thus limiting her capability of affiliation in her childhood years. Therefore Valerie was able to develop her professional capabilities,

but was unable to develop on a personal level because of her weak capability of affiliation and emotion.

To conclude this section, I point out that the capabilities for management were developed through the years in women middle managers and in various contexts. Therefore the cropping up of the same management capabilities in different contexts supports the idea of capabilities as under on-going development. For example, the capability of affiliation might appear in the education context and in the role model and professional domain stages. This shows that a specific capability is not unique to a certain context, but appears in different contexts because of its ability to continually develop.

### **8.3 The Transformational Leadership Capability Approach**

The third critical question that I posed at the start of study was: *In what ways do the capabilities of women middle managers enable them to function as transformational leaders?*

After my reading of the relevant literature I proposed that a list of management capabilities taken from Nussbaum's (2000a) list of central human capabilities and from the list of professional capabilities prepared by Walker et al. (2010), be aligned to the transformational leadership behavioural components of Bass and Avolio (1994) and the leadership dimensions of Leithwood et al. (1999), because they complemented each other in significant ways. The alignment of the two theories was important to this study because each theory on its own was unable to adequately explain the data. The data on the life stories of the women middle managers could be explained using the Capability Approach but not the data on how the participants managed their departments in a changing educational context. The Transformational Leadership Theory however, was able to sufficiently explain the data on how these women managed their departments in a post-apartheid transforming educational context, but this leadership theory was not useful in explaining the early life stories of the women participants. Therefore, it was necessary to form a union between the Capability Approach and the Transformational Leadership Theory in order to understand and explain the data in this study. I termed this transformational leadership functioning, believing that the management capability and the transformational behavioural dimensions and their components are better understood as a unified single explanation

rather than as discrete and separate explanations. In order to align the management capabilities and the functioning of transformational leadership, I formed categories for the alignment that are based on the leadership attributes of setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organisation as suggested by Leithwood et al. (1999). This alignment is presented in Chapter Three, Table 3.1, and a detailed argument for the alignment of the capability approach and the transformational leadership theory follows. Since the women middle managers participating in this study were located within a department in schools, the categories for the alignment focus on leadership attributes within the department context of a secondary school.

The four categories that I used for the alignment in my study are based on the leadership attributes of: developing knowledge and skills in the department, setting departmental directions, developing people in the department and redesigning the department. The category of building knowledge and skills within a department includes those management capabilities and transformational leadership practices that promote the development of knowledge and skills. Therefore the knowledge capabilities of senses, imagination and thought (Nussbaum, 2000a), and knowledge, imagination and practical skills (Walker et al., 2010), and the transformational leadership behaviour of intellectual stimulation (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Leithwood, 1999), are aligned to the category that deals with the leadership attribute of developing knowledge and skills in the department. An example that shows how the unified approach helps to better explain the practice of the woman middle manager in her role, rather than focusing on separate explanations, follows.

If a woman middle manager wishes to stimulate the members in her department intellectually, my argument is that she should have the capabilities of sense, imagination and thought, and knowledge and practical skills to develop knowledge and skills within her department. If a woman middle manager tries to encourage her members to use new teaching practices within the department to help improve learner performance, the woman middle manager should have the necessary knowledge, imagination and practical skills to promote transformational leadership in her department. If she has not developed the capabilities of knowledge, imagination and skills herself, then my argument is that she will experience difficulty in intellectually stimulating her colleagues.

Therefore I have unified the capability approach and transformational leadership theory because each set of theoretical ideas, standing on their own, does not adequately explain how a woman middle manager is able to develop capabilities to function as a transformational leader within a changing educational context. I use a hybrid that locks together as a unit the capability approach of Sen (1999), Nussbaum (2000a) and Walker et al. (2010) and the transformational leadership theory of Bass and Avolio (1994) and Leithwood et al. (1999). I name this hybrid the *transformational leadership capability approach*. This is a significant and original contribution to theorising the capability set for middle management. The set of nine capabilities are the foundation for management and when the external capability is strong then the manager can act as a transformative manager and leader and this is seen as one concept.

Without the freedom to develop and act on her foundational management capabilities, the woman middle manager may fall short of functioning as a transformational leader within a changing educational environment. I found that this is what Nussbaum (2000a) means when she refers to the external conditions. I found that these external conditions may or may not allow the foundational management capabilities to develop. External conditions can form barriers to capability development and effective transformational leadership functioning. Therefore my findings show that although the women middle managers may have developed the foundational capabilities over the years and do have attributes of transformational leadership, these attributes are not put effectively into practice when the external school conditions form barriers to their management roles. Therefore in some of the women middle managers, only some of the attributes of a transformational leader may be displayed while the other attributes may lay dormant. However if the external conditions within the school encourage capability development, then the woman middle manager can flourish in her management role and as a transformational leader.

Although my study focused on female participants, these foundational management capabilities are not restricted to women middle managers, but can be developed in men middle managers as well. The management capabilities can also apply to other school management tiers, indeed, in other contexts as well.

My findings that support this proposition emerge from the observation data, the journal entries of the women middle managers and the interviews. A detailed discussion of how the woman middle manager functions as a transformational leader is enabled through the management capabilities that appear in Chapter Seven.

I found that through the development of the professional capabilities of knowledge, imagination and practical skills, these women middle managers were often able to develop knowledge and skills in their departments, and intellectually stimulate the members in her department. Moreover, through these capabilities the woman middle manager was able to challenge her members to introduce new ideas into the department and to encourage teachers to use creative teaching methods to stimulate teaching and learning. Thus I found that the woman middle manager who has a thorough knowledge of her academic discipline is able to critically evaluate her own practices and therefore expects teachers to be critical of their own teaching practices in order to promote effective teaching. This is evident in Rita's observation data when she engages the teachers in evaluating their practices and in finding ways to improve teaching and learning.

By setting departmental directions most of these women middle managers were able to practise inspirational motivation and idealised influence in the department. They were also able to build a departmental vision, establish departmental goals and set high performance expectations. These leadership functions were enabled through the professional capability of informed vision as described by Walker et al. (2010). Through the capability of informed vision these women middle managers were able to inspire and motivate the teachers. I found that they were often selfless as they did not use their positional power for personal gain, but worked in collaboration with their department members to promote effective teaching and learning. Thembi and Hema are examples of women middle managers who inspired the teachers and worked in collaboration with them. Thembi afforded the teachers in her department a "chance to express themselves" and to "prove how much they know". Hema "distributed her leadership role amongst the members in her department" and even assigned "important events to different teachers" in her department so that they could manage these school events on their own.

Through the leadership attribute of developing people in the department, these woman middle managers were able to offer individualised support to the teachers and set an example for others to follow through modelling best practice. Gail, as a woman middle manager, set an example for the teachers in her team to follow as she was “committed and hard-working” and therefore only expected “the teachers’ best effort”. In order to enable this form of leadership the women middle managers needed to develop their capabilities of affiliation, emotion and integrity. The professional capability of emotion allowed these women middle managers to develop the teachers through a balance of compassion and rationality, as they had to assess the performance of the teachers through their supervision and monitoring of their work as well as having the responsibility of attending to their individual professional needs. Rita, as a woman middle manager, was able to work with compassion and understanding with the teachers in her department and, based on their individual needs, was able to work with the teachers on “a one-to –one” basis and show them “different strategies as to how to manage different problems” concerning their teaching practice. Thus, the woman middle manager developed the capability of integrity and was ethical in her management practices. However, I found that some women middle managers did not offer support to teachers in their departments who did not demonstrate professional and ethical behaviour. Neelam is one such middle manager who distanced herself from a teacher who displayed unethical behaviour. This indicates that this participant has high ethical and moral standards befitting the attributes of a transformational leader.

I also found that the redesigning of the department involved the transformational leadership function of creating a productive department culture and providing a structure to foster collegial participation. The development of the capabilities of practical reason, social and collective struggles, assurance and confidence, as well as resilience allowed most of these women middle managers to create a productive department culture and to structure the department to promote the participation of the teachers. Through the professional capability of assurance and confidence the middle manager can assert her views and act for change within the department. Creating a productive department culture involved changing the culture to one of collaboration among the department members. Structuring the department to foster participation often afforded the members the opportunity to participate in decision making. Neelam

provided opportunities for the teachers in her team to participate in the decision-making processes. She invited her teachers to be subject-coordinators and to control certain management aspects pertaining to that subject. She thus created opportunities for the teachers to develop their management and leadership skills.

Through the professional capability of collective struggles, these women middle managers were able to distribute leadership among the teachers when necessary, thereby empowering and developing them professionally. The professional capability of resilience enabled most of the women middle managers to persevere to help change the work ethic of underperforming teachers in order to maintain the quality of instruction. The capability of practical reason allowed these women middle managers to form a conception of what was good for the department and therefore they were able to engage in critical reflection about planning. This central human capability (Nussbaum, 2000a) enabled the woman middle manager to often create a productive department that promoted collaboration and participation amongst all members so that effective teaching and learning, which is the core function of schools, could take place.

#### **8.4 Final Remarks**

To conclude, in this study I have used Sen's (1999) capability approach, Nussbaum's (2000a) central human functional capabilities of sense, imagination and thought, emotions, practical reason and affiliation, and the professional capabilities (Walker et al., 2010) of knowledge, imagination and practical skills, informed vision, affiliation, social and collective struggles, emotions, integrity, assurance and confidence and resilience to understand how women middle managers develop their management capabilities to function as transformational middle managers and leader. I found that these capabilities have an affinity to the transformational leadership behavioural components of Bass and Avolio (1994) and the transformational leadership dimensions of Leithwood et al. (1999). The behavioural components relevant to middle management were intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, consideration of the individual and idealised influence. The transformational leadership dimensions were intellectual stimulation, high performance expectation, building school vision, establishing goals, high performance expectations, supporting the individual, modelling, structuring to foster participation and creating a productive school culture.

I referred to the combined human capabilities and the professional capabilities as the management capabilities, and the combined transformational leadership behavioural components and the leadership dimensions as the transformational leadership function. The management capabilities aligned to the transformational leadership function by way of leadership attributes such as developing knowledge and skills in a department, setting departmental directions, developing people in the department and redesigning the department. Using the capability approach and the transformational leadership theory to analyse the data generated in this study, I conclude that nine foundational capabilities develop from early childhood years and continue as an on-going growth process, and that these capabilities enable the women middle managers to function in their management role later in their lives.

Women middle managers with the nine management capability sets learn to activate their freedoms in the workplace to become leaders displaying transformational leadership attributes. Thus, based on my analysis of the nine women's narratives, I propose a transformational leadership capabilities theory. It is a hybrid of the capability approach and transformational leadership theory. The hybrid theory is useful to explain the foundational management capabilities that need to be developed in middle managers of schools, and to show how the external conditions and capabilities function to render transformational leaders successful. Achieving the capabilities depends on available freedoms and opportunities that are present in the person's milieu. If there is a lack of freedom and opportunity within a particular context, then capability development is unlikely to be achieved. However, it is ultimately through freedom and opportunities that the development of capabilities is achieved. The transformational leadership capability theory proposes that women middle managers, such as the nine women participating in this study, achieve their agency as women middle managers when they have developed their management capabilities and can therefore function as transformative middle managers and leaders.

Women middle managers face barriers to their development of the capability set when they are not given the freedom and opportunities to achieve these capabilities. Many lack the support to function as transformational leaders because of the presence of external conditions in the school context that constrain transformational leadership. Although the women may have the internal capabilities to function in a transformative way, when the school culture is bureaucratic and only the principal and those in

formal leadership roles run the school and practise as leaders, then the woman middle manager will lack the support to function as a transformative manager. When the teachers in the department do not wish to embrace educational change nor work in collaboration with the women middle managers, then the woman manager too will lack the necessary support to function as a transformational leader. Therefore, the management capabilities and the transformational leadership functionings both require favourable external conditions as well as capabilities that support the women middle managers in their quest to be transformative leaders and successful managers of departments in a secondary school. This insight of how the internal capabilities and external conditions articulate and operate in unison, within a middle manager's life, especially that of a woman middle manager, holds the key to how senior managers of schools can groom and support people at this important interfacing tier of school management.

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ETHICAL CLEARANCE – UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL



RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)  
WESTVILLE CAMPUS  
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587  
EMAIL: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

8 MARCH 2007

MS. S LALLA (200272053)  
EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT

Dear Ms. Lalla

ETHICAL CLEARANCE: "THE UNDERSTANDING AND PERFORMANCE OF MIDDLE MANAGEMENT ROLES AMONG THREE INDIAN FEMALE HEADS OF DEPARTMENT (HODs) IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE PHUMELELA CIRCUIT IN THE UMLAZI DISTRICT"

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the above project, subject to:

1. Permission being obtained from KZN Department of Education and school Principals
2. Researcher's and Supervisor's name and contact details being included on the informed consent document

This approval is granted provisionally and the final clearance for this project will be given once the above conditions have been met. Your Provisional Ethical Clearance Number is HSS/0038/07

Kindly forward your response to the undersigned as soon as possible

Yours faithfully

  
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA  
RESEARCH OFFICE

- cc. Faculty Research Office (Derek Buchler)  
cc. Supervisor (Dr. J Karlsson)  
cc. Prof. R Moletsane

**INFORMED CONSENT: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, KWAZULU-NATAL (LETTER 1)**

27 Nov. 2006 15:37



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATALI  
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO  
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS

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Tel: 033 341 8613  
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Pietermaritzburg  
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228 Pietermaritz Street  
Pietermaritzburg, 3201

INHEKODHOMISI PIETERMARITZBURG HEAD OFFICE

Enquiries:  
Imibuzo: M Franche  
Navrae:

Reference:  
Inkomba: 022506  
Verwysing:

Date:  
Usuku:  
Datum: 27/11/06

**RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH**

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

This is to serve as a notice that S Laila (200272053) has been granted permission to conduct research with the following terms and conditions:

- That as a researcher, he/she must present a copy of the written permission from the Department to the Head of the institution concerned before any research may be undertaken at a departmental institution.
- Attached is the list of schools she/he has been granted permission to conduct research in, however, it must be noted that the schools are not obligated to participate in the research if it is not a KZNDoe project.
- S Laila has been granted special permission to conduct his/her research during official contact times, as it is believed that their presence would not interrupt education programmes. Should education programmes be interrupted, he/she must, therefore, conduct his/her research during nonofficial contact times.
- No school is expected to participate in the research during the fourth school term, as this is the critical period for schools to focus on their exams.

for SUPERINTENDENT GENERAL  
KwaZulu Natal Department of Education

**INFORMED CONSENT: DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, KWAZULU-NATAL (LETTER 2)**



PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL  
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATALI  
  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO

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228 Pietermaritz Street  
PIETERMARITZBURG

<b>INHLOKOHOVISI</b>	<b>PIETERMARITZBURG</b>	<b>HEAD OFFICE</b>
Imibuzo: Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar	Reference: Inkomba: 0225/2006	Date: Usuku: 05 June 2008

Ms S Lalla  
74 James Avenue  
Isipingo Hills  
ISISPINGO  
4133

**PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS**

The above matter refers.

Permission is hereby granted to interview Departmental Officials, learners and educators in selected schools of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal subject to the following conditions:

1. You make all the arrangements concerning your interviews.
2. Educators' and work programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, educators and schools and other Departmental Officials are not identifiable in any way from the results of the interviews.
5. Your interviews are limited only to targeted schools.
6. A brief summary of the interview content, findings and recommendations is provided to my office.
7. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers and principals of schools or heads of section where the intended interviews are to be conducted.

The KZN Department of education fully supports your commitment to research: **The understanding and performance of middle management roles among female Heads of Department in Secondary School.**

It is hoped that you will find the above in order.

Best Wishes

R Cassius Lubisi, (PhD)  
Superintendent-General

RESOURCES PLANNING DIRECTORATE: RESEARCH UNIT  
Office No. G25, 188 Pietermaritz Street, PIETERMARITZBURG, 3201

SAMPLE OF INFORMED CONSENT FROM SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

The School Principal

Dear Sir/Madam

**Permission to conduct research in your school**

I am presently researching the topic: "The understanding and performance of middle management roles among female Heads of Department (HODs) in secondary schools"

In order to research this topic successfully, I need to study how female HODs in secondary schools construct their roles as middle managers. Therefore, I would like to conduct my research within your school. I will also seek the consent of the female HODs concerned, who wish to participate in this study.

In support of my application, I wish to supply the following information:

- I am a registered PhD student at the University of KwaZulu-Natal
- The data collection will not intrude on the instruction time of the participants as I will only observe the role of the female HOD. My study does not involve lessons, therefore lessons will not be disrupted.
- Interviews with the participants will be carried out during teaching breaks and after school hours.
- All interviews will be transcribed for data analysis
- The principal and two educators (male and female) from the participant's department will be interviewed.
- The participants/female HODs will be informed in detail of the nature of this study and what is required of them.
- Interviewees will have access to their interview transcripts.
- I have been granted permission by the KwaZulu Natal Department of Education to conduct my research in secondary schools (letter dated 27/1/06)

These refer to the following contact details for any further queries

Researcher	Miss Shurilla Lalla Student Number: 200272052 School of Education and Development University of KwaZulu-Natal Tel: 031-9021176 Cell: 0847170054
Supervisor	Dr. J. Karlsson School of Education and Development University of KwaZulu-Natal Tel: 031-2601398 Cell: 083-7881433

I would sincerely appreciate it if you would grant me permission to conduct my research at your school.

  
Miss S. Lalla (Student No.: 200272052)

**PRINCIPAL'S INFORMED CONSENT**

Consent is hereby granted to Miss Shurilla Lalla to conduct research at Spaulk's Primary Secondary School.



**SAMPLE OF INFORMED CONSENT FROM WOMEN HEADS OF DEPARTMENT**

**Informed Consent**

**Title :The understanding and performance of middle management roles among female Heads of Department (HODs) in secondary schools.**

Researcher	Miss S. Lalla Reg. No. : 200272053 School of Education and Development University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Tel.: 031-9021176 Cell: 0847170054
Supervisor	Dr. J. Karlsson School of Education and Development University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Tel.: 031-2601398 Cell: 0837881433
Purpose	To explore how female Heads of Department understand and perform their middle management roles in secondary schools.

**I understand that:**

- ❖ My participation in this study is voluntary.
- ❖ I may withdraw from this study at any time I may deem necessary.
- ❖ I may refuse to answer any of the questions.
- ❖ There will be at least four interviews ranging from one to two hours in length.
- ❖ I will be observed in school performing my role as HOD.
- ❖ I will be required to keep a journal recording daily entries of my role as HOD for a week.
- ❖ I will be photographed in the classroom and the spaces I occupy within the school will also be photographed.
- ❖ My identity and any other person's identity that may appear in the photographs will remain anonymous and unidentifiable.
- ❖ My classroom and items within it (like my desk) will be photographed.
- ❖ The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed for purposes of analysis.
- ❖ I will be allowed to read the transcripts of the interviews and the field notes made during the observation.
- ❖ I will be required to select photographs from my personal album that reflect how my life has been shaped into the person I am today, that is: a female, an educator and a HOD and middle manager. The photographs will include early childhood, primary and secondary education, tertiary education, career photographs of myself as a teacher and HOD.
- ❖ Confidentiality will be guaranteed.

I am willing and consent to participate in this study.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

14. 08. 2007  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR WOMEN HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

5

Questionnaire for Heads of Department

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Kindly complete the following information about yourself. Mark with a  where required.

Age group:  20-30  31-40  41-50  51-60  60+

Are you:  Single  Married  Divorced  Widowed

• Your area of specialization?

---

• Your Qualifications:

---

• Schools you attended as a learner

---

• Tertiary institutions attended:

---

• Department are you presently managing? (Specify Subjects/Learning Areas).

---

• Year you began your teaching career?

---

• Number of years you taught for before applying for your present position?

---

• Was your first application for the post of HoD a success?

Yes  No

• Have you applied for a Senior Management position?

Yes  No

• Number of Educators in your department: \_\_\_\_\_

Demographics of educators in your department:

RACE	BLACK	COLOURED	INDIAN	WHITE	OTHER
MALE					
FEMALE					

- Pass rate in your Department \_\_\_\_\_
- Matric pass rate in your Department \_\_\_\_\_
- Achievements in your Department:

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Once again, thank you for your time and effort.

## INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR WOMEN HEADS OF DEPARTMENT

### Semi structured interview schedules: Guideline for interviews

**Interview date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**HoD interviewed:** \_\_\_\_\_

The interview will be in a quiet room and will be tape-recorded. Each interview will be 1½ to 2 hours long. The recorded interview will be transcribed after the interview and matters arising out of the interview will be used for the follow up interview. There will be at least three interviews. At the end of the first interview the participant will be asked to complete a short questionnaire to gather biographical information on the participant. This information will be filed and used when data is being analysed.

#### **Resources**

Tape recorder  
Interview schedule  
Short questionnaire (interview 1)  
Observation journal

#### **Start of interview**

Thank you for permitting me to interview you. This interview will be at least 1½ to 2 hours long. Please feel free to ask for an explanation of what you may not understand. Please be

assured that whatever information has been given to me will remain anonymous and confidential and you will be allowed to view the transcripts to avoid any misunderstanding or misinformation on my part. The interview will be tape recorded.

#### **Practices of the woman head of department (Interview 1)**

1. Tell me why you chose to be a teacher?
2. What motivated you to become a middle manager in a secondary school?
3. What about your role as HoD do you like most?
4. What are the positive and negative aspects of your role as HoD?
5. What challenges do you face in your role?

6. What contributions have you made as HoD?
7. Tell me about your role as a middle manager and what your job entails?
8. Would you describe yourself to be more of a teacher or manager? Explain
9. How do you manage your teaching and management role simultaneously?
10. What changes have you made within your department?
11. Tell me about your application for your management position
12. Tell me about any other management position you may have applied for.

### **Impact of Family and professional relations (Interview 2)**

1. Tell me about your family?
2. How did having/not having children impact on your career?
3. Who inspired you in your career?
4. Do you think your gender has impacted on your role as a manager and in your career? Explain
5. Describe yourself as a manager and the type of management approach you use in your department?
6. How would you describe and explain your relations with the members in
  - a) Your department
  - b) Management
  - c) The school
7. How do the teachers you manage relate to you?
8. What opportunities do you create for the teachers in your department?
9. How do you manage professional development within your department?
10. Do you reflect about your management practices and how to develop yourself?  
Explain
11. How do you use your position as HoD to inspire the members in your department?

### **Functioning and practices of the woman middle manager (Interview 3)**

1. What is your main focus as head of department?
2. How do you conduct meetings in your department?
3. What is your vision for your department?

4. What goals do you have for your department and how are these goals formulated?
5. How do you manage teachers who do not perform well within the department?
6. How do you manage teacher misconduct within your department?
7. Tell me how you supervise the teachers in your department?
8. Tell me about the type of culture that prevails in your school and the type of culture you promote within your department?
9. What is your involvement in decision-making within your department and at whole school level?
10. What contributions do you make to policy formulation and implementation as a middle manager?
11. What opportunities do you have in your school as a middle manager?
12. Tell me about a day in your life as a head of department.
13. These possible questions focus on the photographs of the spaces you occupy in the school as a head of department:
  - 13.1 Which is your favourite space and why?
  - 13.2. Tell me about this picture. (Picture of classroom/office).
  - 13.3. Tell me about the learners you teach and what your expectations are of them.
  - 13.4. What do you like/dislike about your office/ classroom?
14. These possible questions are based on the journal entries of the woman HoD:
  - 14.1 What were the focal areas that you wrote of in your journal?
  - 14.2 What were some of the challenges you experienced and wrote of in your journal?
  - 14.3 Give me an example from your journal of how you resolved conflict in your department?
  - 14.4 Give an example from your journal of how you managed discipline in your department?
  - 14.5 Give an example from your journal of any time management issues you may experience in your middle management role.

**LETTER WRITING INSTRUMENT FOR WOMEN HEADS OF DEPARTMENT**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**HoD:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity: Letter Writing**

Write a letter to your mentor or role model and inform the person how she/he inspired you to become an educator and a manager. Tell the person of any challenges you may have encountered in your journey to your middle management position and how you were able to overcome these challenges. Inform your role model or mentor how his/her guidance or teachings influenced you as an educator and a head of department.

Dear Participant

Thank you for agreeing to engage in this activity. Writing the letter will require you to recall significant episodes that have impacted on you as a teacher and manager. The memories of the past would have shaped who you are as a teacher and middle manager in the present and in the future. Your lived experiences will discern patterns of your personal perceptions and your reactions over time.

The letter will be analysed and will be safely filed by me. You will be able to comment on my initial understanding of your letter. The letter will not be made available to any other person and total anonymity and confidentiality is assured. The completed letter will be due at the end of my week of observation with you. The letter can be handwritten or typed. The person you are writing to can be fictionalised. The letter is not meant to be posted to the person you are writing to! The contents of the letter will be used as a stimulus for a follow up interview.

Once again, thank you for engaging in this activity.

Sharitha Lalla

## APPENDIX I

### INSTRUMENT FOR OBSERVATION

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Participant

Thank you for allowing me to observe you in your role as a head of department. I will observe you for a week while you are teaching, at meetings (Department and staff) and in your interactions with staff members, learners and parents. I will write field notes of my observation in a journal. I will not interrupt you as you perform your role functions and duties. I will not disturb your teaching lessons as I will be seated in the back of your class while I observe you in class. As I initially analyse my field notes I will allow you to read and comment on these.

I will also photograph you in these settings. The captured moments will be used to create greater meaning and depth to understand who you are as an educator and middle manager. The photographs will not be made available to any other person and will be used only as a stimulus for our next interview. The photographs will be returned to you after our discussion. An interview will follow which will be based on my observations.

Once again thank you for agreeing to be observed and for allowing me to photograph you in your classroom.

Sharitha Lalla

**Reflective Journal Writing Instrument for Female Heads of Department**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Participant

I have provided you with a journal and you will make entries in this reflective journal describing your experiences for a week as a head of department. Use this journal to reflect on your practices as a teacher and a middle manager. You may include the interactions you have with members in your department and school.

This reflective journal will be given back to me at the end of the week and I will use the information in it as data and also as a stimulus for the next interview. You are welcome to comment on my initial analysis of the data from your reflective journal. Your journal entries will remain anonymous and will be filed with me. Your journal will not be made public and information will remain confidential.

I thank you for agreeing to this activity.

Sharitha Lalla

**INSTRUMENT FOR LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEW -**

The understanding and performance of middle management roles among female Heads of Department(HoDs) in secondary schools :

**Interview Instrument for Female HoDs using photographs and a Timeline.**

**Interview Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**HOD:** 01 / 02 / 03

**Preparation**

The female HoDs will be asked in the previous interview to select at least photographs that show how their lives have been shaped as women, educators and HoDs/middle managers, and to bring them to this interview. A typed Time-line will be given to the participants to take away as a reminder of the 'moments' that they must find photos for.

The interview will be held in a quiet and private room and will be tape recorded. The interview will be approximately 1 1/2 to 2 hours long. The recorded interview will be transcribed after the interview and matters arising out of this interview may be used as part of the follow up interview. This interview will be based on the photographs of the female HoDs from early childhood to present day. A Timeline was used to select the range of photographs.

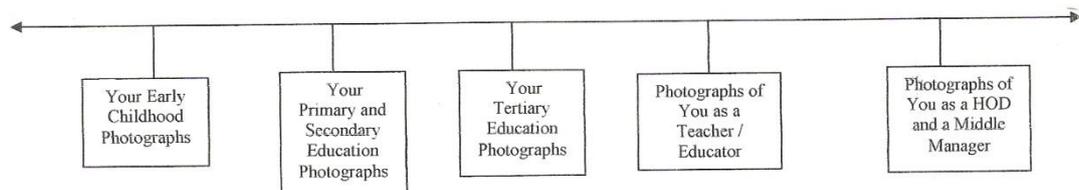
**Resources**

- Time-line sheet
- Tape recorder
- Personal Photographs selected by participants

**Start of Interview**

Thank you for permitting me to interview you. This interview will be approximately 1 1/2 to 2 hours long. Please feel free to ask for an explanation of that which you may not understand. Please be assured that whatever information has been given to me will remain anonymous and you will be allowed to view this transcript to avoid any misunderstandings and misinformation on my part.

You are by now acquainted with my project which is "The understanding and performance of middle management roles among female HoDs in secondary schools". Prior to this interview, I had asked you to select significant photographs from your personal album ranging from early childhood, to primary and secondary education, to tertiary education, to your professional life as a teacher and finally a HoD and middle manager. The photographs selected had to also show how your life has been shaped as a women, a teacher and a HoD and middle manager. Please arrange your photographs according to the Timeline on the chart. ( The Time-line will be drawn on a large chart and the participants will arrange their photographs according to the headings on the chart).



Starting with the photographs from your early childhood to the latest photographs, tell me your 'story' of how you became the person you are today as a women, an educator and a Head of Department and Middle Manager.

**Conclusion**

Thank you for sharing your photographic 'moments' with me and telling me your story of how you became the person you are today. I request to keep these photographs safely with me as I transcribe this interview. These photographs will be returned to you at our next interview when we will meet to discuss the transcription of this interview and the preparation for the following interview.

**SAMPLE OF WOMEN MIDDLE MANAGER'S LIFE HISTORY INTERVIEW  
TRANSCRIPT**

Hema 07/06/07 TAPE TWO

R: Okay each one tells a story.

S: So what did you experience?

R: I will tell you my experience. Participant then discusses photo and explains how they hired a combi and toured through Namibia and Botswana, Zimbabwe and back to Durban. It was a trip over four weeks. She explains who each person in the photo is. I had my bag packed all the time. We had good times together. (Doorbell rings)

S: So you lost touch with them?

R: Yes I haven't been to kings for two years now. I suppose if I go I will probably bump into somebody.

S: So there is still the family home there?

R: Family home is still there but D \_\_\_\_\_ (brother) sold the business. Now remember the family home and the business is attached so the people who took over the business are in the family home. My mother's whole garden is still there but they have taken over. For me it is still too traumatic to go back to the house. If we go we just book in and not stay with any family. I have very good memories here. I cut my teeth at Brabak School, politically and in sport. This is where I started. (Photos discussed again)

S: So you were teaching mainly children coloured children?

R: It was HOR. I was teaching geography in Afrikaans which was the mother tongue. For six years I was the English teacher. Just before I could leave we started dual medium classes so we would have English classes running. This school also had a hostel. Originally our children had to leave town for high school. This was the first high school built in \_\_\_\_\_ and we became the base for the neighboring farming schools. Children are children so we were accepted. There are no townships for separate race groups. (Photos discussed while identifying areas in which the group toured)

S: So you did not teach geog at this stage?

R: No I was English second language because it was an Afrikaans medium school and there was a vacancy at the time for English my principal phoned me because he knew I was at home. He called me in and I came in and fitted and I was the English teacher. Then comes \_\_\_\_\_ secondary, I came in at the beginning of democracy in 1994 so appropriately and this is my first encounter with a full Indian staff.

S: And how was it?

R: It was a bit of a stressful situation because I used to smoke. I never smoked before. I learnt to smoke at varsity and my mother was horrified. AT Kings I smoked in the staff room and everybody accepted it. We shared matches and that is how we related. So I am walking into R \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary staff room and I thought to myself how am I going to do this

*Ironical that I came here during democracy and I was limited in my interactions with only Indian people.*

because the men sat on one side and the women sat in another place and I thought how will I deal with it?

S: Was that the seating arrangement?

R: Ja that is how they sit you see it now too. It has changed now but before the men sat on one side and the women sat on the other side. It was acceptable for men to smoke in the staff room but it would have been killers if I smoked there. At the same time I was weaning off. I had a baby and I knew nobody on my in-laws side smoked and I had to duck and dive. I thought no I am staying in Durban now I can't deal with this and I never smoked the whole day at school so on the first day at Secondary I gave up smoking. I just didn't feel like it anymore. Most of my cousins have also given it up. So coming to and looking at all these charous I thought to myself god how am I going to deal with it but I fitted in again and the people that approached me made me feel very comfortable and we became very good friends. All those old one with antiquated ideas have all gone thanks God. People were wary of me because I was different and very outspoken. I was asked to run the tuck shop. I gained respect over the years. They didn't know me so I had to make myself known and become assertive so the men would not bully me and walk all over me. When promotions came in I didn't get promoted. An outsider was promoted, the affirmative action. They moved her up to DP and asked me to act again but then she passed on after three months in the post and that is how I got the post. I would never ever have gotten appointed if she didn't die. When I was post level one we had many parties.

S: So you also built quite strong friendships?

*People were initially wary I was a non conformist but they learnt to accept me and respected who I was.*

R: Very strong friendships with the women. It is so important for women to network because we talk a lot of things that make sense like networking and such like. We really had lots of fun. I have a god relationship with my staff. (Discusses photos)

S: So how have you grown as an educator, as a manager?

*The women have been running this school. We are so versatile and committed to what we do.*

R: I think with time and experience one learns a lot. That is how you grow as a person through your experiences. If I look at my education through school I wish I knew more at the time to be more active to what I know now. My greatest experiences would have been at university, at Rhodes as a person and my teaching. What makes me and how I have grown is my interaction with people. That is how you grow. You experience other people. If you don't expose yourself to other people's experiences then you will never grow. (Cell phone rings) Discusses photos again. I really want to understand young people I need to see how they react to different environments.

S: So what does teaching mean for you R \_\_\_\_\_?

R: Teaching for me is not just a job. Teaching for me is a passion and it is my life. I love what I do and I don't do it for the money. If it was for the money I would have given up long ago. I don't know if I have answered your question. I still got lot of growing up to do. I know I am not doing enough with my time. When I look at young potential children I know they have so much potential and I do what I can for them.

S: And your middle management role, how is that? How do you see that role in the context of your life?

R: As a manger because now I am working with ten and all women because Mr. N\_\_\_\_\_ has gone off. So I am working with all women. I know I play a very influencing role. I can share what I have with them (Participant requests to look at her notes) As a woman leader and the difference I make I know I have made a difference by building meaningful relationships with my staff, by being sensitive to them, by understanding their needs and giving them space to be who they are. I am not rigid. I think my department has the most turnover in terms of people coming in and leaving for various reasons. I am not dogmatic. I don't expect them to stick to a rigid rule. I bring them in I orientate them and I leave them to develop but I am there to guide them whenever they need me. They know I am always there. I don't expect them to deviate themselves from their personal lives. They must know at all times that I am approachable. I create a caring environment where people will listen to each other's problems, share each other's joys. In the caring environment we can talk about each other's concerns. I know what is going on in their lives because hey come and tell me. They never fail to deliver the goods. AS a middle manager at R\_\_\_\_\_ and as a woman who has a different way of leading certainly not the same way as men I do not want to lead the way they lead. I just feel that it is important that we bring in our own femininity, our intuition, our nurturing our caring because that is who we are. If we introduce that and lead we make remarkable leaders because we have that extra something. It has spilled over from my department to the staff when I did the HIV course last year. That has brought staff together. It has closed the gap. The suspicion of different cultural groups has been broken. I know I was instrumental in breaking those barriers in school. If we talk of challenges that still exist there are many. The stereotype of hoe women operate and how men expect you to operate that still exist and some of the challenges we face is that as women we multi task so e just have to find a balance of how to balance a task and how to sustain it but don't cut yourself off. Men are very sterile they can only do one thing at a time. Just be yourself. Just be who you are as a woman and you can overcome these challenges. At our school I am the only woman among the male SMT so although there maybe one or two that are more approachable and more sympathetic you find the African males are still very dogmatic and patriarchal. I don't allow that to threaten me. I just maintain who I am and I do things the way I want to do it and in that way I get things done. I am never intimidated by them anyway but the general staff I know I have their respect by just being who I am and not pretending to be this manager as males portray it but by just being a manager like everybody else by delegating and doing things with respect. I think those are key words, trust respect and being who you are and being humble. Just be like everybody else. And what makes me accomplish all that is a love and a passion for people and a passion for the things that I do.

S: And R\_\_\_\_\_ what do you see for yourself in the future, \_\_\_\_\_

R: Work wise I still like what I do. What I like about what I am doing is just looking after children. I like working with young people but I also know that it is time to move on and for me to move on is not to go another school because I really don't have the energy to start all over again to earn and gain people's respect but it will be out of the school system either in to the department. I like to analyze polices as they come out, educational policies so I would like to become a researcher. I would like to work in an education policy unit. That would be for my old age years or go into the department and be an advisor but certainly not to another school and of course to finish my studies because I am passionate about that. For me I have the urge to study. I feel I have much to offer and I am wasting my time now. As much as I enjoy the kids I can move on, there are others to take over. I think also you know when you reach the top of the ladder let the ladder down now for others to climb up. I have reached the top of the ladder at school I want to put the ladder down because there are a lot of teachers

from my department that can start climbing up. It is their opportunity to climb to the top, I want to move on.

S: So you don't see yourself going up in management?

R: If that opportunity would arise fine, but it would only be for status to be a deputy or principal now because DP there is nothing new that I can do. I know the whole portfolio of the DP so I would only go there for the money and the status but job wise it would not be a challenge for me. I want a challenge. I want to do something new. I am not going there just for the status and at the same time I know how difficult it is to get there. We know what happens at promotions.

END OF SIDE A

## SAMPLE OF RESEARCHER'S JOURNAL ENTRY

16 April  
 Maths lesson Time : 9:55  
 Grade 10

I am currently observing P.'s maths lesson. P. is busy with some of the girls explaining and revising some of the Maths problems.

This is my first day observing P. as I had come a few days ago to meet with P. and to discuss my research with her. I explained in great detail what she was expected to do if she accepted to participate in the research. I was relieved when she signed the Consent form and readily agreed to participate.

Today I had come in at 8:00 and requested to be sent to P. However, I was asked to wait in the "waiting room" as P. was busy with a test. I did inform the secretary at the reception that I had made special/prior arrangements to call at the school, but a call from P. to the secretary ~~had~~ indicated that she would not be long and would see me soon.

At 8:45 when the siren sounded P. had walked into the main area and greeted me with surprise. "I did not know if it was you. I thought it was a parent. I thought it was a parent. I would have come immediately. We hugged glad to see each other.

I felt less apprehensive because I knew my observation was finally on its way! P informed me that I did not need to go to the office the next day, she welcomed me directly into her class. I thought I would follow protocol and introduce myself to the school principal, but I probably will do that through P.

As we walked along the busy corridors, I sensed this school was well resourced. Indeed P's science lab was large and airy and boasted some lovely specimens! This was a very advantaged school and was previously an 'ex-model C' school. A little different from the slightly cramped <sup>class</sup> school I just visited. P warned me that the Maths class she was going to teach would be "quite rowdy". When we entered I only saw chattering girls, who quietened when they saw me. P introduced me to her class and I was greeted by curious stares. Once the lesson began everyone was back to normal and the "stranger at the back of the class" did not seem to deter the girls from passing comments at each other.

P engaged so warmly with her learners and patiently explained the Maths problem to the girls. P then spoke of a previous class test and the poor pass rate of the learners. She spoke with

care and explained how important it was that they worked hard to pass and to do well at school. She lovingly told the class that as their "Grade Mother" she would be keeping 'an eye' on them.

The girls switched their conversation to the Matric Dance and after parties. Excitement stirred up in the class and the girls openly broached the subject of contraception with P.

P. displayed qualities of a good teacher and a good communicator today. The learners listened attentively to her during the lesson and found it easy to approach her with challenges they faced. She showed a caring and maternal side when she spoke to the girls about planning their future and when she taught her subject she was passionate about her teaching. P. tried to instil the importance of working hard and she believes in setting high standards and goals for the girls!

After the 3rd period the siren sounds for lunchbreak.

18 April  
Biology class Gr 12.

Each period is 47 minutes and P. informed me that she teaches 42 out of a possible 70 periods. She has the lightest load compared to the other HODs and she is thankful

P.'s table was 'overflowing' with books and files. She had to moderate exam papers and she was going to supervise the teachers' records. "I will have to take books home to supervise" were her words. "There is so much of administration as a manager it bogs you down!" was how P. spoke of some of her middle management duties.

P. indicated that she had a strong department because the teachers worked well, but she felt that one of the teachers was never prepared with her work. P. indicated that the teacher had recently just left a job in the business sector and had a science degree, but no education or teaching qualifications. So she had to be closely monitored to help her in her new field. P. complained that the teacher always 'forgets' her record books at home! As the HOD, P. did say that she was accountable for the department!

19 April  
Rita's classroom

13:30

Rita called Ms X one of her Grade 12 educators to her classroom to discuss her records which were not updated. These records had to be taken to the cluster meeting to be signed by the cluster co-ordinator, and departmental representatives. The learners' portfolios also had to be in order because these records would be moderated against the teacher's records. None of the teacher's records were in order. Rita was upset with Ms X for being unprepared for moderation and confronted the issue with Ms X.

The practical test sheets were needed for moderation. P., after much discussion with Ms X asked her if she could not replace the sheets from elsewhere. Clearly the teacher was proving to be quite a challenge for P. to handle. Ms X said she could do it another day! P. was getting agitated at the defiant teacher who did not have her books in order. P.'s ability to manage this situation would show how effective she is as a manager.

## SAMPLE OF A PARTICIPANT'S JOURNAL ENTRY

19/3

— What a pleasant day for the first time since the beginning of 2007. I did not have to handle a single disciplinary problem. It may be that I am doing something right!

PL I concentrated on my own records and marking. This was a most unusual day because no demands were made of me. The printer in our office functions very poorly. I completed a worksheet which I had to darken using a pen. How unprofessional!

During the lunchbreak, I asked my team to ensure that a co-ordinated consultative process for determining the term mark was used. Grade co-ordinators were requested to assist. I have a sore throat. At home, I have little energy to serve my family.

The first "pink eye" learner arrived at my door while I was busy distributing term test papers. I sent the student home because I anticipated that the virus would infect other learners. The principal sent the student back to me and requested that the student be sent home after his term test. Yours truly gets to investigate for this infected student.

I arrange for a meeting of Maths / Science educators for Wednesday. We will discuss record-keeping, term marks, work schedules, extra-curricular activities.

I had prepared much work during the weekend. Feel energetic and eager to work. Some educators have no classroom control and keep sending learners with disciplinary problems to me. I deal with some cases and not with others because I am busy with grade 11's and 12's.

An educator has collected monies for an excursion and not handed in monies. I run around and try to get the money without success. When I send a learner to call the educator the educator tells the learner to say that the educator could not be found!

20/7

I worked hard yesterday at home trying to get my CASS moderation file (grade 12) in order. I typed out new memoranda to replace & untidy ones which were contributions of other educators.

I sign learner and educator portfolios (grade 12) for CASS moderation.

Some information is missing even in senior educator's files. I send for an educator to complete details on her CASS form.

The Chatsworth branch of Hospice invites 8 learners and an educator to an information meeting. I believe that social responsibility should be learned at school, and that this is an opportunity to achieve this aim. Despite my difficult schedule, I have

**BIOGRAPHIES OF WOMEN HEADS OF DEPARTMENT**

*Women Middle Managers Influenced by Resilient Mothers*

Mandisa is in her mid-thirties and is the eldest of three children. She has a brother and a younger sister. Mandisa's ethnic background is Xhosa and she was born in the Eastern Cape Province. Her parents were unmarried and lived apart. Mandisa's mother therefore became the sole provider for her children. Mandisa's mother worked for an insurance company in Durban. When they started their schooling, both Mandisa and her brother were sent to live with their grandparents in a rural part of Eastern Cape. Although her grandfather and uncle tried to fill the role of father in their lives, Mandisa was still in awe of her mother and the role she played in her life.

Mandisa's respect for her mother grew because her mother was capable of raising her children without any support from their father. With very little tertiary education of her own, Mandisa's mother was able to indirectly influence her in her education and in her career. It was her mother's perseverance to succeed on her own as a mother and a working woman that inspired Mandisa in her career.

The ability to manage a household and to raise three children proved to Mandisa that her mother had conviction coupled with a strong personality. Her mother was able to improve their standard of living through her determination and hard work. The opportunity to further her studies was realised because her mother was able to finance her. What emerges from Mandisa's narrative is that both Mandisa and her mother place great importance on the capability to aspire for a better life through education and a career (see Walker, 2007, p. 183). Through her education Mandisa was able to develop her agency and make choices. However, it was her father who tried to deny her the opportunity to further her tertiary education by refusing to assist her financially.

Her aspiration to further her education and to have a career was not deterred by her father's lack of moral or financial support. The capability to aspire made Mandisa more determined to want to succeed in her educational and career goals. Her

aspirations were inspired by her mother's own career development and achievement even though she lived in a community that was patriarchal and women were given fewer opportunities than men. Mandisa's mother developed in her the capability of integrity and taught her to be a determined and courageous individual.

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Thembi was affected by the lack of a father figure at home. Thembi is in her late forties and was born in a township on the outskirts of Durban. She is Zulu speaking and a staunch Christian. Her mother was a teacher and her father owned a small business. Thembi was the youngest of five children. She had four sisters, three of whom were nurses and the other a teacher, and a brother who studied for a Bachelor of Science Degree at the University of Fort Hare. Her brother's death when he was at university was a tragic loss for the family. Her parents divorced when she was in primary school, and this affected her as she was very attached to her father. Although he was divorced from Thembi's mother, her father was still a part of his children's lives, particularly Thembi. Her father still maintained his children financially and according to Thembi, they were "well cared for and never wanted for anything." Both the parents had an amicable relationship and provided a secure environment for all their children. Thembi however, was affected by her parent's separation and this led to her having a troubled childhood. She was unable to develop her capabilities of emotion and affiliation due to the loss she felt when her parents divorced.

Thembi's capability of affiliation was at risk when the relationships she formed with her peers proved challenging as her friends had a negative influence on her well-being. The broken relationship of her parents affected her choice of friends. However, the value that her family placed on religion and education motivated Thembi to strive for more in her life and to also have a profession like her mother and her siblings. Her mother's perseverance and hard work influenced Thembi to be the middle manager she is today.

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Gene's parents divorced when she was growing up, but Gene did not feel a sense of loss because both her parents were actively involved in her life. Gene is in her early sixties, and was born in a small mining town in Springs in Johannesburg. She is a single, English speaking White woman. Her father worked in the mines and her

mother was a housewife. According to Gene her father had a very 'responsible job on the mining site'. He would operate the lifts that would transfer the mine workers into the mine shafts. Gene has a sister who is two years younger than her. When Gene's sister was born she was a sickly child. Through much of her childhood days, most of her parents' attention was focussed on her sister. Gene was not bitter that her parents concentrated on their younger child as she also felt a deep sense of responsibility for her.

Therefore, Gene was still able to experience a stable family life even after her parents divorced because both parents remained involved in their children's lives. However, Gene's mother played a more dominant role in her life and educational choices. Gene believes that her role as a manager is indirectly attributed to her mother because she was determined that her daughters would be educated and become independent women.

Gene's mother was task oriented and very strict in her upbringing; she was not averse to disciplining her daughters "with a rod" and was not the stereotypical mother who was gentle and loving. Her disciplining methods were harsh because she tried to instil sound values in her daughters so that they would be well equipped to cope with life and the future. Although Gene's father was the loving and affectionate parent, it was her mother who impacted on her life and her career.

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Valerie lived with her both her parents; however, her mother was the dominant figure in her household. Valerie is classified as Coloured, is divorced and is in her mid forties. She was born in Durban and is the eldest sibling in her family. She has two brothers and took on the maternal role in the family. Valerie is fair-skinned, blue-eyed and light haired, and was often treated differently at school by her peers because of her physical appearance. According to Valerie, she 'was a loner' for most of her schooling, as others kept away from her, assuming that she was 'unapproachable and a snob'. The girls were threatened by her because 'the boys were attracted to her. Her lack of friends made her bitter and she became an introvert and isolated herself from her peers at school. However, as she approached adulthood, she was accepted by her peers and was seen as a regular person and was not discriminated against because she

looked different from others. Her family life on the other hand, was disciplined and controlled by her mother but Valerie had a happy childhood.

Having a strict and disciplined upbringing were contributing factors to Valerie's development and progress in school. Although her mother was very controlling of her children, and regimental in her behaviour, Valerie claims that this had a positive effect on her development, particularly in her professional life. Valerie's mother kept a tight rein on her children and set high standards for all of them. She encouraged their educational development, but restricted them socially. Her mother's strict upbringing explains why Valerie finds it difficult to interact with others.

Although Valerie's father earned the family income and the household depended on him financially, it was the mother who was the dominant parent in their household. Her presence was always felt in their home by the children, because of her involvement in her children's lives. Understanding the societal restrictions that would be placed on her daughters, Valerie's mother was determined that her daughters succeed in life and in their careers. Her mother understood that they would encounter many challenges in their lives as women; therefore she taught them to persevere in their endeavours in order to succeed and attain a sense of well-being.

Valerie's mother might have provided the opportunities for her children's educational development, but through her strict personality, Valerie was unable to develop meaningful relationships with others in her life. Her inability to make friends easily and to form relationships can be attributed to her mother's strict upbringing and display of tough love. But, Valerie has accepted her lot in life and although her own personal life has not developed, she has developed in her career. The fact that Valerie had to fight to get where she is in her career suggests that she had the freedom and agency to actively participate in her development, rather than be a passive spectator (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007, p. 5).

#### ***Women Middle Managers Influenced by Both Parents***

Both Neelam's parents played an important role in her upbringing, however, like Valerie; it was her mother who motivated her in her education and career. Neelam was born in a town about fifty kilometres out of Durban and she lived there till the age of fourteen, and thereafter, relocated. Neelam has two siblings and during her early

childhood, her constant companion was her elder brother because her younger sister was a sickly child. Neelam is married, has two daughters, an eighteen year old at university and a thirteen year old in high school. Neelam claims that her “home is very busy” and they enjoy entertaining. She states that she comes from a “fairly rich home” with both her husband and herself having careers in education. Her family is also very spiritual and according to Neelam they “invest much time in religious practices”.

Neelam had a very good childhood and she was inspired by her mother’s determination to succeed in a male dominated society. Not being given equal opportunities as her male counterparts, Neelam’s mother was able to break through the mould of what was expected of women in her society. She was determined to work to improve her family’s income, even though Indian women were not expected to work outside of their homes. The unequal treatment of women prevented many women from participating in public transactions such as purchasing land, but Neelam’s mother was a determined woman, who managed to challenge the restrictions and “unfreedoms” placed on women. Her mother’s determination to succeed motivated Neelam to achieve in her own career. Although Neelam admires and respects her father for his loving and humble nature, she views her mother as a stronger influence in her life. Neelam admires her mother for challenging some of the societal norms and the restrictions that society placed on her as a woman.

Neelam’s paternal grandmother was another woman who inspired her to be the person she is today, as a woman and middle manager. Her grandmother’s caring and selfless characteristics inspired Neelam in her role as a middle manager.

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Hema’s parents played an important role in her life, and the mother and father had influenced her greatly in her education and her career. Hema is an Indian female, in her late forties. She was born in a town in the Eastern Cape. She is the second of four children, and has an elder brother and two younger siblings, a brother and sister. Hema is married with two children in high school. Hema had a “very happy childhood” and she and her siblings were “very spoiled and short of nothing”. She was born into a middle class home and her father was a businessman who owned a shop in the town they grew up in. They lived in a large home as an extended family. They came from a “very loving and stable home environment”.

Hema grew up in a town that that was populated mainly by the Coloured community and had a few Indians; therefore she identified herself within a mixed community. At home, they were taught to be sensitive to gender issues. Hema's mother was a liberated woman, who ensured that her children were treated equally in their household. Although her mother was brought up in a strict Hindu home, where girls and boys would be expected to assume different roles, she was opposed to gender discrimination.

Both parents were equally competent in the private and public domains as they contributed equally to household duties and to their business. The morals and values taught by her parents and the independence she gained from a young age, helped Hema "develop into a strong, independent thinker", attributes that would follow through in her management role as head of department.

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Irene's parents played an active part in her life, and her father influenced her in her career. Irene is in her late forties and is classified Coloured. She was born in an area that was assigned to the coloured population by the apartheid government in Durban, and has lived there ever since. Irene is a single female, who was engaged to a man who was studying to be a priest, but decided not to marry. She did not want to compromise the lifestyle she knew. Irene felt that being bound to a priest would restrict her in many ways and she liked the freedom that she had.

Irene's father was a school teacher and her mother a nurse. She is the eldest child and has two brothers and a sister. Her sister followed in her mother's footsteps and became a nurse, one brother is a principal of a high school and the other is a Chief Financial Officer in the Defence Force. Since childhood her father instilled in his children the importance of a good education, and all the children strived to achieve academically. Irene's father was her inspiration and her role model. He inspired her in her own teaching career and in her management role. Having her father in a dual role as a teacher at school and as a parent at home, enabled her to develop in her profession. Her father's strong work ethic and dedication to his job further inspired Irene. Irene was inspired by her father's aspirations and determination to lead a better life and improve his class status from working class to middle class. The role her father played in making her aware of the injustices of the apartheid regime, influenced her decision to become a political activist and fight for social justice and for equal

opportunities. She was able to understand the plight of the Black children in rural areas who were given very few opportunities. When Irene's father lost his life to leukaemia in 1999, he "left a rich legacy behind in his teachings". Irene would apply her father's teachings in her own life and later in her management role.

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Although Rita's parents were both instrumental in her upbringing, her father played an important role in her education and career. Rita is an Indian female who is in her late forties. She was born in a town on the outskirts of Durban and her family later relocated to an Indian residential area close by. Her husband works in the education field and her elder son is at university and her second son is in high school. She presently resides in an affluent suburb on the outskirts of Central Durban.

Rita has three siblings. Her two older siblings were academic achievers from primary school, often scooping the prestigious academic prizes. Both qualified as medical doctors. Rita and her younger brother, however, were not the high achievers at school. Rita was the active child in the family and loved participating in various codes of sport at school. Because she lacked academic excellence in school, she was 'not given the preferential treatment' that her elder siblings received at home.

Rita was a more balanced pupil at school and followed a career in education. Rita felt a sense of isolation as she lacked the attention of her parents. She developed a sense of resilience and was able to cope with this unequal treatment meted out to her. Rita had realised that her father had placed great importance on education because of his own difficult childhood which lacked freedom and opportunities. Therefore he wanted his own children not to be as disadvantaged as he was. He was forced to leave school and work to help support his family from a young age. Rita admired her father because of his values and commitment to improve their lifestyle. He motivated his children to succeed academically and "to set goals for themselves". He wanted them to work towards good careers and "to be ambitious" through sheer hard work and determination. Using her father as her inspiration, Rita is able to apply many of his teachings in her own role as head of department and middle manager.

Rita's mother was less ambitious than her father when it came to schooling and a career. She chose not to pursue her schooling although Rita claims she was capable

enough to do so. Rita's father wanted his children to have their own careers, but he did not encourage his spouse to do the same. Women were denied the opportunities to further themselves due to societal norms and pressures. And Rita's mother had resigned herself that her schooling was not important and therefore, did not complete it even though she had the ability to do so. Therefore Rita's mother and father were both disadvantaged in their schooling and their education. Her father was disadvantaged because of a lack of financial resources and her mother because of her gender.

### ***Women Middle Managers Influenced by an Illustrious Family***

Arthi, an Indian female is in her early fifties. She is married with two children. Her husband works in the education field, her daughter is at university and her son is an IT specialist in Gauteng. Arthi lives with her husband in a suburb south of Durban. Arthi's interests are "films, reading and socialising with a select group of friends, who are normally in the teaching profession". Arthi's mother suffered from cancer and lost her life when Arthi was seventeen years of age. Her father thereafter left her older brother and her in the care of his sister and he emigrated.

Arthi does not feel that she was motivated or influenced by anyone in her career. However, her family backdrop and significant members in her family have created the space for her to develop into the middle manager she is today. Although her middle class status afforded her more educational opportunities and freedoms, the death of her mother created barriers to her development. The silences in Arthi's conversations about her father, suggest a sense of betrayal that she felt when her father deserted her brother and her in their time of grief. Her aunt seems to have helped ease the loss she felt at losing both her parents.

Her aunt's love for English literature seems to have rekindled Arthi's spark for life. Their common love for English created a strong bond between her aunt and herself. Although Arthi does not name her aunt as an inspirational figure in her life, the narratives suggest that the aunt did in fact motivate Arthi in her career as she later became an English teacher and a Head of Department of Languages. Even Arthi's grandfather, who was a Member of Parliament, appears to have influenced Arthi in her interest for literature, as he was also an influential writer and a speechmaker. The cycle of highly educated family members is perpetuated in each generation in Arthi's

family. Each generation emulates the other and the successful educational history of one generation forms the backdrop for the next generation to follow.

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### **Educational experiences**

Within this theme of educational experiences, the participants had arrived at teaching through various routes. Their educational experiences had also influenced them differently. Hema and Valerie both grew up in areas with mixed race groups and they were able to easily identify with other population groups. However, both felt stifled when they had to attend schools that catered only for a particular race group. They were the outsiders coming into the schools where they felt restricted. As a learner from a minority group, Hema became an outsider when she attended a school that catered only for coloured learners. Irene, in contrast, was the insider. Her father was her teacher in high school; therefore, she was able to feel a sense of belonging at home and school. Arthi was both the insider and the outsider in her schooling career. She was easily assimilated into school life, however, when she reached her secondary schooling, she felt distanced from some of her educators and began disliking school. This was also as a result of the loss of her mother. Neelam and Rita were the competitive and non-competitive learners at school. Neelam was ambitious and highly motivated and did not allow her economic background to stifle her. Rita in contrast, did not hanker after academic achievements, but wanted to have a balance in her educational life. Mandisa, Thembi and Gene had disrupted educational experiences. All three participants' had to attend boarding school either due to social or family pressures. All three participants had difficulties coping with boarding school. Therefore, as I tell the stories of the educational experiences of the women heads of department, their educational stories will unfold under the following headings: the Outsider; The Insider; The Insider/Outsider; The Competitor and the Non-competitor and Disrupted Educational Experience. I will begin with the educational stories of Hema and Valerie.

## **The Outsider**

Hema's primary school memories were exciting as she attended a Catholic school that was built for Coloured learners, but who accepted children from other race groups. Hema maintains that her ability to adapt to the school and to communicate fluently in Afrikaans, allowed her to enjoy her primary education.

Although Hema considered the move to a Coloured School as exciting, this move to a school outside the town that they lived in, suggests that the Indians as a minority group in the town were not given the same provisions and opportunities as the others in the area. The White learners had their own primary school in the town and the Coloured learners had a school in their township. African learners also had their schools but the language barriers prevented the Indian learners from attending these schools. The Indian children were further disadvantaged as a minority group as they had to also be fluent in Afrikaans in order to cope with the lessons in the Coloured schools. The Indian child in the town was displaced in terms of educational provisioning and they were unable to make their free choices.

The displacement of the Indian child was further exacerbated in terms of provisioning for secondary education. When Hema and her brother completed their primary school education, they were once again faced with the dilemma of attending a suitable high school since there were no high schools in the area for Indian learners. Due to the separate education laws of the apartheid government, children of the different race groups had to be educated separately.

Therefore, Hema and her brother were sent to Durban to complete their secondary school education. Due to the high Indian population in Durban and in the KwaZulu-Natal province, there were many schools providing education for Indian learners. The provisioning and distribution of schools based on race, brought about a sense of dislocation of learners as they had to go "elsewhere" to complete their secondary school education. The Coloured learners had to go to boarding school and the Indian learners had to be "shipped" to remote families in Durban.

The move to Durban signalled a loss of freedom and opportunity for Hema. Although the move was to benefit her schooling career, her social and educational freedoms

were severely curtailed. Living within the insulated Indian community, stifled Hema as her freedom to interact and communicate with others freely was restricted. She claims that she was not allowed to “mix with people from other races” and she was not allowed to talk openly with males. Her educational opportunities were also curtailed. As a female she was not given the same opportunities and privileges of her brother. Hema was expected to do the household chores before any school tasks. This was not expected of her brother. The role expectation, based on her gender, did not weaken Hema’s resolve to want to achieve academically.

The move from Eastern Cape to Durban challenged Hema emotionally. Having grown up in a town and being exposed to “a mixed society” allowed Hema the opportunity and freedom to interact with people of all race groups. Being brought up with fewer restrictions, Hema was also able to openly communicate with boys and girls of her age. However, the relocation to Durban placed many restrictions on her. Living with her maternal grandparents meant that she had to abide by their strict rules, thereby drastically changing the life she knew.

Hema resisted the constraints being placed on her as a female, especially concerning her educational achievements. As a female she was not expected to perform well at school, rather, it was expected that she be a good homemaker. But Hema learnt to concentrate on both her studies and her household chores. Rather than being a passive recipient of societal norms, Hema acted upon the pressures she faced as a female. She decided to act and shape her own life, rather than let those around her determine her destiny. Therefore, her need to pass her final year of school as this would create new opportunities for her.

Valerie also wanted to follow a career in teaching as a first choice, although her educational experiences held painful memories for her. Growing up as the eldest sibling in her home, and having to care for her younger siblings, developed an interest in Valerie to want to work with young people. Although Valerie experienced a happy childhood, her own schooling experiences were peppered with sadness.

Valerie’s difficulty interacting with her peers made her introverted as she was often the subject of bullying by her female class-mates. The possible distrust and anger against the Whites during the times of the apartheid rule, made it difficult for Valerie to be accepted by the others in her class as she so closely resembled a White. To cope

with the situation, Valerie learnt to remain silent while the other girls continued with their bullying. In the process, Valerie further isolated herself from the group as she did not want to compound her problem at school. Valerie was the outsider amongst her peers in school, because she looked different from the rest. However, she felt a sense of belonging with the members of her community with which she lived, rather than with her school community.

Living in an urban area, near the city of Durban, which was densely populated by Indians, exposed Valerie to the Indian community. Therefore, in her childhood and teenage years, she identified herself mainly with the Indian community. Although she lived amongst the Indian community, she received her primary and secondary education in Coloured schools. When Valerie matriculated in 1983, she enrolled at a Teachers Training College for Coloured Trainee teachers to train as a teacher of commerce. Valerie furthered her studies through correspondence after she was appointed as a teacher. Valerie's route to teaching was also motivated by her primary school teacher's poor treatment of her.

Valerie's career choice stemmed from her desire to work with children. But, she found it difficult to relate to small children; therefore, she decided to teach older children in a high school. Valerie's dedication as a teacher proved worthwhile because her work as a teacher did not go unnoticed and she was immediately assigned a Matric class when she was transferred to her present school.

Valerie's mother had played an important role in Valerie's education, but, as Valerie grew into adulthood, she found her mother's parenting skills very stifling, therefore her need to work. She did not want to be like her mother who was forced into being a housewife rather than becoming a working woman. Valerie was motivated to succeed in her career, because a life without a career would mean stagnation and being bound to her mother. Therefore, through her determination, Valerie was able to prove herself as a teacher and finally as a head of department and middle manager.

### **The Insider**

I consider Irene to be the "insider" in her educational setting because as she shifts between the two spatial settings of the home and school, she is able to adjust with ease in either setting. The comfort that she seems to feel at school can be attributed to her

social relationships she has in school with the various people she interacts with. Her interactions with her father, her teachers and principal and her peers contribute to her “insider” status in the school setting.

Irene’s father was instrumental in developing her love for school. His dual role of being both a father and a teacher to Irene enabled her to adapt easily into school life. As her history teacher, Irene’s father was able to expose her to political and social issues in the country. Being involved in the fight for justice during the 1980 school boycotts indicates her agency to act against the unfreedoms in the form of inequality and injustice in the country during that time. The strong support structure offered by the teachers and principal of her school indicates the supportive role they played in their students’ academic lives. This further highlights the ease with which Irene was able to adjust to school life.

Irene recalls always having to compete with the boys at school. Being in a class dominated by boys suggests that the girls were not given the same educational opportunities as boys. Irene too refers to the boys as being “more academic than the girls” and as “sharp”, suggesting that she was also influenced by the social stereotypes that boys were more intelligent than girls. The girls in her class had to work hard to show the boys that they were “powerful” as well. This further suggests that men and boys in any society are considered as having more status and power than women and girls and would therefore have power over them. Therefore, Irene’s fight for racial freedom and justice could also be a fight for gender justice. Although Irene “passed well” at school, she also had limited career choices as a female in a male dominated society.

### **The Insider/ Outsider**

Arthi’s educational experiences as a learner in school suggest that she was both the insider and outsider in her educational settings. She was the insider in primary school, as her social relationships with her peers and teachers were strong, whereas her high school experiences showed resentment and conflicting relations, thus making her the outsider.

Arthi’s family background was middle class and very “illustrious”. Her social and economic background in primary school allowed her to interact freely with her

teachers who resided in the same neighbourhood as her. Arthi felt a “close connection” to her primary school teachers because of their commonalities such as race and class. She looked upon her primary school teachers with great respect and almost reverence as they were given an “iconic status” by their young learners. Therefore, this close connection she felt with her primary school teachers gave her the insider status in primary school. This changed once she reached high school.

Arthi’s insider status changed to that of the outsider when she reached high school. The conflicting relationships with her high school teachers have contributed to her outsider status, because she no longer felt a liking for school. Her memories of high school were “excruciating” and “painful” suggesting a deep sense of loss. Her hatred for the science subjects stems from the callous remarks of her teachers. Therefore Arthi’s teachers in high school appeared to be instrumental in restricting her educational development. Their lack of concern and empathy further alienated Arthi from her teachers and her educational life. The loss of her mother also reinforced the loss that she felt in high school. Arthi’s sense of loss and isolation suggest that she was indeed the insider who had become the outsider in high school.

Having children created the opportunity for Arthi to enter into the field of education. Teaching as a career would offer her the space to spend time with her growing children. Although Arthi had completed a degree in Law, she did not pursue it as a career; rather she opted for a career in Education. This suggests that Arthi wanted to stay true to her “illustrious” family backdrop by pursuing a degree in Law. As a member of such a privileged family, Arthi had the freedom to choose her career – she could either continue with Law or she could choose to study towards an Education degree. She chose the latter, because it suited her needs as a young mother. Her love for English literature also inspired her to continue with teaching, and to finally become a head the department of Languages in her school.

Neelam lived and schooled in a town in the interior of KwaZulu-Natal. The residential area in which she resided and schooled was newly developed to accommodate the local Indian community. Neelam’s school experiences indicate that she had a strong sense of achievement and competition from a young age. I therefore refer to Neelam as the competitor, because of her competitive nature displayed during her school years.

Neelam's determination to "beat the teacher's daughter" highlights Neelam's competitive nature from a young age. Neelam came from a disadvantaged working class background, but, Neelam's mother worked very hard to support her husband's income and was determined to improve her family's economic background. The oppressions she felt at school because of her economic background did not deter Neelam from her educational goals. She instead used her disadvantaged social status to propel her to achieve higher, thus her need to fare better than the learner who came from a more advantaged background.

Neelam's primary school education was very good, but was often a source of discomfort for Neelam when teachers openly advantaged some learners over the others, based on their social class. The lack of equality in the classroom, in the treatment of learners by the teachers, was of concern to Neelam from a young age. The open favouritism of richer learners and learners, whose parents were teachers, concerned her. Neelam had to work harder than the more affluent learners to prove herself to the teachers. She did not view herself as less capable than the more financially advantaged learners, but the teachers at the school, through their practices, reminded learners of their differences. Therefore Neelam did not succumb to the secondary status accorded to her by the teachers. She instead fought against the injustices within her class, by proving herself academically.

Neelam's competitive nature is again highlighted in her studies at university. She had enrolled for a challenging science degree and proved her worth by passing all her courses. Her lack of faith in the job market motivated her to change her direction of study to education and teaching. Although Neelam made the switch to teaching, she still considers a science degree as being of higher status than a teaching degree as the science degree was "designed for high positions in a scientific environment". Although Neelam is a head of department of Science and Mathematics, her prior knowledge from her science degree is of little relevance to the classroom. Therefore, Neelam's competitive nature may be compromised in the classroom, as the work she does may not challenge her adequately.

Neelam's passion for science is not being put to use in the classroom, and therefore she regrets the "nature of the work" that she does, as it is not scientific enough for her. However, teaching rather than a science degree would create more opportunities for

her in the job market. This suggests that as a woman, Neelam may have fewer opportunities in the science field than her male counterparts. Her recognition of the challenges she may face have motivated her to change to teaching. Being the competitive participant in this study shows Neelam wanting and aspiring for more.

Rita's primary schools years were very happy and enjoyable. She attended schools that were built for Indian learners in predominantly Indian areas in the south of Durban. Rita's siblings were competitive and high achievers, but she preferred having a balanced academic life, and can therefore be seen as the non-competitor.

Rita was not influenced by the academic achievements of her two older siblings, although she did feel isolated in her household because she was not performing as well as her siblings. Rita loved sport as a child, and therefore balanced her school life between sport and her academic work. However, from Rita's account, it appears that the benefits of sport were secondary in her family, as compared to academic achievement. The resilience that she developed in her home allowed her to continue with her education at her own pace.

Rita's teachers either played a part in creating opportunities for her or not. Her mathematical ability was nurtured by her teacher who inspired her to excel in the subject, whereas, her hatred for Afrikaans stemmed from her dislike for her Afrikaans teacher who inflicted corporal punishment on his students. Her love for mathematics and science influenced her decision to study towards a science degree at university that would enable her to qualify as a pharmacist. Her choice of a career was influenced by an intrinsic need to continue in the field of mathematics and science. However, due to her own internal barriers, she was unable to continue with her chosen field of study.

Although Rita might be the non-competitor, she did possess the ability to perform well at school. She was the mathematics "genius" who would "solve problems" differently from the others. Her ability to solve problems suggests that she was analytical and did not follow the norm in her thinking. Therefore, Rita was able to resist the pressures put on her to be an academic achiever, because she made the choice to lead a non-competitive and balanced school life.

Not conforming to the pressures of her family, Rita also chose not to be competitive in university. Rita's non-competitive attitude contributed to her being unable to cope with university in her first year. Although Rita was given the opportunity to study at university, she was not prepared for the adjustments she had to make, and therefore succumbed to the pressures of university. The science degree that she undertook to study required a great deal of discipline and focus, which Rita found difficulty in maintaining. Her father continued to support her studies the following year, and Rita realised that she had to commit herself to her studies in order to progress as a female. In the third year of her studies, Rita's father had died. This signalled the end of her financial support for university. Rita then changed her field of study to education because the education degree offered students bursaries and Rita was adamant that she would support her own studies.

### **Disrupted Educational Experiences**

Mandisa attended rural primary schools in the Eastern Cape. She moved constantly to different schools in her primary school education as the rural schools she attended did not provide education beyond a certain grade. The changes in her schooling spaces would be disruptive to her education. The constant move to different schools suggests that Mandisa had an unsettled home life as well. With each new move came a move to another family member's home. The opportunities afforded to her were very different to that of her own child. Mandisa's and other children living in rural areas had very limited educational capabilities as they lacked educational resources. The lack of resources, however, did not deter Mandisa from continuing with her education. She created her own educational path as she moved from school to school albeit the limitations she faced. The constant moving around to other family member's homes suggests that Mandisa did not have a consistent parent figure in her formative years.

Mandisa's mother was a single parent, and she raised her children without any assistance. She was the sole provider for her children and worked hard to support them. However, being away from her mother during her formative years was difficult for Mandisa. Her only contact with her mother was during the school holidays. Mandisa's narrative also suggests that she faced social and class barriers to her development. When Mandisa was on the farm, living with her grandparents, she experienced an economically lower standard of living. Therefore, in trying to gain an

education, Mandisa had to contend with many disruptions to her family and school lives. Attending boarding school in her senior secondary schooling was part of her disrupted life.

The disciplining methods Mandisa experienced at school suggest that through the violence at school, she was denied her basic human freedom from bodily harm. Through the lack of support and through the punishment from the teachers her academic performance at school was thwarted as she found her high school experiences “very unpleasant” and “harsh”. Despite resigning herself to the fact that she was punished “for a reason” she still believed her teachers to be “mean” and “unfriendly”, suggesting that she lacked the support and concern that is needed to become fully capable of human action and expression.

Mandisa’s disrupted educational experiences in boarding school may have contributed to her not wanting to pursue a career in teaching. However, due to her circumstances she was to follow a career in teaching. Mandisa’s account suggests the ease with which she was able to enter the educational field, but the difficulties she faced in trying to enter the health Science field. As a woman, the science field was appealing to her, but remained closed for her. She was only able to enter with more competitive academic results and financial assistance. Therefore, the opportunities that Mandisa had in school were limited and constraining, she lacked supportive teachers, she faced financial difficulties and as a female she lacked the opportunities of her male counterparts. On entering the teaching field, Mandisa’s interaction with other people developed her love for teaching.

Gene, also settled for a career in teaching, as it offered her stability. Gene had limited opportunities when she reached her tertiary education. There were not many career options for women to follow as these were limited to the caring and nurturing professions like teaching or nursing. Gene was further constrained by the subjects she studied at school. Studying Mathematics in high school proved difficult for her and was a subject that was more accessible to males in school. Mathematics and the Science subjects were considered the domain of males in school and females often had difficulty coping in these subjects because females were given fewer opportunities to study them. Gene’s opportunities to go to university were also limited by her financial constraints. Like a few of the other participants, Gene’s option for a career was

restricted to teaching because of the constraints placed on them as females. Although Gene was a White female, she also experienced inequalities at school based on her gender. Teaching was also viewed as a suitable profession for women because it was a caring and nurturing profession and it was assumed that the stereotypical role of the female as nurturer and carer would easily flow from the home into school.

Gene had teachers who were disciplinarians in school, but, she was able to cope in the strict environment. The family support she received at home helped her cope with school. Her mother's influence during her schooling years enabled Gene to withstand the pressures she experienced at school. From Gene's account the disciplining measures she received from her mother and her teachers have allowed her to become a responsible teacher and manager as she learnt to be disciplined from a young age. Gene's narratives suggest that as a white learner she had more opportunities than the other participants as she was exposed to more activities out of school such as dance and music. Gene's schooling was disrupted however, when her parents divorced and she and her sister were sent to boarding school.

Thembi was also subjected to corporal punishment in school but was forced into accepting this as the norm in African schools. Her home was an extension of the school, as her mother was equally strict with her. According to Thembi, teachers were accorded the same respect as parents, although they were physically punished by their teachers. Thembi's narratives show that there were firm boundaries erected between the teachers and the learners. The teachers were the figures of authority and were not challenged.

Thembi's educational experience was disrupted when she had to attend boarding school in her senior secondary years. Once again she was denied her basic human function of human dignity when she was physically punished by her teachers in secondary school. The teachers in schools had much control and authority over the learners, and kept their reign of control over the learners through harsh forms of punishment. The types of punishment meted out to the female learners, further indicates the lack of respect and dignity afforded to the female learners by the male teachers.

The difficulties that Thembi experienced with some teachers at school were not only because of the physical abuse but also because of the lack of competency of the

teachers. Thembi says that she had to “grab” whatever content was being taught and this suggests the intensity of Thembi’s thirst for knowledge. Thembi expressed a love for English from a young age. English was one of the official languages in South Africa during the Apartheid rule, and therefore a language of the ruling class. Therefore, being proficient at the language would suggest being able to communicate in the language of those who were in power and would perhaps offer Thembi a sense of release from the oppressions she experienced as a Black female.

While some teachers may have stifled Thembi’s development as a learner in certain ways, other teachers offered her the freedom and opportunities to express herself and to develop into a capable learner. When Thembi completed her high school education, she wished to further her studies. Thembi’s career options were limited to nursing and teaching. She wanted to follow in her mother’s footsteps and become a teacher. Her love for English and the fact that she could communicate well also influenced her decision to follow her chosen field of work.