

**TITLE**

Frustrated careers? The perceptions of female educators at a Durban Primary  
School.

By

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**Declaration of Originality**

I, hereby declare that my thesis: 'Frustrated careers? The perceptions of female educators at a Durban Primary School', is entirely my own work and that all sources used or quoted have been acknowledged.

K. MAHARAJ

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Signature

*02/12/03*

Date

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### *Abstract*

The study examined perceptions of female educators at a primary school in Durban, with regard to issues of gender equality.

The literature review revealed that women educators have faced great injustices regarding past educational policies (before 1994) and the nature of gender biased practices both in society and within the school systems.

The study highlights some of the main barriers, both intrinsic and extrinsic, faced by women teachers which prevented their upward mobility in the profession, thus determining their perceptions of their present career status. It also focuses on strategies that women educators perceived in helping to advance in their career as a teacher thereby achieving satisfaction.

The research consisted of a quantitative phase which included the use of self-completion questionnaires to determine the perceptions of the female educators to their present career status. The data collected was used to develop strategies women teachers can use to advance their careers.

The findings revealed that there were two groups of teachers each with different set of perceptions. The younger generation of teachers did not experience intrinsic barriers and displayed more satisfied perceptions of their career. The older generation of teachers seemed less satisfied with their present career status. Both, however agreed that organizational constraints (extrinsic barriers) affected their advancement in the profession.

## Contents

	<b>Page.</b>
<b>Title page</b>	<b>i.</b>
<b>Declaration</b>	<b>ii.</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>iii.</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>iv.</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	
1.1 Background and purpose of the study	1.
1.2 Research questions	3.
1.3 Research methods	3.
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b>	
2.1 Introduction	4.
2.2 South African education policies that shaped women teachers present status	5.
2.2.1 Employment status of married women teachers	6.
2.2.2 Salaries	7.
2.2.3 Bonuses	7.
2.2.4 Housing subsidies	8.
2.2.5 Taxation	9.
2.2.6 Leave conditions	10.
2.2.7 Promotion opportunities	11.
2.3 The New Constitution	11.
2.4 Other barriers women teachers may face within schools and outside school	12.

2.4.1 Internal barriers	13.
2.4.1.1 Socialization and sex-role stereotyping	15.
2.4.1.2 Potential role conflict	16.
2.4.1.3 Lack of female role models and support systems	17.
2.4.1.4 Realistic assessment of commitment	18.
2.4.1.5 Geographic mobility	18.
2.4.2 External Barriers	19.
2.4.2.1 Organizational constraints	19.
2.4.2.2 Men remain “gate-keepers” to the teaching profession	21.
2.4.2.3 Negative reactions to female authority	22.
2.4.2.4 The glass ceiling	22.
2.5 Conclusion	24.
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology</b>	24.
<b>Chapter Four:</b>	
4.1 Presentation of data	26.
4.2 Summary of findings	26.
4.2.1 Biographical data	26.
4.2.2 Quantitative data: Section 2	27.
4.2.3 Barriers that aspiring women teachers may face	28.
4.2.4 Strategies, that aspiring women teachers can use to advance in their profession	31.
4.3 Conclusion	34.
<b>Chapter Five: Recommendations and conclusion</b>	35.
<b>Bibliography</b>	38.

**Appendix A**

**Appendix B**

## Title

### ***Frustrated Careers? The perceptions of female educators at a Durban Primary School.***

## Chapter One:

### **1.1 Background And Purpose Of The Study**

The purpose of this research paper is to examine female educators' perceptions of gender-equality and inequality in a primary school, specifically as they relate to their positions in the school. My interest in the above topic is due to the fact that I teach in a school with a male dominated management and school governing body. There are many highly qualified, well experienced female educators at the school but they are not represented in management or the school governing body. Valuable input from such seasoned female educators with regard to the management of the school is lost due to the possibility of gendered-biased practices. This study will examine the perceptions of the school's female educators. While some seem frustrated and demotivated, it is possible that other women teachers are contented. Furthermore, it is possible that there are other sources of demotivation and fatigue, beyond patriarchal discrimination.

With the democratization of South Africa and the introduction of the new constitution (Act 108 of 1996), all citizens including women were granted equality. However, Sandra Acker, noted British feminist, asserts in the context of the British education system that although in theory there are no barriers to women's equality in the

teaching profession, in practice, however, women's positions in teaching remain much the same as they did at the turn of the century (Acker, 1989, 21).

In keeping with the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), South Africa now has gender equity firmly enshrined in its Constitution (Wolpe et al., 1997, 3).

Despite official policy and genuine efforts to implement recommendations regarding advancement of females in the teaching sector, large numbers of males in dominant positions continue to prevail as a result of the advantages they have historically enjoyed. In this regard a recent study of 700 women teachers in Great Britain revealed that women teachers "still rate discrimination and prejudice as the greatest deterrent to career progression" (Bush et al., 1994, 179).

Research conducted in South Africa and in many countries in Europe shows that the number of female educators far exceeds those of male educators. Despite various barriers, a great many pro-active female teachers are determined to make progress in their profession by attending professional development workshops and continuing with their personal studies by attending university on a part-time basis.

Historically women teachers have faced great injustices in the school system due to gender inequality. However, in their quest to overcome a male dominated school system, they have identified various ways to empower themselves. Marianne Coleman confirms that there is "a recognition in education of equal opportunities and strengths that women bring to school management" (Bush and West- Burnham, 1994, 177).

The female educators of the school being researched face similar circumstances. Even though many of them have not had much opportunity for upward mobility, they have now identified other ways to progress professionally ie. embarking on part-time studies thereby improving their qualifications.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

1. Are the female educators employed in the school (the research site) satisfied with their career progress and status in the school?
2. What career barriers do aspirant women teachers face, due to gender discrimination at the school?
3. What other barriers to career advancement and job satisfaction do women teachers encounter?
4. What strategies do female educators employ to advance in their careers?

### **1.3 Research Methods**

The research was undertaken at the primary school in which I teach, which is in the North Durban regional district. I chose the school that I teach at because of the convenience of accessibility of data from the participants. The sample consisted of all 19 female educators in the school.

The prime method of collecting data was via self-administered questionnaires. As the nature of the topic is extremely personal and sensitive, responses will be treated as confidential. This type of data collection according to Collins et al will be particularly

useful as the respondents can exercise the right not to respond, and responses can be expected to remain anonymous and confidential (Collins et al., 2000, 196).

Permission to conduct the research was requested from the principal of the school before the research was undertaken. Participants were assured that their career prospects would not be affected by their participation in the research, as their identities were kept anonymous and their responses confidential.

## **Chapter Two:** **Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the literature available in-order to determine perceptions of female teachers with regard to their career status. Although much research with regard to the above has been conducted overseas, not much has been done in South Africa. This chapter will be divided into sub-sections that identify the various key areas of inequality that women teachers around the world have had to contend with in the past.

Research done overseas by Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) and Shakeshaft (1989) indicates that women are effective leaders yet, under-represented in leadership positions at the workplace. The situation in South Africa is no different according to Grayvenstein (1991) and Kotecha (1994). This implies that there are forces beyond issues of leadership, possibly a gender- bound culture, that keep women from progressing (Kotecha, 1994, 22).

The predicament of Black women in South Africa was historically compounded by other factors. The South African system before 1994 was shaped by the philosophy of apartheid. This was characterized by racial inequality. Apartheid thus presented Black women in the teaching sector with the additional hurdle of racial discrimination. Wolpe et. al. (1997) assert that discrimination in South Africa kept Black women teachers out of certain positions.

Apart from the racial issue, women in South Africa were faced with the reality of gender power. According to Walker (1990) men tend to define the position and roles of women as that of housewife and mother, expecting women to operate within the parameters of those positions.

Fortunately when the Government of National Unity came into being it acknowledged the serious disparities between men and women in the teaching sector.

With the heralding of a new gender order many women teachers have seized this opportunity of equality and are now standing poised to share in major decision-making process in schooling and to occupy positions of responsibility and power. They are excelling in the teaching profession. However, there are many women teachers who seem dissatisfied. This dissatisfaction probably has many other sources and will be discussed later in this chapter.

## **2.2 South African Education Policies That Shaped Women**

### **Teacher's Present Status**

Although in South Africa there is an overt constitutional commitment to ensure that discriminatory practices against women are discontinued and an overt political imperative to promote equity in general and gender equity in particular, one cannot ignore the

continued existence of discriminatory practices against women especially in education. The system prior to the 1990's was designed to prepare non whites for an inferior type of citizenship (Kallaway, 1984, 66). With regard to Black women teachers Walker noted that, "both the legal and educational systems were geared towards perpetuating the domestic and subordinate status of women" (Walker, 1991, 17). Thus one can see that Black women teachers in South Africa "suffer a triple oppression, of gender, race and class has a rhetorical commonplace" (Walker, 1990, 2).

A discussion of South Africa's past discriminatory laws towards Black women teachers will follow, as apart from other barriers women teachers face, these laws also posed a major obstacle to the progress of Black women teachers teaching in state schools.

### **2.2.1. Employment Status of Married Women Teachers**

The Public Service and Pensions Act (1923) stipulated that a female officer upon marriage had to retire from her permanent appointment as from the date of marriage. Spinsters, therefore lost the status of permanent teachers through the change of their marital status. If married women teachers were re-employed, they were employed in temporary assistant capacities (Kotecha, 1994, 26). There were distinct disadvantages attached to temporary employment. The most important of these was job insecurity as these teachers could have been given twenty-four hours notice of termination. Of course they were at liberty to give twenty-four hours notice if they wished to resign, but the advantages of this system were weighted entirely in the department's favour. For example, in the case of a school being overstaffed, it was expedient for the department to

retrench a temporary rather than a permanent teacher (Kotecha, 1994, 26). Although this rule was repealed for Whites in 1970, Indians in 1977, Africans in 1980 and Coloureds in 1984 it had serious implications for the professional progress of women teachers. The temporary status carried with it all sorts of discrimination which in turn reduced their professional status to a lower level (Kotecha, 1994, 80).

### **2.2.2. Salaries**

Traditionally, in South Africa the salaries of women in the teaching profession were lower than those offered to men. Before 1943 women received approximately 66 percent to 75 percent of the salaries of men (Venter, 1977, 47).

This sex differentiated payment of salaries to teachers became entrenched, although there is evidence that the gap narrowed progressively, until 1992, when the disparity between the salaries of men and women was formally phased out (Kotecha, 1994, 108).

### **2.2.3. Bonuses**

In 1956 a new system of payment of bonuses became available to teachers. Even in the payment of bonuses, major discrepancies were evident. Initially, teachers received a bonus of 5 percent of their salaries (Ponnusamy, 2002, 131). Women teachers received half of the service bonus that men received (Bendeman, 1994, 190).

In the 1980's, a new system, known as the Service Bonus was introduced. All teachers now receive a non-pensionable bonus of about 93 percent of their monthly salaries, payable in the month in which their birthdays fall (Employment of Educators Act 76 Of

1998, Regulation 88). The teachers were not paid unless they were in service on the date of their birthdays and the bonus was also not paid out on a pro rata basis. This rule affected the temporary teachers who were invariably women and who were employed for one term at a time (Kotecha, 1994, 109).

#### **2.2.4. Housing Subsidies**

The Housing Loan Scheme was started in the late 1950's (Ponnusamy, 2002, 133). In order to have been considered for a housing subsidy a teacher had to be a married male or a single person with dependents or a married female who was the only breadwinner of her family. Besides widows with dependents, single women teachers with aged parents to support could have also applied (Ponnusamy, 2002, 133). A married women teacher on the temporary staff who had dependents could not apply for a housing loan or housing subsidy unless she was the recognized breadwinner of a family, she had five years of unbroken service or she was under fifty years of age and had contributed to the Provident Fund (Ponnusamy, 2002, 133).

Marriage for a female employee in 1991 still meant that she lost her subsidy (Bendeman, 1994, 190). In short, married women did not qualify for a housing subsidy unless their husbands were totally financially dependent on them.

Presently, however, the Home Owner Allowance Scheme is open to men and women teachers with the following provisions: that he / she contributes to a statutory instituted pension or provident fund; that he / she is employed in a full-time capacity; that if he / she is younger than sixty-five years of age; that he / she is not married to a person who

participates in the scheme for the Public Service (Employment of Educators Act 76 of 1998, Regulation 73).

### **2.2.5. Taxation**

Prior to 1989, married women working in South Africa were not regarded as taxpayers. In terms of the Income Tax Act of the Union of South Africa introduced in 1914, a married woman's income was deemed to be the income of her husband (Cele, 1994, 59). Although the women themselves paid taxes out of their own earnings, their incomes and taxes were added to their husbands for income tax purposes and taxed at the hands of their husbands. The system of joint taxation had far reaching implications for working women. For tax purposes women were placed in one of three categories: 1) married women (currently married to a partner); 2) married persons (widows and divorcees); 3) unmarried persons. In most circumstances, married women paid more taxes than married persons and unmarried persons. On the whole it was more profitable to remain a single parent than to marry.

Section 4 of the Income Tax Act of 1990 allows married women to be tax payers in their own right. In the new tax regime each income earner is taxed at his or her hands. The new dispensation gives married women a new image, that is, as income earners and tax payers in their own right. Their status has now improved, in that they do not have to be identified or defined in relation to their husbands in terms of tax laws (Ponnusamy, 2002, 134).

### **2.2.6. Leave Conditions**

Evidence suggests that men and women teachers enjoyed the same leave benefits prior to the 1990's. However, injustices did creep into the dispensation of sick leave in respect of accouchement for women. No paid maternity leave was granted until April 1991 (Kotecha, 1994, 79). Leave for accouchement was categorised as sick leave prior to the 1950's and this leave was considered sick leave without pay. However if a women had the necessary vacation leave credits she could have elected to substitute the accumulated long leave in lieu of the sick leave granted for accouchement (Ponnusamy, 2002,135) . Single women could not apply for maternity leave and according to Pandor some single women often lost their jobs if they became pregnant (Pandor, 1994, 106).

Leave conditions with regard to women teachers have definitely improved under the new dispensation. They are now entitled to paid maternity leave sixty days prior to and ninety days after the birth (Ponnusamy, 2003, 136).

The paternity agreement for men on the other-hand is limiting in that it only provides for paternity leave at the time of the birth of the child. Normally the paternity leave ranges from three to eight paid days (Appolis, 1998, 78). This actually entrenches the stereotyped attitudes of employers who are more prepared to give parental rights to women than to men. If fathers were to be given adequate paternity leave it would benefit women too. According to van der Walt et al "Having the father at home to share in the responsibilities in respect of the new-born child would also facilitate early bonding between him and the baby which could encourage him to take on a larger share of the child-care responsibility in the future" (van der Walt et al, 2002, 92).

### **2.2.7. Promotion Opportunities**

Prior to 1990's promotion opportunities for women teachers in all state schools were limited. They were generally promoted to posts such as Heads of Departments of the Junior Primary Phases in schools or Principals and Deputy Principals of junior primary schools (Mentor, 1979, 203). There appeared to be two reasons for women's non-promotion: the reluctance of community to appoint women in position of authority and women being under-qualified for promotion posts. It was also observed that women had to have longer service than men to get promotion posts (Van der Linde, 1994, 111). According to Wolpe et. al. affirmative action has become a key strategy in trying to redress these past historical imbalances (Wolpe et. al., 1997, 200). But recent statistics prove that imbalances persist. According to the Gender Equity Task Team of 1997, the figures for schools and colleges show that men account for 36% of all teachers in South Africa, but hold 58% of principal posts, 60% of deputy-principal posts and 50% of head of department posts. In 1994, only 4% of all female teachers were principals compared to 11% of male teachers (Wolpe et. al. 1997, 82). Van de Linde (1994) attributes the fewer number of women teachers in promotion posts to other barriers like the communities' and the women's negative attitudes to themselves. I will discuss this in section 2.4 below.

### **2.3. The New Constitution**

According to the new constitution of South Africa, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 is aimed at the achievement of equity in the workplace by promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment through the elimination of unfair discrimination, and

implementing affirmative action to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced mainly by women, Blacks and the disabled (van der Walt et al, 2002, 87). With the new dispensation many of the disparities and injustices of the past, towards women teachers, have been eradicated in the law. Under these circumstances one might expect an improvement in the morale of women teachers but anecdotal evidence suggests that there are still high levels of dissatisfaction. One possible reason for the above according to Wolpe et. al. is that the ways in which affirmative action are implemented may ultimately be disempowering for women if certain preliminary steps and procedures are not in place to support the affirmative action strategy (Wolpe et. al., 1997, 200). They warn that if affirmative action for women takes place in a 'vacuum' it can result in 'tokenism' with women employed, procedurally put into positions in an unsupportive environment, scrutinized and informally appraised regarding their performance according to covert male criteria never made explicit or discussed with incumbents of the positions (Wolpe et. al., 1997, 200).

Another possible answer could be that sufficient time has not passed for these women to have obtained the full benefits of the changes made in the 1990's (Baron et. al., 2003, 243).

#### **2.4. Other barriers women teachers may face within school and outside school.**

While overt barriers to female advancement have largely disappeared, other more subtle forces continue to operate. These include factors that relate to women teachers themselves, for example, low self-esteem. According to Baron et al, one major factor

impeding the progress of females in general involves their own expectations. Women seem to hold lower expectations about their careers than do men (Baron et. al., 2003, 245).

Haven et. al. (1980) tried to theorize women teachers' slow progress in education. They suggested that: women may be inherently unsuited for administrative work because of 1) early socialization, 2) structural barriers of organization that might prevent advancement and 3) male dominance in the society as a whole. Kotecha agrees with this as she admits that men come to see themselves as a superior class of teachers (Kotecha, 1994, 21).

Aspiring women teachers must be adept at clearing hurdles and overcoming barriers.

Since the first step to overcoming barriers is to be aware of them, there is a great need to identify some of these barriers women can encounter when wanting to progress.

#### **2.4.1. Internal Barriers**

Pigford and Tonnsen (1993) identify internal barriers as those concerning a woman's feelings and beliefs about herself and her roles. These barriers are deeply engrained in the traditional and stereotyped attitudes of the society about typical feminine characteristics. They refer to the fact that women have been socialized in a particular way which leads them to exhibit characteristics of diminished self confidence, and an overriding desire to please.

Confidence, it is often said, is the single best predictor of success. People who expect to succeed often do; those who expect to fail find that prediction confirmed. Unfortunately women tend to express lower self-confidence than men in many achievement-related situations, perhaps because they have been the victims of sexism in such situations (Baron et. al., 2003, 245).

Shakeshaft in Shayi states that a lack of self confidence and self esteem are internal barriers that women teachers must face. She contends that because we live in a male dominated, male-run society that perceives woman as inadequate, this is, in fact, the root of all barriers to women in school administration. Women are not given enough opportunities in the public arena to display their abilities and to gain confidence that comes with experience. One first has to be in position where she/he can be in charge, then one can gain self confidence that goes with success in this position. It seems women are first judged on self confidence before a platform to show it is given. She argues that, “We have not studied self-confidence through the eyes of the women to be measured by male-defined standards of self-confidence. Thus it is not clear whether women have less self-confidence or if they only have less self-confidence in areas in which they are traditionally thought not to excel (Shayi, 1996, 54).

Linn & Peterson support Shakeshaft saying that when defining confidence, the role of context must be examined because they believe that confidence depends on the nature of the task and on “the availability of clear and unambiguous information concerning ability. In addition, the presence of social comparisons appears to contribute to lowered confidence in women, but not in men” (Linn & Peterson, 1985, 64).

Some of the other internal barriers could be listed as follows: socialization and sex-role stereotyping, potential role conflict, realistic assessment of commitment, geographic mobility, and hostility from other women.

#### **2.4.1.1. Socialisation and Sex-Role Stereotyping**

According to Wood in Ngcobo, women often internalize the negative stereotypes that others hold about them concerning their roles and abilities and this causes them to underperform. They thus create their own barriers to advancement. The effect of the deeply entrenched stereotyped view of women, which has accumulated throughout the history of humanity, appears to remain at the core of modern society (Ngcobo, 1999, 39). This phenomenon of sex-role stereotyping leads a woman to believe that she is not competent enough to be a leader in the educational sphere. In a study done by Pavan et. al. (1991) they reported that the majority of the women they interviewed had internalized their perception that their administrative abilities were poor. Jones and Montenegro in Greyvenstein state that “gender stereotyping is transferred from generation to generation in an unquestioned form via acculturation and socialization, perpetuating gender inequities in an unquestioned form” (Greyvenstein, 1996, 79).

Schools can also be regarded as secondary agents of socialization as they do little to help women overcome this barrier. Some schools actually contribute to the problem by assuredly teaching and reinforcing behaviours considered to be ‘gender appropriate’ (Ngcobo, 1999, 40). Sadker, et al. noted that “Most female and male students attend the same schools, sit in the same classrooms, and read the same books, but the legacy of inequity continues beneath the veneer of equal access” (Sadker et. al. 1986, 512). Pigford and Tonnsen agree with the above by stating that although women and men attend the same schools, teachers tend to treat them differently, reinforcing the boys “behaviour more positively than that of the girls” (Pigford and Tonnsen, 1993, 11).

Kotecha summarises the above when she says that “schooling plays a central part in socializing boys and girls for their eventual contribution to economy: the cycle of gender differentiation is reproduced and reinforced in the classroom via the curriculum as well as via teacher expectations and the roles that male and female teachers perform” (Kotecha, 1994, 22). I am inclined to agree as the 2003 OBE textbooks still reflect gender stereotypes where males are doctors and principals and females are nurses.

However, Hawkins, states that women are changing all these perceptions. Female educators are becoming very competitive. “Many women teachers are challenging the long held belief of society concerning who should hold leadership positions. Females clearly aspire to obtain executive positions in schools and more and more females are seeking long held male positions” (Hawkins, 1991, 34).

However, present experience in the school that I teach at indicates that the teaching fraternity now carries teachers with two types of perceptions towards teaching. On the one hand we have the teachers from the older era who have internalized society’s stereotyped gender roles of women and tend to behave according to these stereotypes. But more positively, we have a ‘new crop’ of teachers who are ushering in a fresh outlook on the teaching profession, challenging management if suspected of making decisions that are gender biased, thus creating the possibility that teaching for female educators can be rewarding and satisfying.

#### **2.4.1.2. Potential Role Conflict**

Married women teachers may also be less inclined to advance into higher positions in the school given the potential stress of role conflict that such a move may bring (Al Khalifa,

1992, 96). Some people call these women ‘jugglers as they have to juggle career, family life\ married life, give attention to husband, children and be expected to be present at social functions.’ Trying to overcome all of the above may lead to role conflict and fear of success. Her conscience may bother her when she seems to be neglecting her family (Shayi, 1996, 55).

Greyvenstein in Shayi aptly says “The ambitious women teacher has to contend not only with the conflict between her traditional role, but she also has to develop a new definition of self to succeed in her role as manager. Sex role stereotyping compounds this inter-role conflict in women. Where teaching has been traditionally viewed as being complementary to woman’s role of wife and mother, management is contradictory to this role, thereby causing further conflict” (Shayi, 1996, 55).

#### **2.4.1.3. Lack of female role models and support systems**

Statistics by Wolpe et. al. quoted earlier in this chapter show that there are very few women in management. This deprives women teachers of good role models. Tibbets in Shayi agrees that there are too few role models of women that females can emulate (Shayi, 1996, 56). Because of the lack of role models for females they often tend to emulate men. This factor is supported by Dekker & Lemmer (1993) and de Witt (1991). Women need people on the top to help them up the career ladder; yet there are too few women on the top to help others up the ladder. There seems to be a lack of a support system like an ‘old girls network’ (Shayi, 1996, 57).

Fortunately, in South Africa this barrier is being overcome by many women, as in keeping with the government’s affirmative action policy it can be commended for its inclusion of a high percentage of women parliamentarians in both the 1994 and the 1999

terms. South African women can now boast that a third of its cabinet is represented by women; a sizable number to provide as role models for other aspiring women.

#### **2.4.1.4. Realistic assessment of commitment**

Women may not want to advance in the teaching profession not through lack of aspiration, but because “not wanting to take on two jobs... rather reflects an accurate assessment of the number of hours in a day and the very real limits of the human body” (Shakeshaft, 1987, 89).

There is evidence that women “tend to be self critical about their ability” when contemplating a decision about an increase in workload (Al Khalifa, 1992, 96). Where a male will apply for a promotion as a simple career move, a female teacher does not separate the world of work from the rest of her life in the same way (Bush et. al., 1994, 177). Women tend to “seek to bridge the personal and professional aspects of their lives and to reduce the gap between public and private role” (Al Khalifa, 1992, 102).

#### **2.4.1.5. Geographic Mobility**

According to Edson (1988), Dopp and Sloan (1986), because of family obligations, women prefer promotion posts in the same location where the spouse and children reside. This may result in them rejecting a promotion post as they are tied down by family responsibility.

Further Coleman in Bush et al states this with regard to mobility: “Where both partners are pursuing a career, it is still most common for women career interests to be

subordinate to those of the man if there are problems of geographical mobility” (Bush et, al. 1994, 184).

### **2.4.2. External Barriers**

External barriers are those imposed on the individual by various factors that are out of her control, such as institutional structures and practices that restrict women’s progress.

Unlike internal barriers, “that can be overcome by individual change, external barriers require social or institutional change” (Shakeshaft, 1989, 545).

#### **2.4.2.1. Organizational Constraints**

At every level of an educational organization there appear to be barriers to the advancement of women (Bush et. al., 1994, 180).

Firstly, at the point of application for promotion. Pigford and Tonnsen refer to this as the formal screening system which includes the requirements of experience and credentials such as degree and certification. Both these criteria are now invalid as most women teachers have the necessary experience and qualifications (Pigford and Tonnsen, 1993, 14).

Secondly, differential levels of opportunities within the post.

Thirdly, differential expectations of others; and partially resulting from these expectations, the stereotypical roles that men and women tend to adopt in management.

According to Schmuck such organizational barriers may operate not only against women, but positively in favour of men: “At each step of administration preparation, job

seeking and selection, there are organisational processes which clearly indicate a preference for males” (Schmuck, 1986,179).

Fortunately in South Africa in accordance with its vision of the principle of gender equality, the National Department of Education took the lead to appoint a Gender Equity Task Team (GETT). The GETT report identified numerous concerns with regard to sexism in schools among which was “establishing schools as sites where there is critical and active promotion of all forms, including rights based on sex, gender and sexual orientation” (Wolpe et. al., 1997, 104). But what is questionable is whether those who make the appointments (S.G.B.s and Management) are actually implementing the above.

Bush et al identify the following to be external barriers that women teachers face:

- the grooming of male teachers
- sex bias in training offered by higher education
- males tend to mentor other males.
- the lack of female role models in senior management
- more opportunities given for males to exhibit leadership
- male domination of selection committees, leading to discrimination

(Bush et. al., 1994, 181).

While some of the more obvious aspects of discrimination are now being identified and are being eliminated, more subtle barriers remain.

#### **2.4.2.2. Men remain 'gate-keepers' to the teaching profession.**

According to Coleman in Bush, "Since men hold more position of responsibility than women and tend to set the standards of what is expected from a manager; it is claimed that men are 'gate-keepers' to the profession" (Bush et al., 1997, 181). Schmuck confirms this by stating that "Through all stages of preparation, from encouraging teachers to seek administrative positions to final selection of administrative candidates, the chances are that a man will be preferred to a woman. The exclusion of women is self-perpetuating, despite active efforts to change institutional practices" (Schmuck, 1986, 179).

Further, 'jobs for pals', the former student network and all variations of nepotism are in question because men are still given preference when decisions are made about educational management posts, and men prefer to appoint men, due to the fact that men prefer top management teams to be homogenous in terms of their gender composition (Van der Westhuizen, 1991, 553). However, recent statistics show that the department of Education has increased the numerical representation in management in its efforts to promote gender equity (Wolpe et. al., 1997, 202).

The 'old boy's network' is a resource which makes available contacts for advice, information and moral support as a career is pursued. Women teachers continue to have a major difficulty being accepted by the above. These networks are a part of a male culture because they develop as by-products of membership of men's clubs and organization (Ngcobo, 1999, 42). Wolpe et. al. recommend that "These networks which traditionally only males had access to must now include women so that women in leadership will not always be relegated to 'solo status'" (Wolpe et. al. 1997, 210). Education should now

follow the lead from business where many women's networks have been developed and initiatives like FAWE-SA need to be encouraged (Wolpe et. al. 1997, 210).

#### **2.4.2.3. Negative Reactions to Female Authority**

How do people react to women in positions of authority? Do they hold them in equally high regard as men? The answer to both questions appears to be no. According to Baron et. al. although subordinates often say much the same things to females and male leaders, they may actually demonstrate more negative non-verbal behaviour toward women leaders. Further, women who serve as leaders, tend to receive lower evaluations from subordinates than males do (Baron et. al. 2003, 246).

Finally, findings reported by Rudman and Kilianski (2000) indicate that both women and men seem to prefer having men in positions of authority. Indeed, both genders hold implicit attitudes linking men to high- authority roles and women to low-authority roles. The result? Women as well as men, feel more comfortable when a man is in charge (Baron, 2003, 246). Clearly, such attitudes operate against women in many contexts. The school and education is no exception.

#### **2.4.2.4. The Glass Ceiling**

Women's slow progression at work, has led many authors to suggest the existence of a *glass ceiling*, a final barrier that prevents women as a group from reaching top positions. More formally, the U.S. Department of Labor has defined the *glass ceiling* as "those artificial barriers based on attitudinal organizational bias that prevent qualified

individuals from advancing upward in their organization” (U.S. Department of Labor, 1991).

### **Does the glass ceiling still exist?**

The *glass ceiling* may still exist, but in recent years it has been cracked, if not entirely shattered. Women have managed to surmount all obstacles, now providing fierce competition to men in all walks of life, including education. Women have been elected to major offices (prime- minister, senator), have been appointed as senior judges, hold high ranks in the military, and in many cases- head major companies and organizations.

In South Africa after the new Constitution was adopted in 1996, the government created national structures aimed at insuring gender equality. These include the Parliament joint standing committee on the improvement of the quality of life and the Status of Women, and the Office on the Status of Women (Commission on Gender Equality, 2001, 1). The above have been specifically charged to raise the status of women and have achieved much success.

With regard to education, Pigford, Tonnsen and Wyatt (1992) offered advice to women teachers on how to break down the glass ceiling. They suggested that female educators identify and understand the career barriers and change their own ‘destructive behaviours’ first. Apart from this they should be aware of their own strengths and weakness, capitalizing on strengths and eliminating weaknesses.

## **2.5. Conclusion**

Significant transformations have occurred in respect of women's opportunities during the past decade, and these have been especially marked in educational attainment and equity. In fact, Whitehead goes so far as to suggest that "The end of grand (gendered) narratives, universal (gendered) role models and shifts in (gendered) public and private power/ space may signal a new social order" (Whitehead, 2001, 67). These profound changes especially in education, have to a certain extent enabled women teachers to change their perceptions of themselves and have begun to change the gendered relations of authority within the profession.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

This chapter describes the research process and instruments that were employed to achieve the research aims. It commences with the description of the sampling procedure, sample criteria, sample characteristics and concludes with the description of the research instrument and research procedure.

The respondents were studied in their natural environment, which was the school. The research was conducted by means of a survey with the aim of determining the perceptions of female educators with regard to their career status at the school.

The sample consisted of all female educators at the school. The religious composition of the educators in the sample comprised of Muslims, Hindus and Christians. Most of the educators were employed by the Department of Education and Culture while some were employed by the school governing body.

The school is an English medium, public school with an Islamic ethos as the majority of learners are Muslim. The members of staff, however, come from different religious backgrounds. The senior management ie. the principal, deputy principal and H.O.D.s are all Muslim men. The Junior Primary Department, however, is headed by female management. The day to day running of the school is shaped by its Islamic ethos.

With regard to the research procedure, the principal was informed of the aim and purpose of the study and permission was obtained from the Department of Education and Culture. Verbal consent was obtained from the respondents and a covering letter assuring them of the confidentiality of their responses was attached to the questionnaire.

The fieldwork which included the distribution, completion and collection of the questionnaires was completed within a period of five days as scheduled. It was distributed on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 2003 and collected by the 8<sup>th</sup> August 2003. I chose the questionnaire as the research instrument, as it was a quick and efficient method of collecting information. Also since many of the responses were of a sensitive and confidential nature, the anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed.

The questionnaire comprised of four sections. Section 1 elicited biographical data from the respondents. Section 2 comprising of open-ended questions, was designed to ascertain attitudes of female educators towards their careers as teachers and their present positions at the school. Section 3 comprised of closed questions, using lickert-type items on a four-point scale. Respondents were asked to rate each as a barrier to their progress or a strategy for their advancement in the teaching profession. The scale is as follows: 1-

strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neutral, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree. An option to identify barriers or strategies not listed was also given.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Presentation of Data**

The aim of this chapter is to analyse and interpret the quantitative data. The research was undertaken to determine perceptions of female educators towards issues of gender equality at the identified, primary school.

I have chosen to interpret the data using three themes viz. attitudes of the female educators at the school towards their careers as teachers, barriers that challenge their progress in the teaching profession, and strategies that these educators can use to aspire in their careers.

After discussing the biographical data of the respondents, I will present the analysis on attitudes of the educators towards their careers as teachers.

## **4.2 Summary of the findings**

### **4.2.1. Biographical Data**

This research examined the views of 19 women educators. They ranged in age from the early twenties to the late fifties. Most (89%) had a professional teaching qualification.

Their teaching experience ranged from two to thirty-five years. This clearly indicates that the majority of the respondents are married, well experienced, highly qualified and have

been at the school right from its inception, well before many of the members of the present management were appointed.

#### **4.2.2. Quantitative Data: Section 2 (Attitudes)**

On analyzing the data on attitudes of the teachers towards their careers, two distinct trends of perception emerged from the study. Those teachers that were more senior with regard to age, teaching experience and professional qualifications tended to express negative perceptions towards their present status at the school. But the younger generation of teachers with fewer years of experience, who did not experience the gender inequalities in the teaching profession of the past, indicated more satisfied perceptions towards their careers. Thus, in response to the question: 'Are you satisfied with your present career status at the school?', 68% of the respondents indicated that they were satisfied with their present career status at the school. Reasons for satisfaction were either because the school was situated in close proximity to their homes; they did not seek promotion; they disliked administrative work but enjoyed teaching; or had now resigned themselves to being level one educators as all efforts to be promoted had failed. Many of the more senior educators indicated dissatisfaction as they felt that there was no room for upward mobility.

The majority of the respondents (53%) whilst indicating that they experienced problems while trying to aspire to a higher position than their present one, which included the current inequalities that exist in the school system that still favour males over females, strongly affirmed that they can compete with men successfully in the teaching field, if given the same opportunities.

The responses to the question asking them if women educators can contribute to their own career dissatisfaction, clearly indicate that the women educators are confident about themselves but are hindered by the bureaucracy of the school governing body and the school management that still discriminate against women educators when appointing and promoting.

Thus one can see even though many of the respondents express confidence about their careers, a frustratingly slow shift from the traditional, male dominated practices detracts from the job satisfaction of these teachers.

The presentation of the analysis of the barriers aspirant women teachers may face, follows in the next section.

### **4.2.3. Barriers that aspirant women teachers may face. (Section 3.1. of the questionnaire)**

What follows is a composite table illustrating the responses of the female educators towards barriers they may face.

<b><u>Barriers that you as aspirant woman teachers may face are:</u></b>	<b><u>1. Strongly disagree</u></b>		<b><u>2. Disagree</u></b>		<b><u>3. Neither agree nor disagree</u></b>		<b><u>4. Agree</u></b>		<b><u>5. Strongly agree</u></b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>
3.1.1 Your lack of support from immediate family, for example, husband etc.	37	7	37	7	0	0	26	5	0	0
3.1.2 Fear of relocation away from home should you be promoted.	11	2	5	1	16	3	26	5	42	8
3.1.3 Once, promoted your fear of hostility from your fellow female colleagues.	16	3	16	3	0	0	37	7	31	6
3.1.4 Once you are promoted, your fear of hostility from your male colleagues.	26	5	16	3	16	3	42	8	0	0
3.1.5 Your perceived lack of self confidence.	26	5	32	6	16	3	26	5	0	0
3.1.6 Your perceived lack of leadership skills.	37	7	32	6	0	0	21	4	10	2
3.1.7 Your lack of experience in management and administrative skills.	16	3	16	3	11	2	57	11	0	0
3.1.8 Your lack of personal motivation.	21	4	5	1	5	1	26	5	43	8
3.1.9 Your lack of relevant academic qualifications.	37	7	58	11	5	1	0	0	0	0
3.1.10 Your fear of success.	52	10	43	8	0	0	5	1	0	0
3.1.11 Your fear of failure.	26	5	32	6	5	1	37	7	0	0

On analysing this section, even though many of the responses regarding barriers the respondents faced, were diverse, one common view seemed to dominate. Most of the barriers they experienced were not self-imposed, but imposed upon them by forces out of their control.

Many of the respondents (58%) did not regard a lack of confidence or leadership skills as a barrier whereas 57% of the respondents regarded lack of experience in management and administrative skills a barrier. These figures show that although the respondents have surpassed personal barriers ie. they have the necessary confidence and ability to manage, they still lack management and administrative skills due to the fact that they are not given the opportunity to manage in the school. This response concurs with their response to question 8, that women are not given sufficient opportunity to become managers.

The only personal barrier that 69% of the respondents experienced was a lack of personal motivation. These findings support Shakeshaft's view, that, "People who have very little opportunity to move up the hierarchy disengage in the form of depressed aspirations, low commitment or no responsibility" (Shakeshaft, 1985, 126).

Other barriers like a fear of success and fear of failure did not seem to affect the majority of the respondents.

68% of the respondents worried that promotion was contingent on relocation.

Respondents were, by and large, valued the geographic stability of their jobs. This gives some support to the views of Edson (1988) and Dopp & Sloan (1980) that women teachers are tied down by family responsibility and, therefore may choose not to take positions of management if it means relocating away from where their spouse and children reside. But the respondents in this study did not frame their responses in terms of

having onerous responsibility for family but rather described their current situation as a desirable one.

The views of female educators concerning the barriers they face clearly demonstrates that many of the women teachers, have to a certain extent overcome personal barriers but the challenge still remains for them to overcome barriers that they face in the school system due to its bureaucracy.

I will now present the analysis of the data regarding strategies that aspirant women teachers can use to advance in their profession. A composite table illustrating the responses of the female educators to these strategies will first be presented.

**4.2.4. Strategies, that aspiring women teachers can use to advance in their profession. (Section 3.2. of the questionnaire)**

<b><u>Strategies you as aspiring woman teachers can use to advance your career progression are:</u></b>	<b><u>1. Strongly disagree</u></b>		<b><u>2. Disagree</u></b>		<b><u>3. Neither agree nor disagree</u></b>		<b><u>4. Agree</u></b>		<b><u>5. Strongly agree</u></b>	
	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>No.</b>
3.2.1 Ensuring that laws granting gender equality be implemented at your school.	11	2	0	0	5	1	47	9	37	7
3.2.2 Ensuring that more women be role models for education, thus inspiring you to follow.	11	2	0	0	21	4	42	8	26	5
3.2.3 The equal sharing of family responsibility between men and woman at your home will enable you to spend more time and energy on schoolwork, thus achieving higher levels of professional success.	16	3	5	1	16	3	47	9	16	3
3.2.4 That advantages of gender equality be noted by your school governing body and school management when appointing and promoting educators.	11	2	0	0	5	1	26	5	58	11
3.2.5 Your school management should actively encourage, persuade and support you in your efforts to progress.	21	4	5	1	0	0	37	7	37	7
3.2.6 Your teacher unions should play a more vital role in supporting you in your efforts to progress, by challenging your school governing body and management , should they make discriminatory decisions with regard to you.	11	2	5	1	5	1	32	6	47	9
3.2.7 Your peers should provide moral support in your endeavours to progress.	11	2	11	2	5	1	42	8	31	6

On analyzing the responses regarding strategies that aspirant women teachers can use to advance their careers, it is clear that the majority of the respondents were united in their responses towards these strategies that will help them progress in the profession, as they either agreed or strongly agreed to most of these strategies.

However due to the strikingly higher percentage of the responses pointing to support from the school management, school governing body, teacher unions and the implementation of gender equality laws at the school, it appears that these respondents felt more strongly about these specific strategies as compared to the other strategies. This response also concurs with responses in section 2 on attitudes and section 3 on barriers, where the respondents clearly indicate organizational barriers as an obstacle to their advancement.

The following figures will verify the above. In question 3.2.1., regarding the implementation of gender equality laws, 84% of the respondents agreed that this was a useful strategy. Although gender equality is firmly entrenched in the South African Constitution and gender discrimination has formally been removed, these changes have not moved to the point where formal gender equality exists and consequently some teachers remain frustrated in terms of career ambition. Further, there are still a disproportionate number of men in management positions.

A staggering 84% of the responses either strongly agreed or agreed that the advantages of gender equality be noted by the school governing body and school management when appointing and promoting educators. Read in conjunction with question 15 of section 2, ('Does your school governing body and school management discriminate against women teachers when appointing and promoting?') the same trend of response is evident.

74% of the respondents agreed that the school management should actively support women teachers in their efforts to progress. 79% agreed that teacher unions should play a more vital role in supporting efforts of women teachers to progress by challenging school governing bodies and management. In support of the above Kotecha (1993) states that most SADTU branches now have gender committees and, although they are very young, their establishment shows that formal recognition of the need to address gender inequalities in the profession has now been achieved.

On analyzing both the barriers and the strategies there appears to be a cry for support from fellow women colleagues in their endeavours to progress. 73% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their peers should provide moral support in their efforts to aspire. Read in conjunction with question 3.1.3. (Hostility of female colleagues as a barrier) a similar trend of response is evident. Studies done by Mertz and Neely (1990) indicate that if women are supervisors they might have to deal with isolation from other women. But if women teachers are to progress, the united effort of all their fellow female colleagues will certainly help.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

This study of attitudes of female educators has found a variety of patterns in the responses. By ascertaining levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction to issues of gender equality, the study found that there are now two groups of teachers, each with a different set of perceptions towards their career. The older more senior teachers who have a longer teaching experience seemed more frustrated and less satisfied with their present positions

at the school. Their responses to sections on attitudes verify the above. They also still seemed to be more seriously affected by many of the barriers. A possible reason could be that these teachers have experienced many of the gender inequities of the past as cited in the literature review and thus remained level one educators having not advanced to management.

However, the analysis of the data revealed the other group of teachers to have more positive perceptions of their careers as teachers. These teachers are younger in age and have fewer years of teaching experience. They have not experienced the past gender inequality laws and also may have less stereotyped, gendered perceptions of society. Many of them have a positive outlook on teaching as a career and are not hampered by internal barriers that women teachers have for so long in the past experienced. They are more satisfied and less frustrated.

But, from their responses to the external barriers like organizational constraints, it is evident that the majority of the respondents (both groups of teachers) were united in their responses and have not yet overcome these barriers. Further, all the respondents unanimously believed that there can be an improvement in the way that gender is handled in schools and that barriers still do exist in their upward movement in the profession. These findings support the body of literature by Shakeshaft (1987), Al Khalifa (1992) and Schmuck (1986).

### **Chaper 5: Recommendations and Conclusion**

The state has taken the necessary steps to empower women teachers through its equity laws and affirmative action policies since 1994. But these laws *must* penetrate the school

systems. The structures and operations of organizations that support male hegemony must be re-organized to give women more representation in school management and school governing bodies.

To solve the dilemma of a lack of management skills among women teachers, workshops equipping women teachers in management and administrative skills should be held by the Department of Education and Culture. Principals' meetings should not be restricted to attendance by principals only. These meetings should be open to all interested educators, as it is at these meetings that the various management strategies are discussed. This would respond to the concern of the respondents about their lack of management skills. It would also address factors like increasing the number of role models and hiring more competent females to balance the female-male ratio in management.

Many of the respondents indicated that they needed more active support from teacher unions as a strategy for their advancement, but women teachers themselves must participate more actively in teacher unions and construct their own agendas in the struggle to make the organizations which claim to represent them more proactive around their own needs and demands.

In-order to help women teachers, the prime aim of the teacher unions themselves should be to challenge discriminatory practices and decisions made by school governing bodies and school management against women teachers, to facilitate a strategy for taking up cases of gender discrimination and to develop programmes of action at all levels, to address gender issues and redress gender imbalances at schools.

This study has to a large extent revealed that the younger generation of teachers has a more positive perception of their careers. As the older teachers, who carry much of the

frustration of the past inequities, eventually leave the school system on retirement, they will be replaced by more enthusiastic, ambitious educators. It is vital for the school organizational structures to maintain these positive perceptions and enthusiasm of these teachers. In-order to do so school management and school governing bodies should shift from the bureaucratic modes of operation when appointing and promoting educators.

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**Appendix A****Instructions To The Respondents**

PLEASE:

- read each statement carefully before giving your opinion.
- make sure that you do not omit a question.
- be honest when giving your opinion.
- do not discuss responses with anyone.
- return questionnaire after completion.

**Kindly answer all the questions by supplying the requested information in writing, or by circling the appropriate number.**

**SECTION ONE : BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION**

1. Age in completed years as at 01/01/2003 \_\_\_\_\_

2. Marital Status:

Single:	Married:	Divorced:	Widowed:
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3. Qualifications of respondents:

Academic (eg. B.A. B.Ed., etc) \_\_\_\_\_

Professional (eg. H.E.D. UED., etc) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Total number of years in teaching as at 01/01/2003. \_\_\_\_\_

**Section Two: Attitudes**

5. Are you satisfied with your present career status at the school?

Yes

No

6. If yes, can you explain why?

-----  
 -----  
 -----

7. As a woman, did you encounter any problems while trying to aspire to a higher position than your present one?  Yes  No

8. Do you believe that men and women have the same opportunities when seeking to advance their careers in the teaching field ?  Yes  No

9. Do you believe that women can successfully compete with men in the teaching field?  Yes  No

10. If no, can you give reasons ? -----  
 -----  
 -----

11. Do you think that the socialization process of male educators in your school hinders your career progression?  Yes  No

12. If yes, please give reasons.-----  
 -----  
 -----

13. Do you think that women educators themselves can contribute to their own career dissatisfaction?  Yes  No

14. If yes, can you explain why?-----  
 -----  
 -----

15. Do your school governing body and management discriminate against women teachers when appointing and promoting?  Yes  No

16. If yes can you substantiate your answer?-----  
 -----  
 -----

**In the following statements please indicate your response by circling your level of choice, using the scale below:**

***1- strongly disagree***

***2- disagree***

*3- neither agree nor disagree*

*4- agree*

*5- strongly agree*

### **3.1 Barriers that you, as aspirant women teachers may face are:**

3.1.1. Your lack of support from immediate family example husband, parents etc.

1            2            3            4            5

3.1.2. Fear of relocation away from home should you be promoted.

1            2            3            4            5

3.1.3. Once promoted, your fear of hostility from your fellow female colleagues.

1            2            3            4            5

3.1.4. Once you are promoted, your fear of hostility from your male colleagues.

1            2            3            4            5

3.1.5. Your perceived lack of self confidence.

1            2            3            4            5

3.1.6. Your perceived lack of leadership skills.

1            2            3            4            5

3.1.7. Your lack of experience in management and administrative skills.

1            2            3            4            5

3.1.8. Your lack of personal motivation.

1            2            3            4            5

3.1.9. Your lack of relevant academic qualifications.

1            2            3            4            5

3.1.10. Your fear of success

1            2            3            4            5

3.1.11. Your fear of failure

1            2            3            4            5

3.1.12. Others: (please specify) -----  
-----

**3.2. Strategies you as aspiring women teachers can use to advance your career progression are:**

3.2.1. Ensuring that laws granting gender equality be implemented at your school.

1            2            3            4            5

3.2.2. Ensuring that more women be role models for education, thus inspiring you to follow.

1            2            3            4            5

3.2.3. The equal sharing of family responsibility between men and women at your home will enable you to spend more time and energy on schoolwork, thus achieving higher levels of professional success.

1            2            3            4            5

3.2.4. That advantages of gender equality be noted by your school governing body and school management when appointing and promoting educators.

1            2            3            4            5

3.2.5 Your school management should actively encourage, persuade and support you in your efforts to progress.

1            2            3            4            5

3.2.6. Your teacher unions should play a more vital role in supporting you in your efforts to progress, by challenging your school governing body and management, should they make discriminatory decisions with regard to you.

1            2            3            4            5

3.2.7. Your peers should provide moral support in your endeavours to progress.

1            2            3            4            5

3.2.8. Others: (please specify)

---

## **Appendix B**

### **Questionnaire**

*Dear Educator*

*At present, I am engaged in a research project at the University of Natal under the guidance of Professor Rob Morrell. The research is concerned with perceptions of female educators towards gender equality at Primary Schools.*

*As one of the selected respondents, I have taken the liberty of writing to you in in-order to seek your assistance in acquiring information about your experiences relating to the research.*

### **Confidentiality**

*All information will be regarded as confidential and no personal details of any educator\ respondent will be mentioned in the findings, nor will any of the results be related to any particular home, family or school.*

*Thanking you for your co-operation and time*

*Yours sincerely*

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*K. Maharaj (Mrs)*

*August 2003*