

**GENDER IMBALANCES IN POSITIONS  
OF LEADERSHIP AT SCHOOLS**

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT  
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MASTERS  
DEGREE IN EDUCATION IN THE  
SCHOOL OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
KWAZULU-NATAL  
SOUTH AFRICA**

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**DECEMBER 2003**

## **ABSTRACT**

In South Africa women are grossly under-represented in educational management. This study reports on the possible reasons for gender imbalances in positions of leadership at schools.

The study uses feminist theories as a lens to understand the various forces that give rise to gender imbalances in positions of leadership at schools.

In order to arrive at an understanding of how women managers perceive their under-representation in school management, quantitative data was gathered from 53 women managers in the North Durban Region using the survey questionnaire. This data was used to provide the study with **baseline** information to pave the way for an in-depth qualitative study. As part of the qualitative study, four respondents were selected using the purposive sampling technique to provide rich data. The data was then collated with the intention of understanding possible reasons for gender imbalances from the perspective of women educators within a broad social, political and historical context.

Evidence from the data reveals that **while gender equity** policies have signaled the need for social justice and transformation of management structures in schools, there appears to be a serious disjuncture between policy and practice. It is apparent that equity policies have failed to address the 'gendered' crisis at grassroots level. Men's dominance in educational management and the numerical marginalisation of women remains a hurdle. Data reveals that women are highly qualified, highly skilled and intrinsically motivated, and yet grossly under-represented in management structures in schools.

The women managers in this study reflected on the gender stereotyping that pervades both their personal and professional roles. They recommend the creation of organisational cultures at schools that reflect a commitment to gender equity.

# **DEDICATION**

This work is dedicated to my late brother Mr Sunil Singh.

## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I DO HEREBY DECLARE THAT THE WHOLE OF THIS DISSERTATION REPRESENTS MY OWN WORK AND ALL SOURCES THAT I HAVE USED HAVE BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED BY MEANS OF REFERENCES. THIS DISSERTATION HAS NOT BEEN SUBMITTED PREVIOUSLY FOR ANY DEGREE AT ANY UNIVERSITY.

SIGNED: ..... *Sandraj* .....  
ON ..... *30 May* ..... 2004.

S. NANDRAJ

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The success of this has been enhanced by a number of people. I am particularly indebted to the following people:

- **Dr Suchitra Singh, my supervisor for “moulding” my mind.**
- **My parents, Mr and Mrs B. Singh.**
- **Mr Sudesh Devlall for his abiding patience and willingness to assist.**
- **Mrs Priscilla Chetty for the typesetting and formatting of this dissertation.**
- **The women in the research for their willingness to participate in this study.**
- **Mr K.M. Govender for editing the manuscript.**
- **Mrs. Shireen Ramkelawon for her friendship and unconditional love.**
- **My children Nirvash and Shivona Nandraj for their unfailing support and love.**

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 THE STUDY IN CONTEXT

Gender inequality in appointments to managerial and supervisory positions in organisations is a well-known phenomenon. Many studies have shown that gender is one of the most important criteria that determine the employee's position at the workplace. Women are given less authority, autonomy, and control in the workplace, and their prospects of promotion are different from those of men with similar education and status (Reskin & Roos 1990; Adler 1994; Wright *et al.*, 1995). Women are less represented in managerial positions in the organisational hierarchy, and are less involved in decision-making. Male dominance in educational management is a worldwide phenomenon. It is in this context that the study explores the issue of gender equity in management structures in the North Durban Region, KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education and Culture.

In the current South African scenario, Buckland and Thurlow (Department of Education 1996:46) state that there are serious gender distortions in educational management, which place women at a significant disadvantage. Management has traditionally been male-dominated in the senior levels of decision making, although equal opportunities policies introduced since 1994 by government have led to some improvement in opportunities for women especially in the public sector (Wolpe, Quinlan & Martinez 1997:195).

Despite attempts at transformation of education in South Africa, it seems that concerns about gender relations have merely scratched the surface, which implies then that discrimination remains deeply embedded in educational structures at schools. Against this backdrop, it is doubtful whether the current debate on gender equality has taken into account gender stereotypes and other oppressive strategies that subtly control and direct deep rooted structures of domination. Against the background of legislation aimed at rooting out gender discrimination in this country, it remains an open question as to why attempts at transformation have resulted in a half-hearted attempt to accommodate women on the surface. There is a general consensus of opinion concerning a gender related dichotomy which currently exists in the education profession. **Women teach and men manage** in the schools (Marshall & Mitchell 1989:4). This particular gender related dichotomy poses problems for women aspiring to the ranks of management in the education system; hence women, equity and educational management form the central theme in this research.

Data for this study, conducted in 2003, was obtained through semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. These research tools allowed for an in-depth exploration of the gendered experiences of the research participants. Each participant selected, represents a microcosm of the gendered experiences of Black, Coloured, Indian or White women. Although the racial classification of the research participants no longer carries legal currency, their lives are shaped by the political, economic and social experiences carried over from the apartheid era. It is with this reason that race classification was used.

The study was conceptualised against legislation which was developed to ensure gender equity, namely, The Constitution of the Republic South Africa 1996, Act No. 108 of 1996, Employment of Educators Act 1998, Act No.76 of 1998, Employment Equity Act 1998, and Act No. 55 of 1998. These legislations underpinning policy are to ensure fairness toward women in management hierarchies of education. Despite enlightened legislation, there is still an under-representation of women in educational management in South Africa. In addition, a few South African researchers have highlighted the tensions and ambiguities that exist for many women who had to invest in organisational, professional, and managerial sites that are patriarchal in nature (Chisholm 2001; Govinden 1998; Singh 2000; Ponnusamy 2002).

The experiences of the research participants were analysed from an eclectic feminist perspective by borrowing ideologies from liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, feminist post-structuralism, African feminism and postcoloniality. The following questions form the foci of the analyses:

- What are the possible reasons for gender imbalances in positions of leadership at schools?
- How do women educators experience these gender imbalances?
- What are possible strategic interventions to address gender imbalances in positions of leadership at schools?

## **1.2 PERSONAL MOTIVATION AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY**

As an educator, currently serving the profession for the period of some 23 years, I am perturbed at the status of women educators in education. Despite the fact that women are overwhelmingly represented in the teaching fraternity,

they are under-represented in management positions. Data available in South Africa in 1990 (Greyvenstein 1990:76) stated that women formed a two-thirds majority of the teaching force, but were extremely under-represented in educational management positions. The majority of women in promotion posts were clustered in the lower ranks of the management hierarchies. The representation of women at the position of school principal and above was extremely low. However, this data depicted only the situation of white women at that stage as no data was available for other population groups. Disaggregated and limited data also reflects the lack of importance attached to gender issues in educational management within the South African context.

Data pertaining to the Department of Education of the Gauteng Province (Napo 1996:7) indicate that 17 percent of principalships of secondary schools are currently held by women. Although this data cannot be statistically comparable or indicative of all regions of South Africa, it may be assumed that there are gross gender inequities in education management positions.

I have observed that most management positions are male dominated. The role of the women in our patriarchal society has traditionally been defined as that of housewife, mother, nurturer and caregiver and serves to perpetuate the stereotype that women lack the personality, skills and expertise to deal with complex management issues.

Human beings, by virtue of their nature, aspire to become even better and better in respect of their manner of existence. In this context, women too have a valid case regarding the recognition of their aspirations because in striving

for them, they also utilize the necessary intellectual skills, drive and commitment. Richards (1988:165) states that “one cannot help but wonder why perfectly capable and dynamic women have not long ago taken over the administration of a school system in whose ranks they have toiled so faithfully for so many years”. Therefore, equal treatment based on merit and not discrimination, should be the first and foremost criterion for promotion.

It is my personal observation that our schooling system is deeply rooted in a patriarchal culture. Patriarchy is indeed “one of the strongest ideologies in cultures world-wide, and in the context of modern Western culture, it is operative on more or less the whole spectrum of hyper-normative discourses” (Visagie 1999:7). Since patriarchy is regarded as a fully fledged ideology, it appears that the current pursuit of gender equality in South African education is up against a powerful enemy, as indicated by the Commission on Gender Equality (1998:10). To block the advancement of women by placing unreasonable and discriminative barriers can only be viewed as unethical and unproductive.

The disparity that exists between the proportion of women as compared to those of men in leadership positions warrants an investigation as to what is keeping women out of these management positions.

Against the above arguments, the study was undertaken with the following rationale:

1. In response to equity policies and recommendations made by the Gender Equity Task Team, the Department of Education has begun implementing promotion procedures in an attempt to balance the inequalities and to promote women to management positions. Despite this the paucity of women in management positions is apparent. This study intends to investigate why the status quo persists.
2. Too often, research neglects the social and power relations that contribute to the formation of women's experience. This study will foreground women and give them the opportunity to express their "lived" experiences.
3. In the light of the unequal treatment that have been meted out to women, women's roles need to be redefined and renegotiated with regard to how they can positively contribute to society's prosperity through positions of leadership in the education profession. This study will highlight the drastic need for strategic intervention to address these gender imbalances.

### **1.3 POLICIES INFORMING THIS STUDY**

Before 1994 the South African educational system was shaped by the ideology of apartheid. This was characterised by racial inequality in respect of government budget, access to education and design of school curriculum. The Bantu Education Act which was introduced in 1954 by Hendrik Verwoed entrenched a racist and sexist ideology that served to perpetuate the historical positioning of women in the education sector:

*As a woman is by nature so much fitted for handling young children, and as the great majority of Bantu children are to be found in the lower classes of primary school, it follows that there should be far more female than male teachers. The department will therefore...declare the assistant posts in...primary schools to be female teachers' posts...Quotas will be laid down at training schools as regards the number of male and female candidates respectively who may be allowed to enter for the courses...this measure will,*

*in the course of time, bring about a considerable saving of funds (Wolpe et al. 1997: 197).*

The Government of National Unity, which came into power in 1994, thus inherited not only a racially and socially divided education system, but a system where women were positioned at the lower rung of management hierarchies. Discrimination in education means that some people are treated less favourably than others on the basis of social group, gender, marital status, parentage, race, physical disabilities or sexual orientation- when in actual fact none of these have a bearing on the ability to do a job efficiently (Wolpe *et al.*, 1997:15).

The Constitution of South Africa and the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2) (Act 108, Art.9 (3): 1996) embraces the fundamental issue of equity, which states unequivocally that:

*Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law. Equality includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equality, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons or categories of persons disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken. The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language or birth.*

The Education White Paper (1995) in its acknowledgement of the serious imbalances that existed between men and women in the education sector called for the establishment of gender equity mechanisms in an attempt to eradicate discrimination, male domination and other forms of abuse against women. The White Paper reiterated that gender role patterns are steeped in an ideology of patriarchy.

The Employment Equity Bill also proposes equality in the workplace by:

- a. *Promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and*
- b. *Implementing positive measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by black people, women....to ensure their equitable representation in all occupational categories and level in the workforce* (Department of Public Service and Administration 1997:6).

In a recent report of the Task Team on Educational Management Development in South Africa (Department of Education 1996:17), it is stated that change in the country's education and training system is only possible if there is harmony between the "*vision for transformation*" and the realities of those working in the system. Part of the vision for transformation was seen as the establishment of a Gender Equity Task Team to advise the Minister of Education about gender issues in education. One of the specific realities to be addressed in the country's education and training system is that of gender equity in educational management. When linked to educational management, gender equity involves, amongst others, fairness toward women in management hierarchies of education. The Report on Educational Management Development (Department of Education 1996:38-47) which highlights the development of human resources, involves, amongst others,

*equity, that is ensuring that we recognize diversity within our education community. We are obliged to recognize the contribution which men and women with different skills, attitudes and cultures can make in improving education quality. We must particularly focus on developing anti-discriminatory practices with regard to race, gender and disability, and improve the way in which people deal with issues of sexual harassment, abuse and violence. We must ensure that appropriate steps are taken, within the context of transformation, to address historical inequities and set targets for redress.*

A further recent development of greater significance in the gender equity discourse in South Africa is the recent establishment of the Office on the Status of Women (OSW), situated in the Deputy State President's office. According to the draft National Policy for Women's Empowerment (Department of Education 1997:229), the OSW should be the co-ordinating structure of national gender machinery by overseeing the development of a "Gender Management System" with gender units in the various ministries and government departments. In this regard, an Interim Gender Co-ordinating Committee was established by the National Department of Education (Department of Education 1997:231) to address gender issues in education while the recommendations of the Gender Equity Task Team are being considered for implementation.

In honouring its commitment to gender equity policies, the Department of Education in KwaZulu-Natal prescribed a manual in 1999 with regard to

promotion procedures for educators aspiring to management positions. It specified:

- *Affirmative action measures for designated groups, namely Blacks [which include Indians, Coloureds and Africans], women....*
- *Representativity ( Procedure Manual for Processing School Based Promotions 1999:11)*

The Task Team on Educational Management (Department of Education 1996:25) called for the eradication of discriminatory practices which are based on gender, race, disability and sexual preference. Despite official policy and efforts to level the gender playing fields, women are still being denied significant representation in management hierarchies of the education system. The potential of this untapped human resource is yet to be realised. The central aim of this study is to seek the transformation of organisational sites into more equitable and equal arenas for women.

One of the central aims of this feminist study is to challenge the 'patriarchal power paradigm' (Ledwith and Colgan 1996) that seems to exist in the organisational life of schools. In doing so, the intention has been to make explicit the barriers preventing women's access to the furthest reaches of management, while developing and analysing strategies that might facilitate such an intention.

### **1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

In the current South African scenario there are serious gender distortions in educational management which place women at a significant disadvantage. This study seeks explanations and reasons as to why this status quo exists, and

furthermore to highlight the experiences of women with regard to gender imbalances. The study will highlight that gender equity initiatives have thus far been cosmetic and that urgent intervention is required if the Department of Education is serious about the promotion of equal opportunities. Particular research questions under-girding this problem will be asked.

## **1.5 AIMS OF THE STUDY**

The aims of the study are to investigate:

- The gender imbalances that exist in management structures in schools resulting from barriers that are placed in women's path to progress.
- How these barriers affect women educators' aspirations and feelings of job satisfaction.
- What strategic measures can be put into place to address this very serious issue of the under-representation of women in leadership positions at schools.

## **1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of the study lies in its response to the growing need for gender studies especially within the South African context. Educational management in South Africa is dominated by men even though women form the larger work corps. This disparity warrants an investigation of what is keeping women from attaining these positions of leadership.

Data regarding the proportion of males and females in management hierarchies in educational management is limited and disaggregated. This reflects the lack of importance attached to gender equity issues. By doing this research, it is anticipated that possible solutions to gender equity problems in

education will be found. Those in charge of education management development will devise strategies to effectively implement gender equity policies.

Research on gender in educational management in South Africa is only in its beginning stages. Greyvenstein (1990) calls for further research into this area stating that while a start has been made, gender equity in educational management is a highly complex phenomenon requiring address and redress of a complex nature. This study will therefore add to the body of knowledge and act as a springboard for further research.

Women have a valuable role to play in educational management, therefore, they ought to be conscientised about their positioning in hierarchical and paternalistic structures. This study will encourage women to break through the 'glass ceiling' and transform the organisational cultures of their schools.

## **1.7 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study has experienced limitations that have affected the process of data collection and has influenced the conclusions drawn. The following limitations were noted:

- This study was limited to women managers in Ward 142 of Ethekeweni Region in Durban. As this study was of a relatively small sample of women managers, any findings must be taken as suggestive rather than conclusive.
- Conclusions that are drawn in this study may not be generalizable to all women managers in South Africa. Cultures, traditions and values shape

different people in significantly different ways, nevertheless pertinent issues have emerged.

- This study was limited to women managers. Therefore, I was thus unable to gauge the views of male managers. It would have been interesting to study the perceptions of male managers with regard to gender imbalances.
- This study was conducted over a fairly short period of time. Given more time, a larger number of participants would have been sampled.
- As a result of transformation taking place, it is possible that by the time the results of the study are available, significant changes in the area of gender equity may have taken place.

## **1.8 LAYOUT OF THE CHAPTERS**

Chapter 1 provides a preamble to the study. It describes the personal motivation and rationale for undertaking the study, examines the policies informing the study, states the aims, significance, critical questions and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2 provides a literary review of gender in educational management.

Chapter 3 explains the theoretical framework of feminist theories and reveals how it applies to the career trajectories of women managers. Ideologies from liberal, radical, socialist, post-structural feminist theories as well as African feminism and post-coloniality have been utilised.

Chapter 4 analyses the methodological approach used in this study. Here I describe and elaborate on the methodology chosen and explain its implications for a feminist study. Sample selection and research tools that were used to interrogate the study are elaborated upon. Data analysis techniques are also

explained. This chapter presents the limitations of methodology as well as strategies that were utilized to bring validity to the study.

Chapter 5 presents data findings, analysis and discussion.

Chapter 6 provides a summary, conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

# CHAPTER 2

## LITERATURE REVIEW

*...this one thought stands-if I might be one of those born in the future, then perhaps to be born a woman will not be branded*

(Olive Schreiner in Walker, 1979:1)

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

This section focuses on the literature available on gender studies with specific reference to women in educational management. The literature review is organised around five headings:

- Sex-role stereotyping
- Leadership-a masculinist enterprise?
- Lack of role-models and mentors
- Management styles of women-inferior or complimentary?
- Discourses around gender equity.

The rationale for these categories are based on the dominant discourses that prevail in literature with regard to gender studies on women in educational administration regarding sex-role stereotyping, management styles of men and women, mentoring, educational administration traditionally being the domain of men and gender equity initiatives.

### 2.2 SEX-ROLE STEREOTYPING

Many researchers have attempted to identify and categorise some of the barriers to the progress of women's careers in educational leadership (Coleman 2001; Hall 1993). One of the theories put forward to explain the under-representation of women in senior management positions is that of

socialisation and stereotyping. Schmuck (1986) warns of the dangers of subscribing to this “deficit model” where women are seen to need to be trained or educated up to the level of men, rather than be valued for what they might bring to the field of management. Much of the training provided with this purpose are conducted under the guise of providing equal opportunities for the “disadvantaged or deficient” women.

Traditionally teaching has been seen as a female domain, an extension of mothering. Once we move beyond the classroom the masculine culture of educational administration hierarchies is firmly entrenched (Blackmore 1999; Limerick 1991). Newman (1994:193) describes teaching as a “caring profession” that offers women “quasi-familial roles and identities around a core of male hierarchies and privileges”. The qualities of nurturance and selflessness required of the profession, is often thought to be more suited to women.

Critics of the romanticised notion of the “caring professions” such as Acker (1995), point out that such sentiments, about caring as a calling ignore the actual work involved in these occupations. That is, school teaching is work and the school is a workplace for teachers. This notion may explain why, even when women do achieve senior positions within the educational institution, they are often typecast into the same “caring, nurturing” roles. 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 the men are given responsibility for areas such as curriculum and finance.

Acker and Feuerger (1996) describe the additional pressures imposed by the “caring expectation” on women university teachers to be intellectually inspiring yet endlessly nurturing. They caution that:

*... the fact that women have been seen as “naturally” suited to the work has served to disguise its potential for the exploitation and to discourage women from expressing emotions...that might be at odds with the caring script* (Acker and Feuerger 1996: 402).

Commenting on the implications of such stereotyping for women’s career progression, Coleman (1996:322) reports that women were becoming aware of the dangers of such labelling and were taking steps to avoid these traditional roles.

Popenoe (1977:308) states that the term “prejudice consists of judging people, objects, or situations on the basis of preconceived stereotypes or generalisations.” It becomes a real problem if a performed prejudice remains unchanged even when facts indicate that changed circumstances have rendered it obsolete. The actual problem arises when people fail to discard any particular prejudice even when additional evidential light shows that such a prejudice is far from the truth. This, in fact, is the actual problem that the majority of women are still faced with in their quest for promotion into leadership positions in the education profession precisely because their place is mistakenly still perceived to be in the home. He argues that prejudice and discrimination are often considered an inseparable and natural pair.

Accordingly, Tsoka (1999:2) also discovered that while a 39.7 percent of women thought that they were ready to compete successfully as leaders, only 15.7 percent of men agreed with them. In other words, the majority of both men and women still do not believe that women can make good leaders. Obviously such a commonly held view can easily lead to women ending up being discriminated against when applying for leadership positions. She maintains that it is no wonder we have less women leaders in the education profession for it is commonly thought that “women are not competitive enough to be successful in the world of employment.” This is a hurdle that society needs to seriously address if women are to be accorded equal treatment in the world of employment.

Schaefer and Lamm (1995:276) warn that “stereotypes are generalisations about all members of a group that do not recognize individual differences within the group.” Women as forming a particular group in society are in many situations discriminated against not because as individuals they are incapable of living up to the demands placed against them by leadership positions, but simply because they happen to be women and nothing else. This partly explains the reason why so few women are in leadership positions in the education profession.

Tsoka (1999:94), in her study, found out that there was significant agreement between men and women with respect to the perception that “women cannot be aggressive in the business world situations that demand it.” Blanchard and Blanchard (1984:116) note that “the differential stability in males and females has been interpreted as a function of traditional sex-role standards to the effect

that aggressive behaviour in a boy is accepted and even possibly valued whereas such behaviour is discouraged in girls.” The implication is that this is but one of the cultural ways in which society exercises its control on its members, but while at the same time being unaware that it is practising discrimination. Such stereotypes are enough to debar women from possible promotions in the education profession in demanding areas such as those of senior management positions for fear that women will fail when aggression and guards are demanded by the occasion.

Schoeman (1998:21) argues that patriarchal stereotypes frustrate well-balanced interpretations of reality, to such an extent that even the oppressed become restricted in their thinking: “They eventually come to accept their subservient position in society and presumed inferiority as natural, as a given state of affairs that can never be changed.” It has been recorded that female teachers often do not feel themselves competent to be appointed in managerial positions. They have been “brainwashed” through patriarchy to accept themselves as inferior. This is a condition that is seen to relativise their authority as competent teachers and potential leaders of society ((*cf.* Duczek 1988:173).

Often as a result of socialisation and historical dominance of men over women the feelings of lack of self-confidence, lack of competitiveness and a fear of failure become internalised (Acker and Feuerverger 1996). However, these qualities should not necessarily be seen as weaknesses, but strengths women could utilize for effective leadership and management. Kruger (1996) reports from her research that women, successfully used adaptation and conflict-

avoidance to solve conflicts, unlike men, who were generally much more competitive and less likely to be able to employ such strategies.

Cubillo (1999:554) found in her study that women's so called lack of confidence was more to do with unfamiliarity with the territory than with a lack of faith in their abilities. The fear of failure, too, tended to be much reduced once women were aware of the "rules of the game". This initial fear of the unknown is hardly surprising given women's virtual exclusion from the male-dominated world of educational management for so long.

Attributional beliefs, which result from stereotyped socialisation patterns within culture, cause women to behave within the norms of "typical female traits". These norms do not accommodate women in management roles, which are perceived to be male roles, associated with typically male behavioural traits. The nature of this barrier, is that women in management positions are viewed by both males and females as being deviant from the norm (Cubillo 1999).

Tsoka (1999) notes that women aspiring to educational management positions have to contend with role conflict. They have to cope with not only the conflict between the traditional role of wife and mother and career role, but also the development of a new definition of self to succeed in a management role. Sex-role stereotyping compounds this role conflict in women. Where teaching is traditionally viewed as being complimentary to a woman's role of wife and mother, management is seen as contradictory to this role, thereby causing further conflict.

Tsoka (1999) argues that another myth that exists is that women are less committed to jobs that require effort and investment of time, because of roles they play in the family and in the workplace. To bring stereotypes, prejudices and biases that discriminate against women on an unfounded basis that they are poor performers is highly regrettable in terms of our present democratic standards. Putting performance into context, she infers that despite the fact that women are said to be poor performers, by nature, women have always been interested in the betterment of life for all.

Thus literature on sex-role stereotyping reveals that:

- Socialisation and stereotyping subscribes to the 'deficit' model which disadvantages women (Schmuck 1986).
- Teaching is traditionally seen as the domain of women, while management is seen as that of the man's (Blackmore 1999; Limerick 1991).
- Women are typecast into caring and nurturing roles (Acker and Feuerger 1996).
- Women are fast becoming aware of the dangers of stereotyping and are taking steps to avoid these traditional roles (Coleman 1996).
- Prejudice and discrimination are severely disadvantaging women who aspire towards leadership positions (Popenoe 1977; Tsoka 1999).
- Stereotypes lead to women being marginalised for management positions (Schaefer and Lamm, 1995).
- Sex-role standards are entrenched by tradition and culture (Blanchard and Blanchard 1984).
- Patriarchal stereotypes results in feelings of inferiority (Schoeman 1998; Duczek 1988).
- Women lack of faith in themselves can be ascribed to women's exclusion from management (Cubillo 1999).

- Socialisation and historical dominance lead to lack of self-confidence, lack of competitiveness and a fear of failure (Acker and Feuerverger 1996).
- Women aspiring towards promotion have to cope with traditional roles of wife and mother and career role (Tsoka 1999).

### **2.3 LEADERSHIP: A MASCULINIST ENTERPRISE?**

Much of the literature on management have problematized women's relationship to dominant masculinist organisational practices and cultures. These debates have been underpinned by extensive data revealing women's extreme numerical marginalization at management level. Traditionally men have controlled the highest administrative jobs within the school district.

Marshall and Mitchell (1989) maintain that long standing bureaucratic values have thwarted women entering administration. Control was largely maintained by limiting change. This "system" fostered selection of new administrators who resembled their sponsors in attitude, philosophy, deed and in many cases even appearances, hobbies and club membership. Such a selection process resulted in the new mimicking the old down to nuances of behaviour. This argument is further supported by Acker (1990,1992) and Gherardi (1995) who say that organisational structures, cultures and everyday practices have been shown to constitute the 'ideal employee' as a disembodied and 'rational' figure that fits more closely with cultural images of masculinity than femininity.

Blackmore (1999) outlines how the nature of teaching and educational administration has been theorised to fit the sexual divisions of labour, so that

the situation where women teach and men manage can be viewed as the “natural order” and therefore unproblematic. Shakeshaft (1989) notes that one of the impediments to women’s promotion to administrative position in schools relates to male dominance and hegemony in key positions in society and the prevalence of patriarchal norms that strengthen and emphasise gender differences. According to this point of view, men endeavour to preserve their privileged status by restricting women’s opportunities to attain senior positions, thus avoiding the necessity of having to work with them as equal partners (Reskin *et al.* 1990). Accepting women as equals may threaten men’s status (Shakeshaft 1993) and undermine the traditional gender division of labour, maintained by the socialisation process and supported by sex stereotypes.

Wisker (1996:90) also conducted a study on women in higher education in the UK. She pertinently argues that “women are under-represented in higher and middle management positions in higher education, even in the current post-feminist climate when many people claim that there is no need to assert that equality must continue to be striven for. In schools most women occupy the positions of homeroom teachers and heads of departments. Women are found less often than men in positions with an organisational orientation, such as principals or vice-principals. The authoritative masculine image of the managerial roles, which is congruent with the dominant approach in school management that emphasises hierarchy, control and power strengthens the link between gender and role in school and permits men to identify with these roles more than women (Shakeshaft 1989). This state of affairs restricts women’s

opportunities to acquire experience in managerial positions and to develop a career in this direction (Hill & Ragland 1995).

The proportion of women in administrative positions in an organisation is also likely to have an effect on gender inequality. According to Kanter (1977) the gender composition of an organisation affects the relative positions of men and women within it. The higher the proportion of either group within an organisation, the more power and influence group members can gain, and it is easier for them to access senior positions. According to Shakeshaft (1993), one of the reasons for men's substantial representation in administrative positions is their great visibility in various roles in school. Men have an advantage in appointments to administrative positions such as that of principal because they have already been "seen" in leadership roles. In systems where more women prepare themselves for school leadership and acquire more experience in immediate positions, they become a work force that cannot be overlooked when recruiting school leaders (Hill & Ragland 1995).

When men and women compete for the same position, men have an advantage even in a female-dominated occupation like teaching (Williams 1992; Maume 1999). This interpretation of the findings is in accordance with the glass ceiling perspective. The term 'glass ceiling' suggests that the mobility chances of males increase as the percentage of females in the occupation rises, while women have hardly any access to the top positions. In another words, men who work in female-type occupations receive the benefits of a glass escalator into administration, whereas the glass ceiling victimises women (Maume 1999). These findings support Wright & Baxter's (2000) glass ceiling

hypothesis suggesting that the obstacles women face systematically increase as they move up the hierarchy. Thus, women in female-dominated occupations have not converted their numerical dominance into power (Boyd *et al.* 1995) and continue to be excluded from leadership and high-ranking positions. This preserves the traditional gender relations of power and authority. A patriarchal social system in which men have power and authority over women, is one of the many different mechanisms that are responsible for women's discrimination (Powell 1999).

Gherardi (1995) found that women feel most inhibited in their capacity to act freely and with vigour due to discursive cultural practices that positioned them as lesser, powerless and undervalued. This is displayed through symbols, values and patterns of behaviour, as well as discourses about how things are done. Other factors are the temporal and spatial structuring of organisational life, the jargons used and dominant ideologies that prevail. Yet male managers are puzzled why women do not apply for management jobs or leave soon after reaching the top. Women do not understand men's 'paradoxical communication' when they simultaneously invite women to become their peers, expressing their distrust of equality, and implicitly threatening those who dare imagine that they may change the rules of the game (Gherardi 1995:10).

Casey (1995) points out that one reason for many women managers' reluctance to overtly challenge dominant masculine cultures is that to do so might only serve to further marginalize them in an already extremely competitive and aggressive work culture. Research by Marshall (1995) reflects

that women's constant immersion in an aggressive, masculinist culture often renders them resentful if not dysfunctional.

Thus the literature on school administration being a masculinist enterprise reveals that:

- Bureaucratic values block women's entrance into administration (Marshall & Mitchell 1989).
- Organisational cultures favour images of masculinity (Acker 1990, 1992; Gherardi 1995; Blackmore 1999).
- Men restrict women's passage to senior positions to maintain their privileged status (Shakeshaft 1989, 1993; Reskin et al. 1990).
- Women are under-represented in middle and higher management positions (Wisker 1996; Hill & Ragland 1995).
- Gender composition of organisations affects the relative position of men and women in administration (Kanter 1977).
- Cultural practices position women as lesser beings (Gherardi 1995).
- Women are reluctant to challenge dominant male cultures for fear of marginalization (Casey 1995; Marshall 1995).

## **2.4 LACK OF ROLE MODELS/MENTORS**

According to Kram (1983), mentorships enrich mentees by providing insights by means of career dimension and by psychosocial functions. Segerman-Peck (1999) advocates that all senior women should look to mentoring to develop and support other women. Despite the proven benefits of such relationships, women appear to have more difficulty than men in acquiring such a mentor.

Hill and Ragland (1995) also found that in certain cases potential male mentors did not consider that women would want to lead or were interested in

leading. In some organisations, cross-gender mentoring was discouraged because the relationship held the potential for being misunderstood as something more than career support. Colwill (1984) describes the 'sex-role' trap where highly visible male and female mentoring partnerships can lead to sexual accusations.

Research conducted on women in the USA by Hill and Ragland (1995), indicate that women who were promoted to satisfy quotas without the opportunity to develop skills were more likely to fail in the job. The opportunity to develop a relationship with a mentor is a key aspect of the process. A mentor could provide critical information about political realities, techniques to deal with bureaucracy, ways to deal with budget and other essential survival techniques.

Women in influential positions have also failed to mentor women. Many pioneer female leaders lacked the understanding of the power and processes of mentoring behaviour. In carving their own paths, women in certain educational areas did not have time nor recognize the value of a mentoring role in the scope of their careers. Furthermore, if a woman views herself as a token in a position of authority, she purposefully mentors no one (Hill and Ragland 1995).

Lack of peers is possibly just as important as the lack of role models. It has been noted that men grow increasingly anxious to be at the appropriate level of career development when they see their peers being promoted (Grant 1989). However, women tend to use other women as a reference group for a

comparison with their own career progress, particularly when in a female dominated profession. Within the Irish context it was noted that women are less likely to apply repeatedly for promotion (Ozga 1993; O'Hara 1994).

There is evidence to suggest that women have a different approach to employment which has the effect of creating disadvantage for women seeking promotion. Women in particular seem to need encouragement in some form before they begin to consider a move to management, such as the experience of being managed by someone younger or less effective than themselves, or encouragement by a senior person whose opinion they respect ( Gold 1996).

Greyvenstein (1990) noted that within the South African context, there is a lack of women in sponsor, mentor and role model positions. This proves to be a major barrier to women aspiring to management positions. Cross-sex mentoring, she argues, is often problematic due to sexual attraction, jealousy from spouses and colleagues and gender role conflict based on identification with the mentor as a role model.

The words of Camerer in *The Citizen* (2000:12) are pertinent when she says "those women who break through the glass ceiling have succeeded either because someone gave them the opportunity to test their abilities, or they were courageous, or visionary, or naïve, or took a view that they will redefine who they are in society". In face of the many difficulties that women had to encounter, it must be borne in mind that women have practically no career orientation opportunities available to them. Above all, they are experiencing a pronounced absence or lack of appropriate role-models.

Colwill (1984) argues that if we are to succeed in androgynous management styles, where both aspects of male and female qualities are reflected and valued, then there should be cross-mentoring. He also warns of the possibility of men in 'grey flannel suits' creating successors in their own image, and women doing likewise. Paul (1985) advocates the emulation of one or many mentors who can offer a range of models, options, ways of working and being. Schein (1975) remarks that to enable business to be adaptive, intuitive, and responsive to interpersonal needs, the female values and characteristics need to be encouraged and developed in tandem with some of the traditional male strengths. For this we need senior female mentors as role-models to help men and women grow in confidence in these characteristics.

Thus literature on lack of role-models and mentors reveals that:

- Mentoring is essential to develop and support women (Segerman-Peck 1999).
- Cross-gender mentoring could be problematic if it contains components of sexual attraction, jealousy or conflict (Hill & Ragland 1995; Colwill 1984; Greyvenstein 1990).
- Mentoring provides critical information for development (Hill & Ragland 1995).
- Women are often reluctant to mentor other women (Hill & Ragland 1995).
- Women are less likely to repeatedly apply for promotion because of the absence of mentors (Ozga 1993; O'Hara 1994).
- Women who have been successful ascribe it in part to mentoring (Camerer in Citizen 2000).
- Women require encouragement before they apply for promotion (Gold 1996).

- Androgynous management style encourages cross-mentoring (Colwill 1984; Paul 1985; Schein 1975).

## **2.5 MANAGEMENT STYLES OF WOMEN: INFERIOR OR COMPLEMENTARY?**

Stereotypes that identifies management as ‘masculine’ still exist despite the tentative links made between effective management of schools and what might be termed ‘feminine’ styles of management’. Gender stereotypes are often associated with leadership. The number of men in senior management provides an image which may be self-perpetuating. The stereotype is underpinned by:

*...the unwarranted assumption that leadership is a male characteristic demanding physical and mental toughness and the ability to approach unemotionally (Gane and Morgan 1992:53).*

Considerable research carried out in several countries by Shakeshaft (1993); Ozga (1993); Blackmore (1999) suggest that women in educational management prefer a different management style from men. They are less hierarchical, more democratic, flexible and sensitive, foster cohesiveness, value trust and openness and are more humane. These features of management are convergent with innovative and “softer” management discourses that focus on ‘people management’ as the new source of productivity in organisations. Yet the association of effective management and leadership with masculinity and autocratic control remains, as does the disproportionate representation of women in senior posts in education (Hall 1996:3).

Communication is an important managerial function and constitutes the greater part of the work life of the school principal (Moller 2000:210). Consistent with the corpus of research regarding gender in communication, the communication behaviour of women in management differs markedly from that of men (Goddard & Patterson 2000). Women managers tend to choose verbal and non-verbal communication behaviour that is distinctively different from that preferred by male counterparts (Becker & Levitt 1999:273). They communicate better with subordinates, use different, less dominating body language and different language and procedures. Admittedly skilled communicators, their language is more hesitant and tentative (Ozga 1993:11). In the workplace female patterns of speech convey uncertainty, indecisiveness and a lack of confidence (Lemmer 1996:57-58). This communication style has been described by Wetzel (1998:385) as “powerless language”. Wetzel (1998:386) postulates that the “powerlessness” of female speech patterns exists only relative to the power of so called masculine patterns and the relatively weaker social position of women.

In a male-dominated workplace, women’s communication style may even be considered ‘deficient’ and as a result, women managers have been told to “talk like men” in order to succeed (Shakeshaft 1993:9). Thus, many women managers, in order to succeed in male environments are forced to adopt the male modus operandi (Wolpe, *et al.* 1997:204). Even when women in the workplace are encouraged to change their behaviour and essentially to adopt “male forms” of communication, they find themselves in a no-win situation.

The characteristics of male forms adopted are ignored and the assumption of power as domination is reproduced (Thomas & Wareing 1999:80).

In education, as in many other sectors, management itself has long been perceived as synonymous with masculinity (Al-Khalifa 1988; Shakeshaft 1989; Ozga, 1993). Many of the behaviours, skills and competencies deemed to be essential to those in leadership positions, such as authority, control, autonomy, assertiveness and the ability to discipline are embedded in and intrinsic to definitions of masculinity. This means that men are more likely to be appointed to senior positions, but that women who do 'make it' may feel a strong pressure to conform to accepted ways of leading and therefore perform in their posts 'like men'. Women managers who do attempt to reshape the ways in which things are done may face hostility and isolation.

Kanter (1977); Al-Khalifa (1988); Shakeshaft (1989) also notes that women who seek to develop a leadership style which is outside the traditional male norm can have difficulty and may be challenged by the staff more than men in managerial positions would tend to be.

Alimo-Metcalfe (1995) argued that if gatekeepers or the members of the selection committees have an image of management that is traditional and hierarchical, this then has obvious implications for the possible discrimination in the process of appointments. There appears to be a continuing problem in Ireland of gender imbalance on interview boards and women experiencing questions which indicate that the interviewers hold such an image (Daly 1989; O'Hara 1994).

Chisholm (2001) in her study of gender and leadership in South Africa noted that women negotiated their extremely marginal position in the Department by emphasising those leadership qualities and styles they felt were feminine and maternal. They saw themselves and other women as possessing more empathetic, collaborative, supportive, team building and democratic styles of leadership. These qualities were also seen as belonging in a less essentialist manner to the culture of democratic process which many had learnt in oppositional politics in the pre-1994 period. With few exceptions, this was insufficient to cover the structural cracks produced by women's place as constructed in both the public and private, domestic realm for many, these structural and discursive conditions combined to lever them out of leadership positions in educational administration, and to consolidate more masculinist styles and approaches.

Tsoka (1999:24) confirms that women in the South African context learn the so-called masculine approach methods in their orientation which then enforces the male manager's stereotypes on women and this has the effect of confirming the negative stereotype that women cannot make aggressive managers who will act fearlessly when it is demanded of them.

Ouston (1993:16) advises that "getting women into top jobs demand strategic planning, for it does not just happen through goodwill or good intentions." More than one approach is needed to arrest the existing inequalities in leadership positions in the education profession. It has become imperative to deliberately create more suitable role-models in leadership positions for the women to emulate than is the case at present. In this respect, Tsoka (1999:104)

recommends that “training should be established with a bias toward empowering more women in managerial position.”

Discussions on the gendered differentiation of leadership have centered on the different qualities and styles of leadership of men and women, that is the so-called masculine and feminine styles of leadership. The transformational, empowering and collaborative style of leadership associated with women is compared to the more directive and authoritarian style traditionally associated with males. The debate has progressed further to engage the concept of the androgynous leader which, rather than attributing the different qualities exclusively to one gender, suggests that every good leader has available to them both set of characteristics from which they are able to select the most appropriate for the situation (Singleton 1993).

Fullan (1993) argues that the successful management of schools today demands leadership which is enabling, flexible, and expert at dealing with change. Those involved in school management need to develop and articulate their educational philosophy, values and vision by means of participation, reflection and experimentation. It is even possible that gender has little relevance to management style and that the most important factor may be how one interprets and plays the role (Ribbins and Marland 1994:5).

Thus literature on leadership styles of women managers reveals that:

- Stereotypes of administration as being masculine predominates (Gane and Morgan 1992).

- Women prefer participatory management styles (Shakeshaft 1993; Ozga 1993; Blackmore 1999).
- The association between effective management and autocracy is prevalent (Hall 1996).
- Communication behaviour of men differs significantly from that of women (Goddard & Patterson 2000; Becker & Levitt 1999; Ozga 1993).
- Female speech patterns is often seen as 'powerless' language (Lemmer 1996; Wetzel 1998).
- Women sometimes adopt male management styles in order to succeed (Shakeshaft 1993; Wolpe et al 1997; Thomas & Wareing 1999).
- Women who challenge dominant male leadership styles face difficulties (Kanter 1977, Al-Khalifa 1988; Shakeshaft 1989).
- Gatekeepers and school selection committees often adopt the male image of administration resulting in marginalisation of women (Alimo-Metcalf 1995; Daly 1989; O'Hara 1994).
- Women see collaborative management styles as being consistent with the principles of democracy (Chisholm 2001).
- Negative stereotypes of women as not being aggressive managers result in women being sidelined (Tsoka 1999).
- The androgynous leadership style is advocated (Singleton 1993).
- Effective management depends on reflection, participation and experimentation and not necessarily on gender (Fullan 1993; Ribbins and Marland 1994).

## **2.6 DISCOURSES AROUND GENDER EQUITY**

International research records a marked increase in concern regarding gender equity in employment, which has resulted in various actions for the advancement of the status of women occurring at national, regional and local levels in many countries (Silver 1985). In some countries educational management policies founded on government equity laws have been formulated to improve the representation of women in management positions.

Furthermore, affirmative action has been instituted in various countries to ensure the implementation of equity laws and policies.

Research shows that the levels of formulation and implementation of equity laws and affirmative action correlate with the improvement in levels of under-representation of women in education management (Klein 1988). However, there is evidence of controversy among leading researchers such as Adkison (1981), Shakeshaft (1986) and Klein (1988) regarding this issue. Some claim that laws and policies have only been symbolic efforts without enforcement, merely serving to reify the existing hierarchy.

The following issues regarding laws and policies have been raised: interpretation and implementation are difficult to monitor, laws and policies may have a greater impact on women's aspirations than on institutional change, policies requiring change in attitude seek to alter value systems in individuals and institutions and these are known to resist change, equity related policies are highly complex because they cannot operate in isolation, the phenomenon known as *reverse discrimination* is seen to compound ethical issues and a so-called *male backlash* is currently evident in certain countries where a withdrawal of support is linked to the belief that those in power disallow challenges to their control and feel threatened (Adkinson 1981; Shakeshaft 1986; Klein 1988).

Greyvenstein (1990) notes that the report on Education Management Development (Department of Education 1996) records that in South Africa the problem of very few women in leadership positions came to the foreground

after the advent of the new political dispensation. As the problem became more and more conspicuous, an attempt to deal with it in the form of a Commission for Gender Equality was undertaken. Some of the burning issues around apartheid education were new models for the greater management of education for the purposes of institutional autonomy, equal education for all plus a host of other issues related to the issue of equal opportunity for women as leaders in the work place or education profession. Despite its location in the executive and administration of the Provinces, it has not addressed the integration of gender into the development and implementation of policy, and the monitoring of government activities for gender efficacy (Albertyn 1992).

The provincial audits conducted by the Task Team on Educational Management (Department of Education 1996:41) focused attention on the “continuing discrimination against women and emphasised the need for further research on women in management”.

Albertyn (1992) notes that The Office on the Status of Women is regarded as the national machinery for the advancement of women. It should have clearly defined mandates and authority, critical elements such as the ability and competence to influence policy and formulate and review legislation and should be able to perform policy analysis, undertake advocacy, communication, co-ordination and monitoring of implementation. However, these structures are not without controversy and have often been marginalised, undermined and have therefore failed to deliver. She notes that South African women are calling for these structures to be integrated or ‘mainstream’ gender into all legislation, government policy, planning and activities.

Grogan (1996:137) argues that “leadership in dynamic organisations and schools is a shared phenomenon. If we subscribe to the notion that virtually everyone has some potential for leadership, schools can be extraordinary places for expanding opportunities for leadership.” This view surely covers women as well. Equality, and not discrimination, rests on strong democratic beliefs (Dowling 1995:23).

Tsoka (1999:103) also agrees that women bring a gentler approach to management, and handle different tasks simultaneously, which can add great diversity and competitive value to business. She pleads that society should regard the work of female managers just as valuable as that of male managers. This, she says points to the fact that, a culture of excluding women from leadership positions in the field of education has been prevailing for years. Overlooking women in areas of promotion into leadership positions means that South Africa is in fact limiting its employment options instead of broadening them. Similarly Dowling (1995:22) avers that “gender nearly always makes a difference...” Therefore, to treat women as exceptions when it comes to leadership positions, by discriminating against them, is counter productive.

Tsoka (1999) argues that if the attitudes of those in control of education can be influenced and be changed to be friendly and positively disposed toward the upward mobility of women in leadership positions, then, women could play a constructive part in the empowerment of education. She emphasises that without a positive change of attitudes and mindsets, the position of women

would improve at the very most, only at a snail's pace. Any programme meant to assist and help empower women to succeed should be accompanied by a parallel programme geared at changing men's attitudes towards looking at women as inferior to them. What needs to be done in order to bring about change and equality is not only to pass legislation as is the case with the equity bill but to walk the extra mile in the form of harnessing the education machinery and to use it effectively to foster and inculcate change in people's perceptions regarding the role women play in the education profession and society as a whole.

Young (1999:3) warns that unless policy-makers, educational leaders and researchers in the field of educational administration acknowledge and address the leadership crisis as a gendered issue, the theories and solutions that grow out of empirical research and task force work will not only fail to adequately address the predicted shortage but will continue to perpetuate the gendered leadership crisis in educational administration.

Thus, it may be concluded that a clear and definite need for addressing gender equity exists in the sphere of educational management. There are calls for recognition of the contributions of both men and women, for redress actions for past gender-discriminatory practices and for further research on gender equity issues in educational management (Greyvenstein 1990).

Wolpe et al., (1997) make the following recommendations to address the gender imbalances that currently exist in educational administration:

- In the context of human rights with its key concepts of equality and non-discrimination, less emphasis be placed on the gender differences and injustices that proceed from erroneous perceptions in education in general and educational management in particular. Since gender and other social issues such as racial discrimination and ethnicity are being phased out, we should strive for a more egalitarian and neutral classification of people.
- The quality of the education system would improve if the skills and viewpoints of the relevant role-players and decision-makers were improved and developed.
- appropriate recruitment mechanisms should be put in place in order to ensure that all groups are represented.
- staff should be effectively managed.
- a new, non-discriminatory organisational structure based on the principles of equality, comprehensiveness, variety, responsiveness, accountability and effectiveness needs to be put in place.
- creating an organisational system that supports and acknowledges the new culture.

Warren (1996) who conducted research in Ireland in respect of gender imbalances in educational administration emphasises the need for positive interventions. She suggests:

- Training courses be made available to women. These courses should encourage women to apply for leadership positions, provide them with an opportunity to discuss their future options in a supportive environment, encourage alternative styles of management as well as the establishment of a system of support networks.
- The Department of Education draw up guidelines on the composition and operation of selection committees and monitor the same.
- Training courses be provided for prospective members of the selection committees in schools. These courses should include inculcating a positive attitude towards women in management, the effects of sex-role stereotyping on attitudes, assumptions and value judgements.

Thus literature on discourses around gender equity reveals that:

- Government equity laws both nationally and internationally have been formulated to improve the representation of women in educational administration (Silver 1985).
- Formulation and implementation of equity laws have led to the improvement of the levels of under-representation of women (Klein 1988).
- Some researchers argue that the laws and policies are only symbolic gestures and have failed to adequately address the issue of under-representation of women in leadership positions (Adkinson 1981, Shakeshaft 1986, Klein 1988).
- Interpretation and implementation of equity laws and policies are fraught with difficulties (Adkinson 1981, Shakeshaft 1986, Klein 1988).
- In South Africa the Commission for Gender Equality was formed to redress past inequalities (Greyvenstein 1990).
- The Gender Commission has not been effective in monitoring activities for gender efficacy (Albertyn 1992).
- Schools should expand the leadership potential of women (Grogan 1996).
- Equality rests on democratic principles (Dowling 1995).
- Overlooking women for promotion posts translates to South Africa limiting its employment opportunities and is thus counter-productive to the economy (Tsoka 1999, Dowling 1995).
- Attitudes and mind-sets of significant role-players in education need to be changed in order to address the leadership crisis (Tsoka 1999, Greyvenstein 1990, Young 1999).
- Several recommendations have been put forward to address gender imbalances (Wolpe et al. 1997, Warren 1996).

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

This section provided a literature review of gender imbalances that exist in management structures of schools from both an international and South African perspective. The literature that exists around women in educational

management is wide and varied and incorporates notions that the historical development of education has ensured that women are positioned in the lower rungs of the educational ladder as well as the belief that a woman's role in society is contradictory to management roles. Furthermore, the lack of women in mentor role positions poses a problem for women aspiring for leadership positions. Educational management is constructed around images of masculinity despite the tentative links made between effective management of schools and 'feminine' styles of management.

While the progress of equal opportunity plans is proudly communicated in policy documents, the actual application thereof is virtually non-existent. As management posts are assumed to be best suited to men, with a few women being able to shatter the 'glass ceiling', most women experience feelings of frustration and dejection. In South Africa, we are in a crucial period of transformation. Part of the vision for transformation should be the crucial need to address gender imbalances in educational management.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I interrogate the ways in which gender imbalances are informed and addressed by feminist theories, namely liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, post-structural feminism, African feminism and postcoloniality. These feminist theories are described and expounded upon to illustrate the relevant features that enabled me to analyse the data collected from the research participants.

I explore how these different feminist theories facilitate understanding of the historical, economic, social and cultural practices that constitute “gendered relations”.<sup>6</sup> Within the framework of these feminist theories, different perspectives on the issue of inequalities between men and women can be understood. These approaches highlight particular organisational issues and give different accounts of gender inequality, phrase the ‘problem’ differently and propose different courses of action as ‘solutions’ (Calas and Smircich 1996:219).

From this study, I intend to gain perspectives on the following:

- What are the possible reasons for gender imbalances in positions of leadership at schools?
- How do women experience these gender imbalances?
- How can gender imbalance in educational management be corrected?

### **3.2 LIBERAL FEMINIST THEORY**

The liberal feminist perspective has been very influential in setting the agenda for research on gender and organisations, and is concerned with the measuring and explanation of various forms of inequalities between men and women. The liberal feminist perspective points primarily at the inequalities between men and women in the workplace. Gender is considered a variable, and men and women are maintained as relevant and unproblematic research categories (Alvesson and Due Billing 1997:24).

Inequalities are caused by the lack of organisational opportunities for women due to amongst other factors sex stereotyping, the glass ceiling, and the lack of access to mentors and networks. The problem is considered to be in the organisational opportunity structure; solutions therefore pertain to changing this opportunity structure. Liberal feminists strive for equal opportunities and present affirmative action as an important strategy to improve the position of women. These equal opportunities are hindered because the grounds that underlie the division of labour are not gender-neutral. Gender, ethnicity, age, sexuality are rejected as undesirable, irrelevant, arbitrary and discriminating. Making distinctions based on the above mentioned variables is forbidden (by law). Also making distinctions inspired by the demands of workplace is subject to criticism, because making such distinctions is not neutral in its consequences.

Such apparently gender-neutral grounds result in inequality due to broader societal inequalities between men and women. As action is directed towards the changing those effects of sex segregation through equal opportunities and

affirmative action, the hierarchical division of labour is usually accepted as given (Calas and Smircich 1996:243).

Thus liberal feminism proclaims the following:

- Various forms of inequalities exist between men and women.
- Inequalities are caused by a lack of organisational opportunities for women.
- Liberal feminist strive for equal opportunities.
- Gender, ethnicity, sexuality and age are regarded as discriminatory factors.

For the purposes of this study, I appropriate the view that inequalities are caused by a lack of educational opportunities for women and that such imbalances can be addressed by changing the opportunity structures.

### **3.3 RADICAL FEMINIST THEORY**

*She [woman] is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental and the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute. She is the Other.*

( Simone de Beauvoir 1953:16)

The great thrust of radical feminist writing can be captured in the slogan “*The personal is political*” (Hartmann 1997:65). Radical feminists argue that women’s discontent is a response to social structure in which women are systematically dominated, exploited and oppressed. Radical feminists view masculine power and privilege as the root cause of all forms of inequality. They see patriarchy as a tool for domination over women in the following ways:

- First, the concept of “patriarchy” was used to analyse the principles underlying women’s oppression. The “rule of the father” was altered to describe the historical domination of men over women, this being seen

as the prototype of all other oppressions and necessary for their continuation.

- The material base upon which patriarchy lies is fundamentally in men's control over women in the labour market. This control is maintained by excluding women from access to some essential productive resources, keeping men in key decision making processes and ensuring the economic dependency of women.
- Patriarchy is also a strikingly resilient form of social organisation. In our society children are generally reared by women who are socially defined and regarded as inferior to men. In this way children also learn their places in the gender hierarchy. Patriarchal behaviours are taught and the inferior positions of women enforced and reinforced at churches, schools media and so forth.
- Fundamental inequalities between men and women, is traceable to the physical realities of female and male biology, particularly their roles in reproduction and their consequences (Firestone 1970). Women are accorded secondary status and are considered physically weak.

*Patriarchal power rests on social meanings given to biological sexual difference. In patriarchal discourse, the nature and social role of women are defined in relation to a norm which is male. This finds its clearest expression in the genetic use of the terms 'man' and 'he' to encompass all of humankind*  
(Weedon 1997:2).

Radical feminists argue for conditions that recognize the uniqueness and separateness of women and the recognition of their worth as being equal to that of men. It gives positive value to womanhood and places strong emphasis on sisterhood. As Mitchell (1986) points out, radical feminism not only sought to challenge contemporary sexual relations and politics, but it also produced a new language and a new discursive framework based on liberation and collectivism.

Thus, radical feminism proclaims the following about women:

- Women's experiences are rooted in a patriarchal society.
- Women are dominated by men.
- Women are economically dependent on men.

- Patriarchal behaviours are enforced and reinforced in society.
- Women are biologically weaker than men.
- Women are equal to men, but have their own distinctive uniqueness and separateness.

For the purposes of this study, I draw on the ideology of patriarchy as a means of systematic discrimination against women. Patriarchy is used as a tool to entrench asymmetrical power relations between men and women which results in women being neglected and marginalised in educational administration.

### **3.4 SOCIALIST FEMINIST THEORY**

*Remember her gender*

*And never offend her*

*The man in the moon is a miss*

( Aunt Mame)

In socialist feminism, inequalities between the sexes are conceptualized in terms of the subordination of women. This subordination is due to the existence of patriarchy (with an emphasis on reproduction or sexuality) and capitalism.

The split between the public and private permeates society, separating workplace and home and producing a gendered organisational culture where women and men do different jobs, in different industries and at different organisational levels (Acker 1990; Crompton and Sanderson 1990; Calas and Smircich 1996). This gendered substructure is reproduced through organisational processes (Acker 1992). Most socialist feminists stress the

economic dimensions of men's resistance to women workers. They point out that sexist ideology binds women to the home and legitimates their exclusion from higher-paying men's jobs.

Socialist feminism states that the process by which the structure of the organisation is reproduced also helps to produce gendered components of individual identity. Gendered components are not only brought about in from the outside, but also produced within the organisation (Mills and Tancred 1994). Thus, within socialist feminism it is possible to link the structure of the organisation to the people within it.

Socialist feminism strives for a different social order in which differences based on gender, class, and ethnicity have become irrelevant. This implies that a transformation of the organisation itself is needed, and that it does not suffice that 'minorities' gain access to valued resources and the positions of power.

From a socialist perspective, it is not so much the criteria or the grounds that are problematic, but the very idea of the division of labour itself. Its supposed neutrality and insurmountable necessity are questioned and problematized. In exploring alternative possibilities of organising, socialist feminist theory emphasises minimal division of labour and maximum participation of employees. Socialist feminists advocate widespread economic and cultural changes to dismantle both capitalism and patriarchy. They propose equal work opportunities for both men and women workers and advocate policies to increase child care/family leave programs and increase men's involvement in

domestic work. They resist other forms of exploitation such as racism, imperialism, ageism and heterosexism (Walby 1986).

Thus socialist feminism proclaims the following:

- Capitalism and patriarchy result in women's subordination.
- A sexist organisational culture prevails where men and women do different jobs.
- Striving for a social order where gender, class, race and ethnicity are irrelevant variables.
- The emphasis is on minimal division of labour and maximum participation of workers.

For the purposes of this study I appropriate the view that inequalities between the sexes has resulted in the subordination of women. This is largely due to the existence of patriarchy and capitalism. The transformation of organisations is advocated.

### **3.5 POST-STRUCTURAL FEMINIST THEORY**

*Women must make their demands and their claims along with others-make them powerfully and passionately. Only then can discrimination and stereotyping be effectively eliminated.*

*Maxine Green* in Handbook for Achieving Sex Equity through Education.

Weedon (1997) asserts that there is no fixed meaning to the term 'poststructural'. This theory is generally applied to a wide range of theoretical perspectives developed by (Derrida 1976; Lacan 1977; and Foucault 1980). These theories are concerned with, for example, the apparently 'apolitical' destructive criticism practised by many American literary critics in which they are concerned with the free play of meanings of gender (Weedon 1997:19).

Grogan (1996:34) describes post-structuralism as a theory that identifies possibilities for social change by inquiring into the origins and manifestations of both institutional knowledge and beliefs and the individual knowledge and beliefs.

Post-structural feminism seeks to analyse the workings of patriarchy in all its manifestations-ideological, institutional, organisational and subjective. Social relations are viewed in terms of plurality and diversity rather than unity and consensus, enabling an articulation of alternative, more effective ways of thinking about or acting on issues of gender Wallach Scott (1990); Davies (1994) and Walkerdine (1990) have also used this framework to deconstruct traditional ways of looking at gender.

In post-structural analysis, discourse is understood as being constitutive (meanings do not exist prior to their articulation, but are always socially and historically located in the discourse). Subject positions and social structures emerge through the discourse. Thus, people are not socialised into their personal worlds, not passively shaped by others but rather each is active in taking up discourses through which he or she is shaped (Davies and Banks 1992:3).

Discourses are socially and culturally produced patterns of language, belief and practice. They develop over time, and different discourses become more or less prominent according to the social and economic conditions. Discourses constitute power by describing and producing objects and subjects in different

ways. Thus, power is not in the possession of individuals, but rather, is constituted by multiple, constantly shifting discourses. The self is not a coherent personality, but is rather produced and reproduced in different ways by different discourses, also articulating different discourses depending on the discursive context (Foucault 1980).

Post-structuralism rejects the validity of 'truth discourses' and 'grand narratives'. According to them truth and justice are relative concepts, seen and presented differently in different cultures and discourses. Post-structuralism does not instruct people to abandon work and end oppression, but it does deconstruct the foundational conceptions of morality, justice and truth. This poses a challenge for many feminists who support the 'truth discourse' that women are disadvantaged and discriminated against in the world at large and the moral assumption that such oppression is wrong, and that we should work to end this oppression (Assiter 1996; Francis 1996b).

Feminist post-structuralism insists on the deconstruction of the dominant beliefs held by all those in power (Harding 1991). It calls for the exposure of dominant groups in whose interests, societal structures have been perpetuated. In doing so it reveals others who have not been as well served by virtue of their gender or other similarly marginalizing attributes. The aim is not to reduce all to sameness by suggesting that, if the attributes that marginalizes certain groups were to be removed, equality would result. Nor does this theory suggest that a marginalizing experience is a universal one. The intersections of race, class gender, and sexuality complicate all lives in such a profound way.

Post-structuralism offers much insight in the understanding of the way in which social organisations define the life choices of individuals. This theory provides a lens through which one can attempt to lay bare some of the mystifications that distort perspectives. Greene (1988) gets to the core of the problem when she defines mystification as an elusive belief in family responsibilities which has kept women in their places. She explains: “ The kind of social reality that demands such mystification must be interrogated; the illusions must be exposed if women [and men as well] are to achieve the kind of freedom that will permit them to choose what they will become in whatever they decide will be their common world” (Greene 1988:63).

Feminist post-structuralism is concerned with sources of power that exist in social relationships and how women can dislodge it. Both men and women can benefit from knowledge that renegotiates the power balance in their relationships. Women can then challenge the structures that have positioned them unfavourably.

Post-structuralism is a nihilist approach geared toward understanding the human condition. It delights in attaching authority, and advocates the dismantling of social structures. While it offers no hope for reform, it nevertheless provides conceptual tools to tackle social inequalities (Grogan 1996).

Lather (1991,1992) Davies (1994) and Capper (1992,1993a,1993b) argue that the juxtaposition of a feminist critical theory alongside post-structuralism allows feminists not only to identify the social structures that have oppressed

all whose interests were not being served by the dominant discourses, but also to take social responsibility for change.

Weedon (1997:32) argues that a feminist poststructuralist inquiry “enables us to give meaning to the world and to act to transform it”. By the deconstructive process of examining all claims of knowledge for their historical and cultural situatedness, individuals are aided in their searches for the bases upon which their knowledge is founded. If the origins of the institutional knowledge are examined critically, opportunities are provided for the continued acceptance of certain convictions or, alternatively for the rejection and replacement of beliefs that no longer fit.

Thus feminist poststructuralist proclaims that:

- Dominant beliefs held by those in power, be deconstructed.
- Positions are discursively and interactively constituted as the discourse shifts.
- Social organisations define the life choices of individuals.
- Myths must be eradicated if women (and men) are to experience freedom.
- Women must challenge power structures that have positioned them unfavourably.
- Feminist post-structuralism allows for meanings to be given to the world and, advocates transformation of the world.

For the purposes of this study I appropriate the following from poststructuralist feminist perspective:

- The possibilities for social change both on an individual and institutional level.
- Interrogation of patriarchy and acting on issues of gender.
- Deconstruction of dominant beliefs.
- Our lives are shaped by class, race and gender.
- Illusions and myths surrounding women be interrogated.
- The need to dislodge power that exists in social relationships.
- Lives of women are located in historical and cultural contexts.

### **3.6 AFRICAN FEMINISM**

*Are African women voiceless or do we fail to look for their voices where we may find them, in the sites and forms which these voices are uttered?*  
(Ogunpide-Leslie 1994:139)

African feminism refers to political praxis that emanates from a very cogent analysis of political, economic and social conditions that shape African women's lives. African feminism displays a shared intellectual commitment to critiquing gender and imperialism coupled with a collective focus on a continental identity shaped by particular relations of subordination in a world economy and global social, cultural and educational practices. Its overarching argument is that African women, in the interests of 'efficiency', need to increase their productivity in relation to national and global economies.

Black South African women's history has been one of defiance against not only white supremacy, but male supremacy as well. Central to the ideology of Black feminism is the struggle for gender justice and the production of feminist epistemology. Feminist theory in Africa registers sensitivity to context and practice and attempts to distance itself from jargon emanating

from western-centric framework or developing facile generalisations. There is a strong need to guard against cultural hegemony of western approaches and ensure that what is local and context-specific vitally forms gender analysis, feminist practice and organisational development in Africa.

Most black feminists and African feminists argue that women's socially inscribed identities in Africa may take very different forms from women's acquisition of gender identities in the West. In particular, the cultural resonance of motherhood as practice and icon, as well as the valorising of 'superwoman' mean that African women's official identities frequently challenge the myths and stereotypes linked to the western notion of femininity.

African feminist theories are often anchored in activist or practice-orientated working environments and life experiences. Although all feminists connect personal experiences to their politics and intellectual work, the degree of connectedness to real life-influenced by particular historical experiences of cultural marginalisation and social oppression often shapes African feminist theories in distinctive ways.

Citing the reciprocity between theory and experience also draws attention to African women's cultural expression as a vibrant yet often neglected or misrepresented form of theoretical and intellectual intervention. African feminist writings are important means by which African women contest legacies of imperial and male dominance.

Crucial to Black feminism are discourses related to the subordination of women's struggles against patriarchy to nationalist agendas of liberation. There is fluidity associated with a state in transition and once liberation has been achieved,

*Structures are established, processes become increasingly rigidified, spaces disappear and the marginalisation of women again becomes entrenched* (Hassim 1991:67).

Women's organisations and women's movements are crucial vehicles through which feminist struggles are channelled; however they are highly problematic as they are not static and can potentially be co-opted by conservative structures. Where feminist ideology and critical analysis are not accorded widespread recognition, they can be easily silenced.

African feminism movements have placed the state at the centre of post-colonial activism. This activism has resulted in negotiation, collaboration as well as repression. These feminist movements are shaping and being shaped by multiple forces on local, regional and global levels; however women's struggles are often seen to be open to compromise. They may be seen to support systems and structures that are implicated in producing and reproducing their oppression.

The possibility for changing the landscape remains contingent on the popularisation of women's struggles and engagement with key sites of power from a strategic base. African feminist must continue to work hard to develop truly transformative critiques of and interventions into patriarchal and elitist

structures and organisations. The apparent 'gender-sensitivity' signalled by certain constitutional and political reforms can be read as 'progress been made'. However, this celebration of success may be quite premature.

African feminists acknowledge that global economic and political restructuring are experienced in different ways with a variety of effects. They purport the building of alliances and the establishment of networks across geographical boundaries.

Thus, African feminism proclaims the following:

- Identities are shaped by particular relations of subordination in social, cultural and educational practices.
- The struggle for gender justice and the production of feminist epistemology is central to the ideology of African feminism.
- Feminist theory in Africa registers sensitivity to context and practice and distances itself from western-centric frameworks and generalisations.
- Women's socially inscribed identities in Africa may take different forms from women's acquisition of gender identities in the West.
- African feminist theories are anchored in practice and life experiences emanating from historical experiences of cultural marginalisation and social oppression.
- Discourses focus on the subordination of women and their struggles against patriarchy.
- Women's movements are seen as crucial vehicles through which feminist struggles are channelled.
- African feminist movements have led to negotiation, collaboration and paradoxically repression.
- African feminists strive to develop transformative critiques of and interventions into patriarchal and elitist structures.

- African feminists advocate the building of alliances and networks across geographical boundaries.

For the purposes of this study I appropriate the following from African feminist perspective:

- Women's lives are shaped by their political, economic, historical and social experiences.
- Women are dominated in global social, cultural and educational practices and experience marginalisation and oppression.
- Women continue to struggle for gender justice and the production of feminist epistemology.
- African women's experiences may be quite different from their western counterparts; therefore one has to guard against cultural hegemony of western practices.
- Women's activism has led to limited degrees of collaboration and negotiation but has also been instrumental in entrenching repression.
- Women can develop transformative cultures by challenging patriarchal and elitist structures.

### **3.7 POST-COLONIALITY**

Postcolonial refers to the growing body of writing, literary and scholarly which critiques the implications of the relationship of power between the former colonisers and the colonised. This scholarship is opposed to the process of 'Othering' and the oppressive/distortive inscriptions of the colonised which are central to it. Postcolonial theory therefore not only subverts and resists what is associated with colonising culture, it also recognises the inevitability of the contamination of the colonised with practices of the dominant imperial culture. Postcolonial theory offers the tools to carve out solutions for a series of dilemmas that confront women in the education sector. Afzal-Khan (1996:35) invites the use of 'resistance criticism' which is informed by the

connection between 'theoretical praxis, literary form and political struggle'.

Resistance criticism requires that we:

*"recognise the necessity for a multi-pronged approach to resistance struggle (personal, political and cultural) which, in fact, can work only if one acknowledges the multiplicity of 'black' experience"* (Afzal-Khan 1996:40).

Postcoloniality is aimed at dismantling the 'black sexual power tussle as with the world power struggle that subjugates blacks' (Ogunyemi 1985:72) as well as other variables of power such as capitalism and heterosexism (Afzal-Khan 1996).

The rediscovery and re-vision of the terrain of representation pervades several spaces advanced by Blackwomen (Gqola 2001). It is a necessary part of breaking with oppressive systems "looking ahead to the full realisation of the horror with which we are faced and embracing the terrifying peril in standing up" (Head 2001:18).

While the postcolonial feminism/womanist project is undeniably concerned with subverting colonial and patriarchal systems of logic, its focus is on opening the terrain of Black women's representation and theorisation to new signification. These spaces within which Blackwomen with a feminist consciousness congregate are about breaking new ground, making new meanings and redefining the terms of participation.

Thus postcoloniality proclaims that:

- A relationship of power existed between the former colonisers and the colonised.
- It is strongly opposed to the process of 'othering'.
- Colonisation has led to the contamination of the 'colonised' cultures.
- It offers tools to carve out solutions that confront women in education.
- There is a need for a multi-pronged approach to resistance struggle which is personal, political and cultural in nature.
- It advocates the dismantling of capitalism, heterosexism, black domination and patriarchy.
- Women need to raise their levels of consciousness with regard to their representation and participation in social structures.

For the purposes of this study I appropriate the following from postcoloniality:

- South African apartheid education, a product of colonization, has been instrumental in the contamination of the African cultures.
- There is a need to acknowledge the multiplicity of the 'black experience'.
- The dismantling of black subjugation, capitalism and heterosexism.
- Women's need to redefine the terms of their participation in education.

### **3.8 CONCLUSION**

This study provides an understanding of women from six different perspectives:

- Liberal Feminism: As providing an understanding of the various forms of inequalities that exist between men and women.
- Radical Feminism: As understanding the experiences of the research participants within the context of patriarchal power relations.
- Socialist feminism: As a means of understanding the social structures of capitalism and patriarchy as power processes underlying the sex inequalities.

- Post-structuralist feminism: As a means to identify which discursive frameworks have been most significant in the lives of women aspiring for promotion. By being able to recognize discursive frameworks women will become empowered to reposition themselves in alternative ways as it affords them the opportunity to see which values and interests are silenced and the extent to which others are being promoted.
- African feminism: as a means of understanding the life experiences of women who are shaped by particular historical, political, and economic conditions. As a result of patriarchy and hegemonic structures women are experiencing marginalisation and social oppression
- Post-coloniality: as a means of understanding the power relations between the colonisers and the colonised and the prevalence of a dominant imperial culture which has resulted in the contamination of the African culture.

# **CHAPTER 4**

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

As already stated in Chapter 1, the purpose of this research is to investigate possible reasons for gender imbalances in positions of leadership at school from the perspective of women managers. This study addresses three critical questions, which influenced the methodological approach and the strategies used for data collection.

### **4.2 RESEARCH APPROACH**

A study which addresses the lives and experiences of women, lends itself to a feminist perspective (Hall 1990). This perspective is deemed appropriate due to its methodological underpinnings which see reality as differently constructed and experienced (Kittay 1977).

Feminist researchers have engaged in constant debate concerning the use of quantitative versus qualitative methods in social sciences. The distinction made between these two research methods is that while qualitative research explores traits of individuals and settings and cannot be described numerically, quantitative data explores traits and situations from which numerical data can be obtained.

A major criticism of quantitative methods is that it distorts women's experiences and often silences them as they are not afforded the opportunity of conversing with the researcher. Often the qualitative method is preferred since it permits women to express their experiences fully and in their own terms (Hollard et al. 1995:221). However, Fonow and Cook (1991) cited in Hollard et al. (1995) note that qualitative methods often produce strong criticism in the mainstream academic community because of its unscientific nature. Hollard et al. (1995:223) have therefore drawn the conclusion that an inclusive viewpoint on methods appears to be increasingly accepted in feminist research circles. The emphasis is on using methods that can best address research issues within the framework of feminist goals and ideologies.

Best and Kahn (1993:178) also concurred with the above statement when they said that it might be unwise to draw hard-and-fast distinctions between qualitative and quantitative studies. They maintained the difference is not absolute but merely one of emphasis. Hollard et al. (1995:217) observed that most feminist researchers used a combination of both methods so that the gaps in each single method may be compensated by the counter-balancing strengths of the other. This choice is further supported by Parlette & Hamilton's (1972) comment that qualitative research without the benefit of quantitative rigour may be impotent; and that quantitative research devoid of any qualitative creativity may be sterile. The use of both the qualitative and quantitative research traditions allows for the strengths and weaknesses of the two different methods to be combined to reveal more in-depth and insightful evidence. It can generate more comprehensive accounts of women's experiences.

Parlette & Hamilton (1972) put the complementary nature of the quantitative and qualitative methods into perspective when they say that qualitative findings illuminate quantitative results, thereby decreasing the need for researchers to offer 'shot-in-the-dark' interpretations about what has happened.<sup>6</sup> It also signals the needs of this study that maintains that the combination of numerical data and narrative would lend itself to greater understanding of the topic under discussion.

↪ The use of the survey was used to identify broad patterns throughout the sample while structured interviews were conducted to deepen understanding of emergent findings. The numerical data generated evidence of the collective thinking of a large number of women, data that I would not have acquired had I used only the qualitative approach. It is thus evident that quantitative data when combined with qualitative data produces results that are more credible and arguably more authentic (Lincoln & Guba 1985).

■ Qualitative research would afford me the opportunity to understand the 'social and human behaviour from the insider's perspective as it is lived by the participants (Arkava & Lane 1983). Qualitative research approach equipped me with research tools to explore the experiences of the participants in considerable depth within their real life context. This data would allow participants to speak in their own voices and aid theoretical understandings of gender which would lead to the creation and implementation of development plans.

I chose to locate my study in the feminist research paradigm for various reasons. Firstly, feminists are concerned with the lack of research towards understanding women's experiences. Secondly, a major aim of feminist research is to put women's issues on the agenda, and in this way it addresses discrimination, oppression and power imbalances (Neuman 1997). Feminist researchers engage women in interpreting their experiences of contradictions and or marginality as outcomes of oppression. A central feature of feminist study is the social constructions and intertwined nature of gender, class and race. This study would allow me to understand how women construct themselves in terms of their own gender, class and race and whether these variables are linked to the under-representation of women in management posts at schools.

The semi-structured interview technique was chosen as it allowed the interviewees to talk about what was of significance to them, but within a predetermined framework of issues which the interviewer considers important. According to Borg and Gall (1989), the semi-structured interview provides a desirable combination of objectivity and depth and often provides valuable data that can not be obtained by any other means.

#### **4.3 DATA COLLECTION: AN ENRICHING EXPERIENCE**

Research findings are often affected by the nature of data collection methods used. In order to minimise the risk of erroneous conclusions, I used two methods of data collection, namely the quantitative and qualitative methods.

Consistent findings from both these methods increased the credibility of the findings.

#### **4.3.1 Setting and Subjects**

The North Durban Region was chosen as a convenient community to access for this study. One of the main reasons was accessibility as I live in fairly close proximity to the schools in this area, and secondly I believed that gaining entrance into the schools would be far easier. This was an important consideration since the Department of Education and Culture does not grant study leave for the purposes of completing Masters of Education. I therefore had to negotiate mornings, 'free times' and lunch breaks to visit the schools to hand out the questionnaires. Of the 37 schools in this ward, 33 participated in the study. I was unable to access some of these schools due to their remote locations.

Entrance into the above schools had to be negotiated at two levels. Firstly, written permission had to be obtained from the Department of Education and Culture and secondly, from the principals of individual schools to administer the questionnaires. Distribution of the questionnaires was no easy task. I travelled to 33 schools and covered the distance of some 200 kilometres. On the first day I met with the participants (where possible) or the senior manager of the school to explain the purpose of the study. At this point I appealed for completion of the questionnaire, pointing out that their responses were vital to my study. At the second visit I collected the questionnaires. As I had predicted, data collection for approximately 80 percent of the schools ran smoothly. In the 20 percent of the cases I had the tedious task of making

numerous attempts to persuade educators to complete the questionnaires. The main obstacle as I saw it, was the mind-set that educators had against research. They often perceived it as a hindrance that had no benefit for them, but which promoted the interests of the researcher.

Although travelling was an exhausting task, it was nevertheless an invaluable experience. I was afforded the opportunity of discussing my study with not only women managers but also with male managers who questioned me on the topic purely out of curiosity or sometimes even genuine interest. Many of them felt that the study was a pertinent one which would articulate the voices of women. They expressed the desire to share in the findings of the research. Of the 56 questionnaires distributed, 53 were returned. This translated into a response rate of 95 percent. This resounding success can be attributed to my personal contact with the participants. Many had remarked that had they received the questionnaire in any other way, they would have felt inclined not to complete it.

As part of my qualitative study, I had to conduct semi-structured interviews with research participants. Initial contact with black, coloured and white participants was not as easy as I thought. Due to historical segregations that were perpetuated by the apartheid government, the different race groups to date remain isolated from one another. Very little transformation in the racial composition of schools has been noted. It therefore became imperative to establish networks. Through referrals I acquired names of participants who might be willing to participate in the study.

Equipped with a list of schools which I had acquired from the Department of Education, I set about the task of telephoning prospective research participants. During these telephonic conversations, I informed the prospective participants about the direction of the study, and their contributions to the study. Some of them declined to part of the study citing work and domestic commitments as their reasons. Once the women managers agreed to participate in the study, meeting places and times for the interviews were negotiated. These interviews were conducted at the employment sites or in the homes of the research participants, depending on their preferences.

### **4.3.2 Pilot Study**

Pilot studies were conducted to refine both set of instruments namely the questionnaire and the semi-structured interview schedule.

#### **4.3.2.1 Piloting the questionnaire:**

The pilot study was conducted as a starting point of the data collection procedure. Six women managers from three different schools were selected to be part of this initial study. The purpose was to evaluate whether:

- questions were ambiguous or confusing
- participants considered the questionnaire to be time consuming to complete
- data generated was relevant.
- the respondents considered the questionnaire to be valid and appropriate.

The pilot study, with one minor adjustment demonstrated all items to be included in the final questionnaire were intelligible to all subjects. The pilot group remarked that the questionnaire was interesting and not time consuming. This 'pilot group' was excluded from the final sample.

#### **4.3.2.2 Pilot study: the interview**

Skills with regard to the interviewing process have to be acquired. Janesick (1998) recommends that a pilot study of limited duration be carried out so that one is able to get a taste for the setting, become acquainted with personnel, and test one's skills as observer and interviewer. The first experience proved highly rewarding and prepared me for the forthcoming interviews. It was at this point that I sharpened my skills of conversing and listening in a non-intimidating manner.

#### **4.3.3 The purposive sample**

My sample choice for this 'all women' and 'multi-racial' group of managers was based on the following rationale:

- Women were to be the focus group. The theoretical framework of this feminist study was not to draw a comparison between the experiences of men and women educators but to highlight the gendered experiences of women managers and what they saw as possible reasons for gender imbalances.
- Since gender, race, and class are inextricably interwoven in the experiences of women, I wanted to investigate to what extent women are shaped by these different variables. While certain commonalities are shared by both non-white and white women in South Africa, the diversity of race, class, age, culture produced significantly different

experiences. Women often define themselves in terms of dichotomies of gender, race and class to give meanings to their experiences.

- Too often black women appear in cross-cultural studies under the guise of feminist anthropology merely as subjects for interesting and exotic comparisons (Amos & Parmar 2001). My study would bring to light the triple burden of gender, race and class of black women and how women negotiate management positions.

Consistent with the established practice in qualitative studies, the participants were assured of the confidentiality of their interviews. Thus, pseudonyms are used to identify them. This is done in accordance with the race they represent. The idea was not to label any of the women or fix their identities in terms of race but merely to see race as a factor that constructs the lives of women. Hence the research participants were named Helen Blair (White), Devi Ramsunker (Indian), Boniswa Mhlongo (Black) and Sara Adams (Coloured).

#### **4.3.4 Instrumentation**

This study employed the use of both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews to collect data. The combination of the quantitative and qualitative methods results in a 'triangulation effect' which enables fuller exploration of the complexity and richness of the phenomenon under scrutiny Burns (1995:273). Furthermore the use of the two different data collection techniques has yielded interrelated sets of data that have served to increase the study's authenticity.

#### 4.3.4.1 Questionnaire

In order to elicit the views of a large number of women managers, questionnaires were administered. Apart from the large scale data collection the questionnaire surveys appeared to be the most cost-effective and quickest way of collecting the data (Giddens1993; Anderson 1990).

Since the target group was distributed in different schools, it would be costly both in terms of time and travelling to obtain responses from the respondents through individual interviews. It was for these reasons that the questionnaire was chosen to gather data despite its well documented limitations.

Since the questionnaire asks of all respondents the same questions, uniformity is assured. This facilitates easy capturing and analysis of data. Similar or divergent views are easily classified. An added advantage is that the respondents have all the time at their disposal to respond.

The questionnaire, developed by myself, was designed in such a way so that it met the fundamental criteria mentioned previously. It comprised an introductory comment explaining the purpose of the research, and the value of the respondent's participation. The questionnaire comprised of two sections structured in the following way:

**Section A1 comprised of biographical details.**  
**Section A2 reflected employment history and history of the school.**  
**Section B consisted of an opinion survey.**

Section A1 comprised personal information such as age, population group, marital status, dependants, qualifications and current studies. It was important to solicit this type of information from the respondents as it would influence responses to other questions. A brief open-ended question called for a free, in-depth response from the participant. This pertained to possible reasons for not wanting to study further. The researcher wanted to establish if there was any correlation between this variable and women's experiences of gender imbalances in management posts.

Section A2 profiled the employment history of the respondent as well as that of the school. Information such as number of years of service, relative education qualification valuation, number of promotion holders in respect of gender would point to gender equity of the lack thereof in management positions.

Section B consisted of an opinion survey. Women managers had to rate responses to 20 statements on a five point Likert Scale. The scale was labelled 'strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree, and unsure'. The Likert Scale was used to assess the attitudes of women educators to a number of factors relating to possible reasons for gender imbalances in management positions.

Educators were granted freedom of anonymity. This would ensure that educators expressed themselves freely without fear of reprisals.

#### **4.3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews**

Bogdan and Biklen (1992) define an interview as a ‘purposeful conversation between two people that is used to gather descriptive data in the subjects own words so that the researcher can develop insights on how subjects interpret their world’. Interviews aptly suited my study since it espoused the following principles:

- **Flexibility:** Open-ended questions allowed me leeway to probe for responses in greater detail. It also gave me the opportunity to explain and clarify questions.
- **Confidentiality:** Since confidentiality was assured, the interviewees felt at ease to talk about pertinent issues without fear of reprisals.
- **Question order:** The questions were arranged within specific frameworks and categories resulting in a sequential flow of data.
- **Non-verbal behaviour:** Facial and bodily expressions, tone of voice and gestures provided insight with respect to the feelings of the respondents and help to elicit personal and confidential information.
- **Environment:** Interviews were conducted in sites where the participants felt comfortable and relaxed; thus the discourse was directed into desired Question order: The questions were arranged within specific frameworks and categories resulting in a sequential flow of data.

Respondents were selected for the interview process using the purposive sampling technique. The idea was to select information rich cases to illuminate the question under study. Each interview was between 45 minutes to an hour

long. Interviews were audio taped and transcribed. Care was taken to safeguard the integrity of the respondents.

Four broad themes emerged from the interviews. These themes were:

- Barriers that blocked the advancement of women.
- Role models/mentors
- Management styles
- Gender equity policies/transformation

Although four broad themes emerged, the data painted a broader picture in that the respondents gave full accounts of their day-to-day experiences and thinking as educators. Coles (1989) notes that it is only through stories that we can fully enter another's life. We can penetrate cultural barriers, give voice to human experiences and experience human intentions and actions. The semi-structured interviews were used to deepen our understanding of the lives of women managers with respect to social and educational problems plaguing them.

### **4.3.5 Limitations of methodology**

#### **4.3.5.1 Limitations of questionnaires**

Questionnaires have their limitations since subjects may not supply accurate answers, may even ignore certain questions or even falsify their answers. Another danger is that respondents do not give thoughtful consideration to questionnaires. It is possible that the respondents could have tailored replies to conform to their biases to protect their self-interests, to place themselves in a more favourable

light or to conform with socially accepted patterns. Another disadvantage of using fixed alternative responses is that it forces respondents to take a stand on issues about which they have no crystallised opinion. In order to circumvent this problem, I assured the respondents of the confidentiality of their responses. Furthermore, they were given sufficient time to complete the questionnaires.

#### **4.3.5.2 Limitations of Interview Technique**

Interviews are useful tools, but it required a great deal of time, money and energy to conduct the interviews. Another limitation is that the respondents may give socially desirable responses. Also, my own conduct as a researcher, my tone and body language could have influenced the participant's responses. It is possible that I could have sought out answers that would support my preconceived notions of the issues at hand. In order to lend validity to my study, I, as far as possible assumed the role of detached observer, only probing to clarify responses or gain further information. Furthermore, the pilot study proved invaluable in that it sharpened my interviewing skills.

#### **4.3.6 Validity**

*“Validity in the qualitative paradigm is a texts call to authority and truth and as such is epistemological” (Janesick 1998).*

In my study two methods of data collection were used in order to increase the validity of my findings. An integrated approach called triangulation was used.

This involved combining different methods of data collection in order to unravel the various layers that the data yielded and to double check findings from a variety of vantage points (Fitzpatrick, Secrist & Wright 1998). In my study I was able to compare findings that one set of instrument generated with that of another.

Fraenkel and Wallen (1993:139) suggest that validity refers to the degree to which evidence supports any inferences a researcher makes based on the data she collects using a particular instrument. The inferences should be appropriate, meaningful and useful. Validation of the instruments is the process of collecting evidence to support these inferences. Since the questionnaire comprised largely of the close-form format, it helped keep the minds of the respondents riveted on the subject. To avoid biasing, statements were framed in both the negative and positive form. Care was taken to carefully construct the questionnaire and since it was administered to professionals it is assumed that they would have been able to understand and answer the questions unequivocally.

Furthermore, participants were not compelled to participate in the study. Permission was always requested before their participation which then gave the study greater credibility. Anonymity and confidentiality were always assured and this resulted in relationships based on mutual respect and trustworthiness. Audio-tapes were reviewed in conjunction with the transcripts as a test for accuracy. Participants were also invited to review the transcripts. Overall there was no loss or distortion of data.

### **4.3.7 Data Analysis**

The researcher sought to re-organise the raw data from both the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews into an integrated whole. The first step was to tease out emergent trends, themes and ideas to make meaning of the data. The researcher used the following techniques:

#### **4.3.7.1 A Priori Categories**

The researcher had categories in mind when designing the questions in the Likert Scale although they were not categorically reflected on the questionnaire. These categories emerged out of the literature review, theoretical framework and personal experiences. These themes paralleled the survey instrument. Quantitative data was analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Categories were used to present the data into a meaningful whole.

#### **4.3.7.2 Grounded Theory**

Data analysis was an ongoing process as I searched for similarities, patterns and themes that emerged from the data. I then developed a system of coding and categorizing. As the patterns and themes were identified, they became categories for coding the data. Strauss and Corbin (1990) referred to this process as grounded theory.

#### **4.3.7.2 Synthesis**

The categories that emerged from the qualitative and quantitative data were synthesised to arrive at a common understanding of what women managers perceive to be the reasons for gender imbalances.

### **4.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter provided a detailed account of the entire process involved in conducting research from its conception which included the research approach, data collection and data analysis. A detailed data gathering process had to be used because research on gender in educational management in South Africa is only in its beginning stages. The next chapter focuses on the presentation, analysis and interpretation of data.

# CHAPTER 5

## ANALYSIS OF THE STUDY

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The research project examined the possible reasons for gender imbalances in positions of leadership at schools. Two forms of data collection techniques were used: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. As explained in the previous chapter the quantitative approach was to identify broad patterns while the qualitative interviewing was utilized to deepen understanding of emergent findings.

Data analysis was ongoing, open-ended and inductive. For the statements of purpose and qualitative interviews, the constant comparative method was used as it is appropriate for qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba 1985; Strauss & Corbin 1990). After unitizing the data (i.e. identifying units of information in the interview transcripts), working categories within which specific data units were located, were identified. This process has been described by Lincoln and Guba (1985: 350) as the “saturation of categories” or the “emergence of regularities.” Comparative pattern analysis was used to illuminate recurring patterns in the data. Literature, observation and experience assisted me in searching for patterns that finally converged into categories. Extracts from the raw data were selected and either paraphrased or suitable quotations from the written responses were selected as rich data to illustrate the categories.

The research was limited to a single ward and a relatively small sample, and is therefore not generalisable in any way. However, the findings do suggest patterns that are useful particularly when they are corroborated by a large corpus of literature dealing with women in educational management and the underutilization of women nationwide.

The four research participants were Boniswa Mhlongo, Lara Adams, Helen Blair and Devi Ramsunker. As explained earlier each research participant was given a pseudonym in response to the promise of confidentiality. While the names correspond to racialised identities and has the profound disadvantage of labelling, to deny them such identities would be just as problematic, for women are shaped by their cultural, social, racial and historical contexts. All four participants were middle-aged senior managers.

## **5.2 QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **5.2.1 Introduction**

The presentation of data comprises the inputs made by women managers of Ward 142 of the Ethekweni Region of KwaZulu-Natal. The research participants were from the four historically designated groups and comprised women managers from both secondary and primary schools. The data is presented in an integrated way but distinctions are made wherever it is deemed necessary.

## 5.2.2 Presentation of Data and their Interpretation

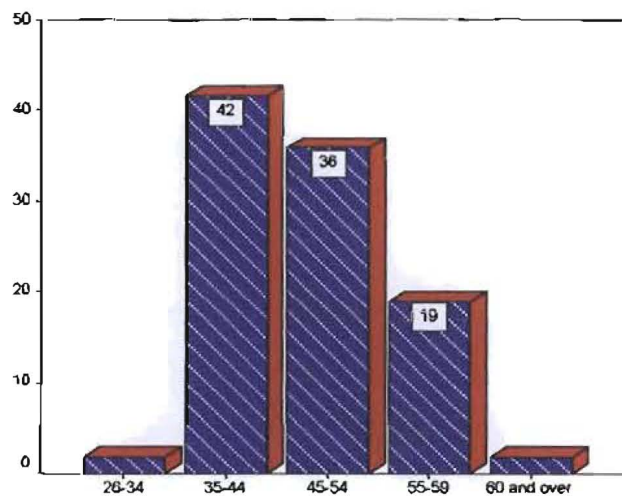
The presentation of the data comprises the inputs made by women managers with regard to the under-representation of women in management positions in schools.

### A. Biographical Details

#### A.1 Personal Details

##### 1. Age Group

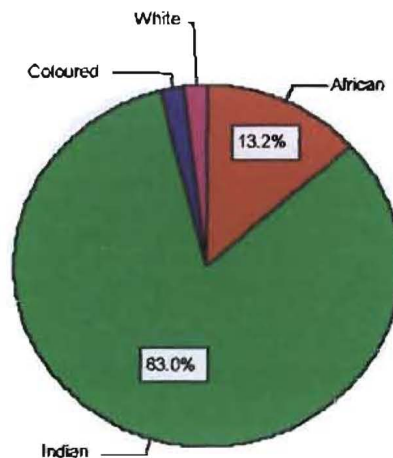
**Graph 5.1: Age Profile**



According to Graph 5.1, 1.9 percent of the respondents are between the ages of 26-43, 42 percent are between 35-44 years old, 36 percent are between 45-54 years old, 19 percent between the ages of 55-59 and 1.9 percent are 60 years or older. This means that 78 percent of the women managers are between the ages of 35-54. The data reflects that the majority of women managers in this ward belonged to the middle age group.

## 2. Historically Designated Race Groups

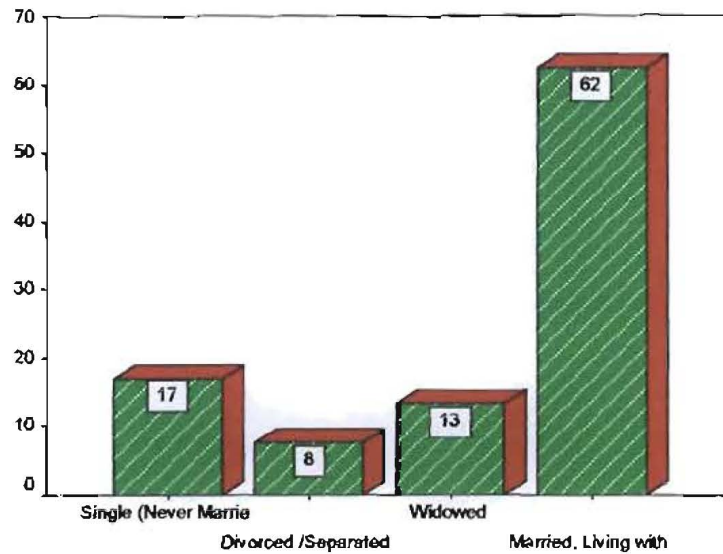
**Graph 5.2: Respondents according to race**



From Graph 5.2 it can be concluded that the respondents comprised 83 percent Indians, 13.2 percent African, 1.9 percent White and 1.9 percent Coloured. Due to the historical segregations that were imposed by the apartheid regime, Ward 142 of the Ethekeweni Region serves a largely Indian population. The extremely low percentage of both white and coloured respondents points to the fact that hardly any transformation with regards to the racial composition of schools has taken place.

### 3. Marital Status

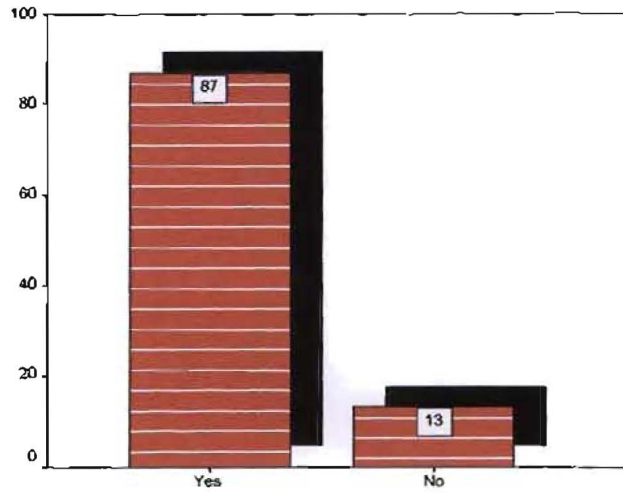
**Graph 5.3: Paired or Single?**



It is evident from Graph 5.3 that 62.3 percent of the women managers are married and living with their partners, 17 percent never married, 8 percent were divorced or separated and 13 percent widowed. This means that the majority of women managers have to negotiate their careers as well as their personal responsibilities.

**4. Women Educators with Children**

**Graph 5.4: Motherhood or Childlessness?**



From Graph 5.4 it is evident that 87 percent of the respondents have children while 13 percent have no children. This data suggests that the majority of women balance motherhood with that of their professional roles.

## 5. Women managers with dependants

**Graph 5.5: Balancing personal and professional lives**



According to Graph 5.5, 13 percent of the respondents indicated that they have no dependants, while 87 percent of the respondents have to assume responsibility for their dependants. Most women continue to be regarded as the caregiver who are responsible for running the home.

## 6. Women managers' qualification

**Table 1: Women certified to teach**

### Qualifications : Academic

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Missing	1	1.9	1.9	1.9
B.COM	1	1.9	1.9	3.8
B.PAED	1	1.9	1.9	5.7
BA	21	39.6	39.6	45.3
BA,EDMAN	1	1.9	1.9	47.2
BPAED	1	1.9	1.9	49.1
HED	1	1.9	1.9	50.9
MATRIC	21	39.6	39.6	90.6
NA	4	7.5	7.5	98.1
P.PAED	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

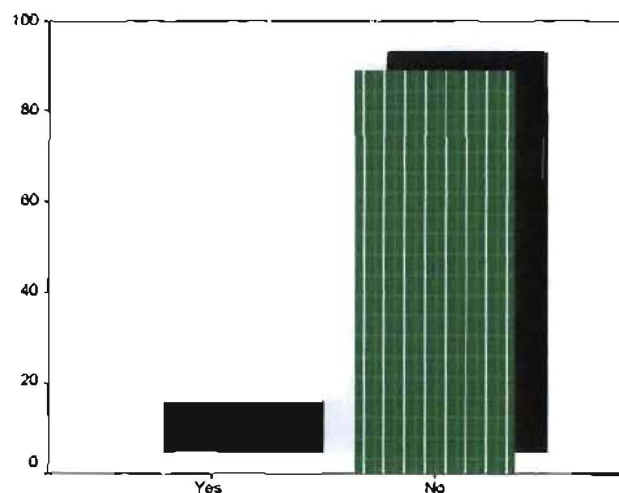
### Professional

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid B.PAED	1	1.9	1.9	1.9
BA	1	1.9	1.9	3.8
BED	8	15.1	15.1	18.9
BPAED	1	1.9	1.9	20.8
FDE	3	5.7	5.7	26.4
HED	7	13.2	13.2	39.6
HED,BEd	1	1.9	1.9	41.5
HED,PRE-PRIMARY	1	1.9	1.9	43.4
HEDJP	1	1.9	1.9	45.3
JP,ED,DIP,BED	1	1.9	1.9	47.2
JPED	6	11.3	11.3	58.5
JSED	2	3.8	3.8	62.3
JSED BED	1	1.9	1.9	64.2
JSED,FED	1	1.9	1.9	66.0
JSTC,SED	1	1.9	1.9	67.9
MED	2	3.8	3.8	71.7
NA	6	11.3	11.3	83.0
NONE	3	5.7	5.7	88.7
PED	1	1.9	1.9	90.6
PTD	1	1.9	1.9	92.5
SED,Dip	1	1.9	1.9	94.3
SPED	1	1.9	1.9	96.2
SPHED	1	1.9	1.9	98.1
UDE	1	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total	53	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 1, the respondents appear to be suitably qualified. 70 percent of the respondents are in possession of diplomas or degrees. Data reveals that the under-representation of women in leadership roles can no longer be blamed on the fact that women do not hold necessary management credentials and academic qualifications. The problem appears to be embedded in the general assumption that women lack the necessary qualifications based on historical data.

## 7. Current and future studies

**Graph 5.6: Desire to study further**



It is evident from Graph 5.6 that there is an overwhelming negativity to study further. 89 percent of the respondents indicated that they have no desire to study further. Only 11 percent reflected that they are pursuing further studies. These women provided the following justification for their decision not to study further:

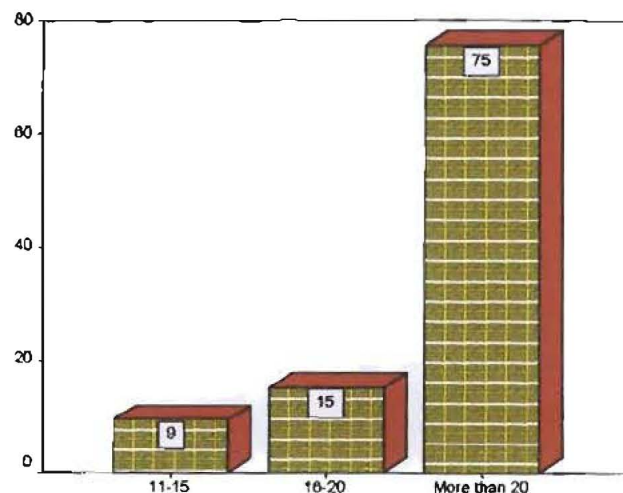
- i) 5.7 percent of the women cited family commitments as the reason for them not being able to study further.

- ii) 11.4 percent said that there was no motivation or incentive to study further. 1.9 percent of the respondents indicated that she was sufficiently qualified. These results can be linked to feelings of women that higher qualifications do not necessarily translate to upward career mobility.
- iii) 26.4 percent of the respondents cited lack of time as an important deterring factor to studying while 1.9 percent of the respondents remarked that studying was quite stressful. It seems that a heavy workload coupled with demanding family responsibilities makes study difficult to undertake.
- iv) 9.4 percent of the women cited finance as a reason for not being able to study while 1.9 percent said that she was close to retirement and therefore did not wish to pursue studies.

## **A2. EMPLOYMENT HISTORY/HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **1. Teaching Service**

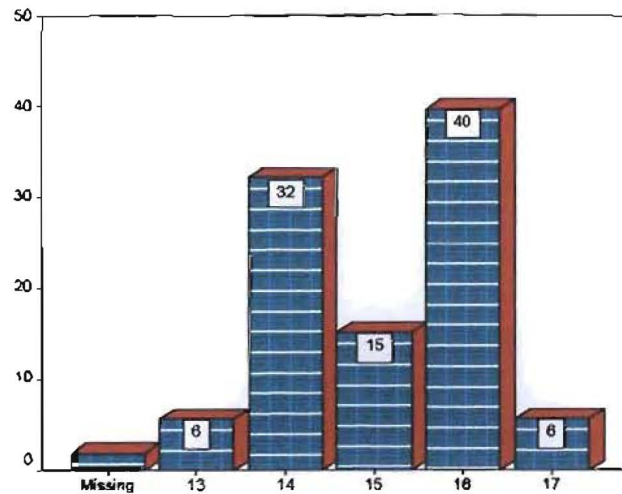
**Graph 5.7: No of years in the profession**



Data from Graph 5.7 reflects that 90.6 percent of the women managers have 16 or more years of experience. Findings show that this ward is manned by a large number of experienced women who bring expertise and skill to the education profession.

## 2. Relative Education Qualification Valuation

**Graph 5.8: Level of Qualification**



According to Graph 5.8, 93 percent of the women have REQV of 14 and above. This suggests that women are highly qualified.

## 3. Promotion post

**Table 2: Post level held**

What promotion post are you holding .

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	0	1	1.9	1.9	1.9
	H.O.D	32	60.4	61.5	63.5
	D.P	9	17.0	17.3	80.8
	Principal	10	18.9	19.2	100.0
	Total	52	98.1	100.0	
Missing	Missing	1	1.9		
Total		53	100.0		

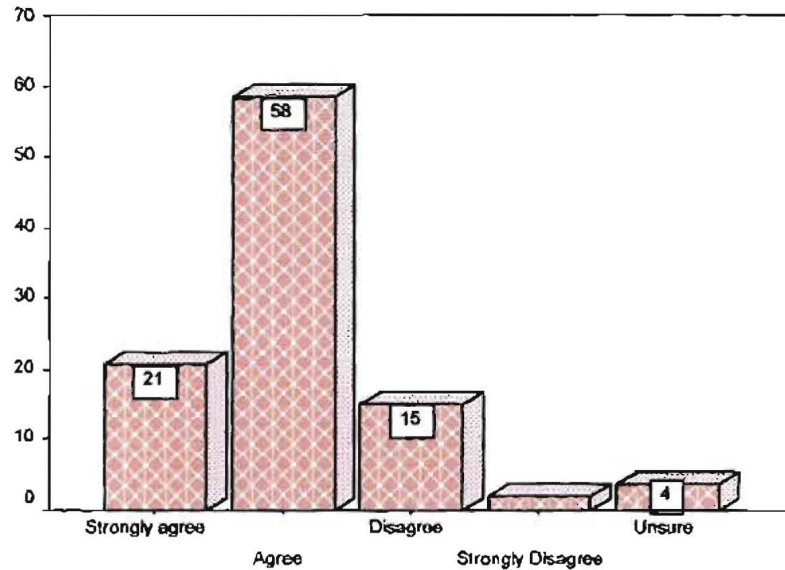
It is evident from Table 2 that 60.4 percent of the women managers are holding Head of Department positions. 17 percent are Deputy Principals while 18.9 percent are principals. Data reveals that women are still positioned in the

lower levels of management. Women appear to be under-represented in middle and senior management posts.

## **B. OPINION SURVEY**

### **1. Women managers' levels of professionalism.**

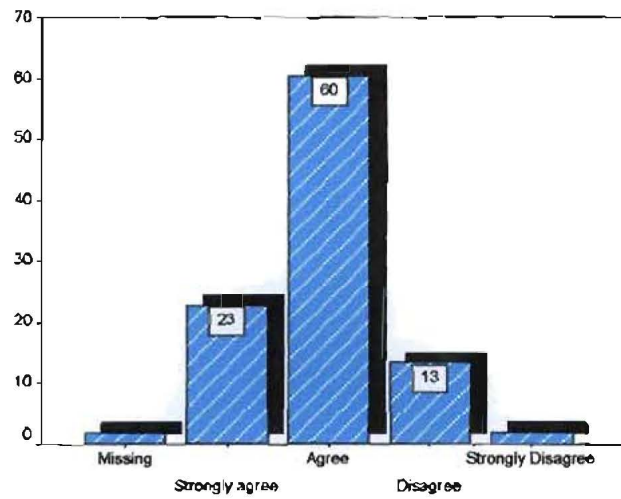
**Graph 5.9: Dynamic or Dependent?**



It is evident from Graph 5.9 that 20.8 percent of the women strongly agreed with the statement that they regard themselves as dynamic and independent in their professional lives. 58.5 percent agreed while 15.1 percent disagreed, 1.9 percent strongly disagreed while 3.8 percent of the respondents were unsure. This data reveals that gender role socialisation can no longer be perceived to be an intrinsic promotional barrier. Women are making a paradigm shift with regard to their place in educational management

## 2. Women managers' self confidence.

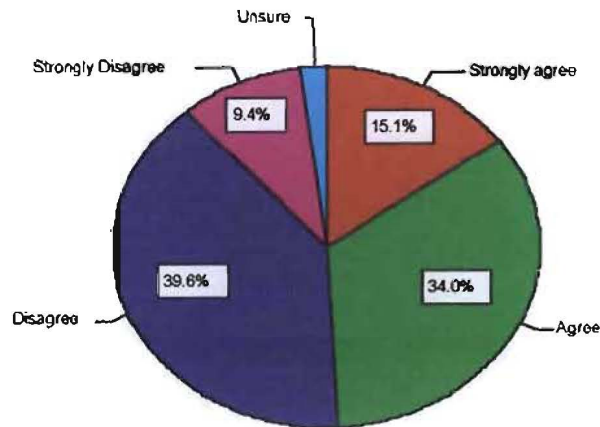
**Graph 5.10: Perceptions of professional women**



It is evident from the data presented in Graph 5.10 that an overwhelming majority of women experience self-confidence as professional educators. 23 percent strongly agreed with the statement, 60 percent agreed, 13 percent disagreed and 1.9 percent strongly disagreed. Women's lack of self confidence can no longer be seen as a barrier that blocks their advancement. Data reveals that women educators are armed with self-confidence to be able to deal with management tasks.

### 3. Application for Promotion Posts.

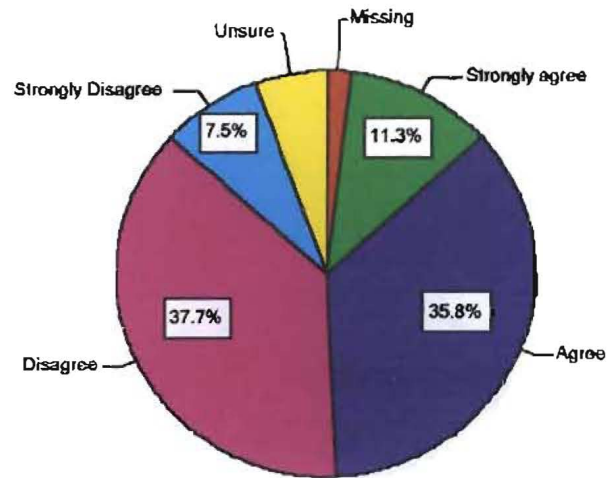
**Graph 5.11: Roadblocks**



According to Graph 5.11, it can be concluded that women's responses were ambivalent in nature. 15.1 percent of the women strongly agreed with the statement, 34 percent agreed, 39.6 percent disagreed and 9.4 percent strongly disagreed. A possible explanation might be that some women are motivated and have professional aspirations that are not necessarily focused on promotion, but rather on their own intrinsic achievements, the achievements of their learners as well as the acceptance of their specific circumstances. A possible explanation for women's lack of motivation to apply for promotion posts could be the acknowledgement that there are fewer promotion opportunities for them as a result of hegemonic practices that define promotion practices. Women are becoming frustrated with the system that effectively discriminates against them.

#### 4. Mentors and role-models

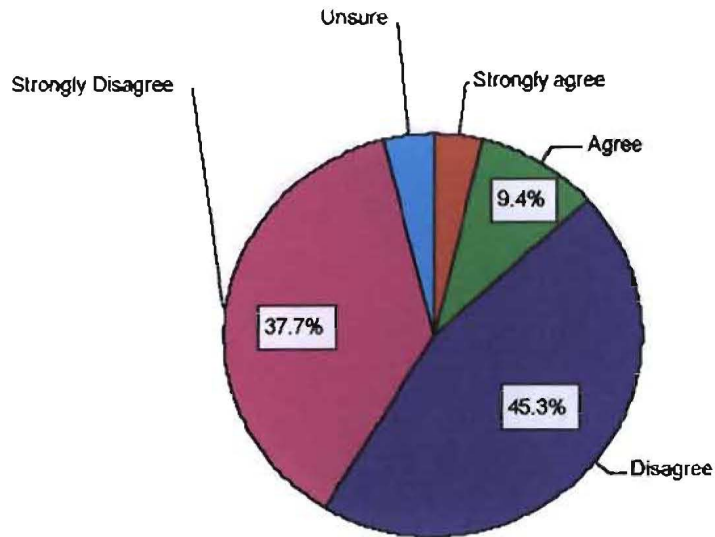
**Graph 5.12: Models for emulation**



According to Graph 5.12, 11.3 percent of women strongly agreed with the statement. 35.8 percent of the women agreed, 37.7 percent disagreed while 7.5 percent strongly disagreed. 5.7 percent were unsure. 4.5 percent of the women either disagreed or strongly disagreed that a lack of women in mentorship or role-model positions is a barrier for women aspiring toward promotion. A possible explanation for this could be that as a result of lack of women in such positions, women have come to bank of their own self-worth, however 47 percent of the respondents strongly agreed or agreed that a lack of women in mentor and role-model positions is a definite barrier for women that seek promotion. It seems that some women consider the assimilation of appropriate attributes from their female counterparts as being crucial to their development as managers.

## 5. Requirements for management positions.

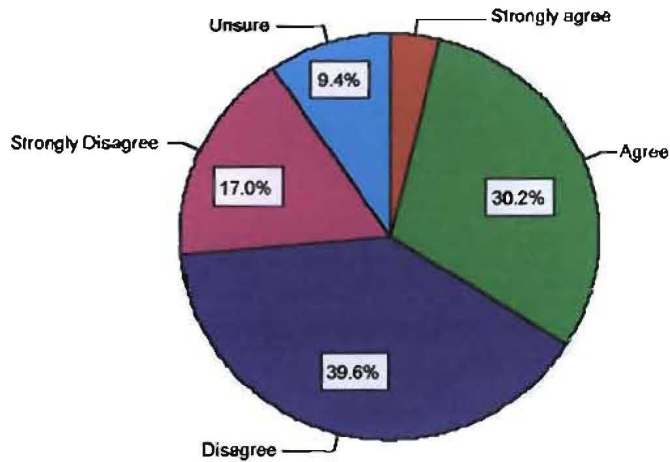
**Graph 5.13: Femininity: Inferior or Complementary?**



It is evident from the data reflected in Graph 5.13 that 3.8 percent of the women managers strongly agreed, 9.4 percent of them agreed, 45.3 percent disagreed and 37.7 percent strongly disagreed. 3.8 percent were unsure. These statistics indicate that women have re-evaluated their positions in management hierarchies and see themselves as potential candidates for promotion. Women are unable to identify with the perceptions that men have natural managerial talents and their careers should be advanced while women should not be promoted because of gender.

## 6. Definition of roles in education by means of gender

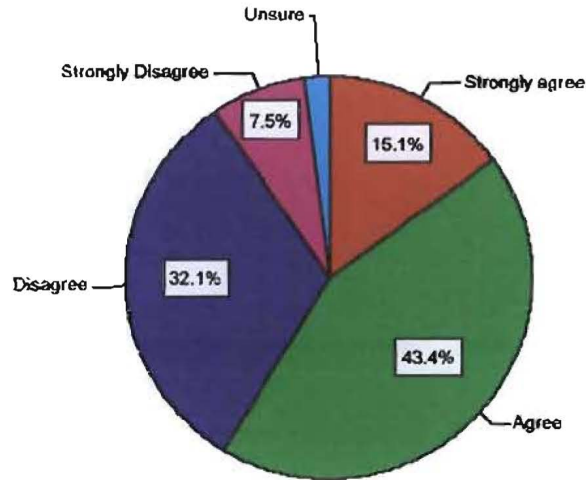
**Graph 5.14: Gendered Management?**



According to data reflected in Graph 5.14, 3.8 percent of the respondents reflected that they strongly agreed with this statement. 30.2 percent agreed, 39.6 percent disagreed while 17 percent strongly disagreed. 9.4 percent of the women managers were unsure of their feelings. It appears that women and men are re-defining management roles and not seeing it as gender-based. While there may be this trend, data is also reflecting that traditional gender roles still pervade many institutions.

## 7. Women educators' attitudes.

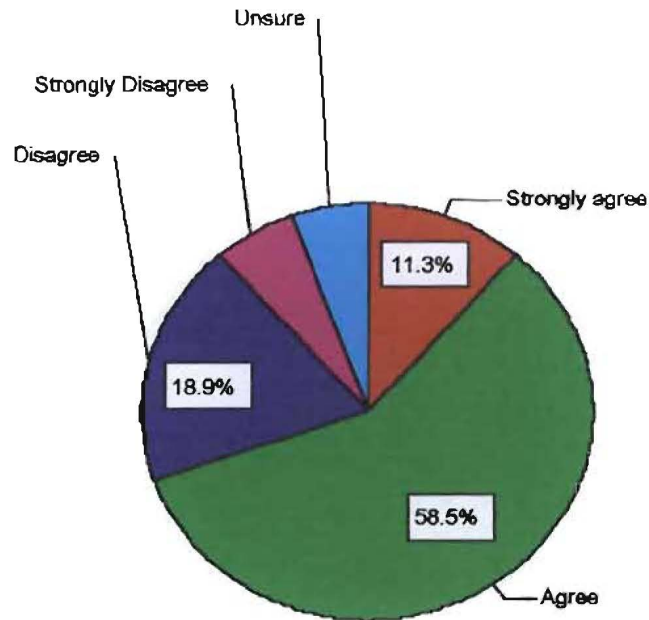
**Graph 5.15: Women managers: assertive or submissive?**



The statistics reflected in Graph 5.15 reveal that 15.1 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 43.4 percent agreed, 32.1 percent disagreed while 7.5 percent strongly disagreed. 1.9 percent of the women were unsure. More than half the sample reflected that women need to display assertiveness in order to achieve promotion. A possible reason for this is that women are acknowledging that they need to move away from stereotypes of themselves as submissive beings and embrace the challenging roles of management.

## 8. Discrimination of women educators

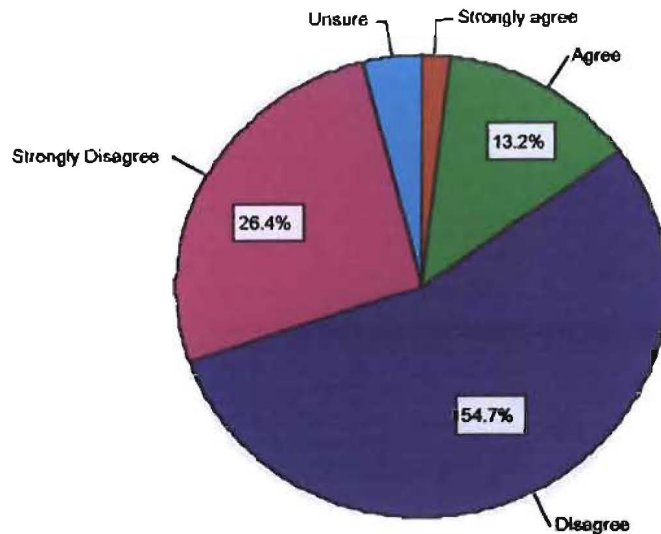
**Graph 5.16 Discrimination: fact or fallacy?**



According to Graph 5.16, 11.3 percent of the women strongly agreed with this statement, 58.5 percent agreed, 18.9 percent disagreed while 5.7 percent strongly disagreed and 5.7 percent of the women were unsure. While there seems to be a change in the way women perceive themselves, there still appears to be the view that women are discriminated against.

## 9. Patriarchal Cultures

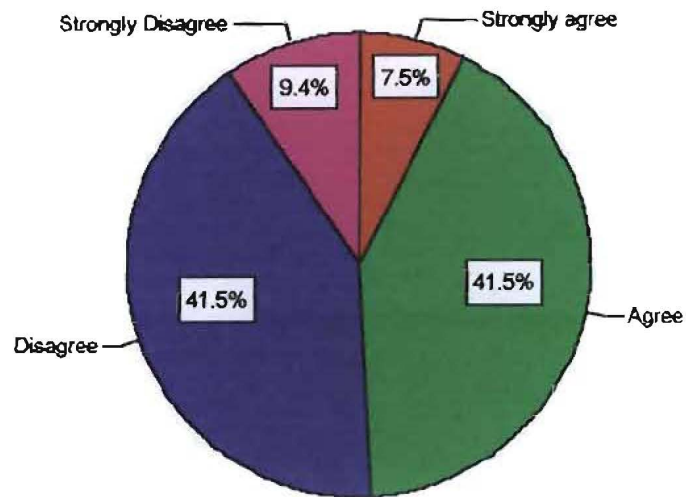
**Graph 5.17: Women claiming their rights.**



It is evident from the statistics reflected in Graph 5.17 that 1.9 percent of the women strongly agreed with the statement, 13.2 percent agreed, 54.7 percent disagreed while 26.4 percent strongly disagreed. 3.8 percent were unsure. While a small percentage of women see themselves in traditional roles, a large majority of women are adverse to men simply taking charge. The perception that they lack self-confidence to assume leadership roles is no longer valid. The majority of them rejected the perception that they find it convenient that men take charge of professional situations. They too wish to claim their rights in management roles.

## 10. Women educators' roles often confined to gender

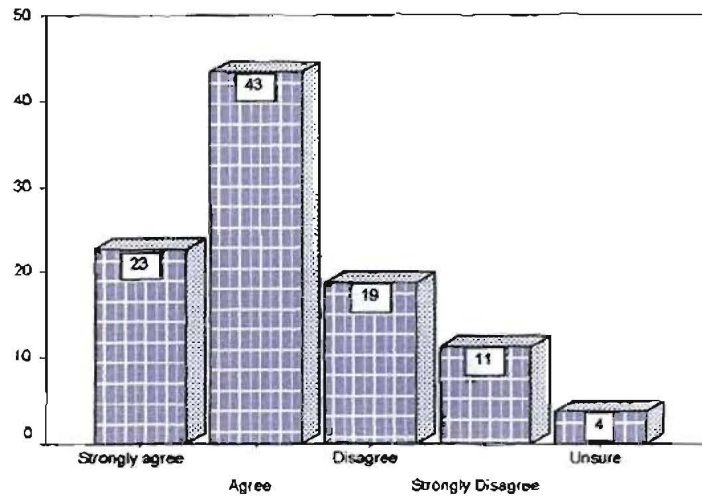
**Graph 5.18: Gendered roles.**



According to Graph 5.18, 7.5 percent of the women managers strongly agree with this statement, 41.5 percent agree, 41.5 percent disagree and 9.4 percent strongly disagree. While some women see themselves as having to perform tasks within the confines of their gender, others are adopting the view that they need to break the shackles of traditional roles and embrace roles that were once reserved for men.

## 11. Conflict between traditional roles of wife and mother and career roles

Graph 5.19: Negotiating roles



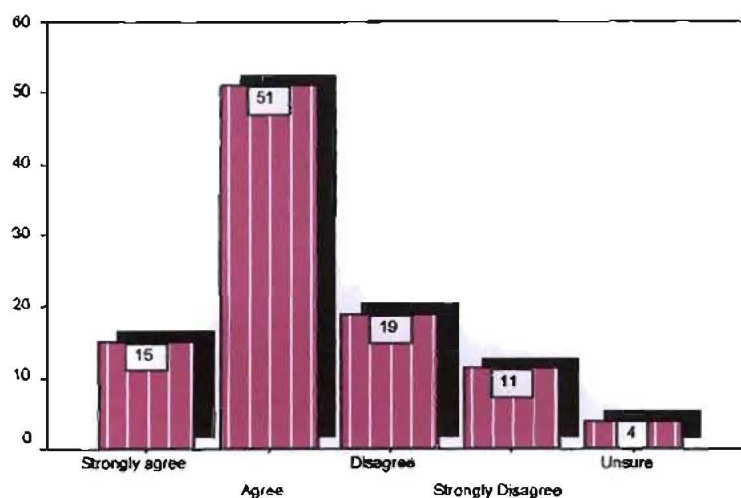
It is evident from Graph 5.19 that 22.6 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the above statement. 43.4 percent agreed; 18.9 percent disagreed while 11.3 percent strongly disagreed. 3.8 percent of the respondents were unsure. The majority of the respondents felt that women who are mothers and wives as well as career women are placed under substantial pressure to balance both these acts. Women have to cope not only with the conflict between the traditional role of wife and mother and career role, but also the development of a new definition of the self in order to succeed in leadership roles.

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## 12. Patriarchal cultures

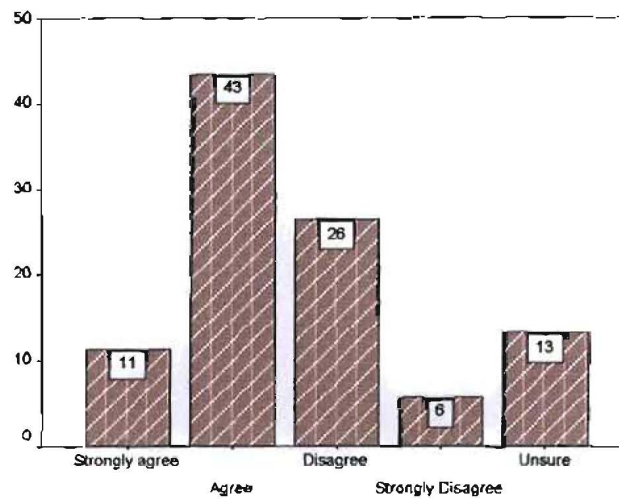
**Graph 5.20: Barriers to promotion**



Statistics reflected in Graph 5.20 reveal that 15.1 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement. 50.9 percent agreed, 18.9 percent disagreed and 11.3 percent strongly disagreed. 3.8 percent of the respondents were unsure. The majority of women are of the view that despite some changes in the attitudes of significant role-players in education, women are experiencing impediments in their career advancement as a result of men's dominance and hegemony in key positions in society and the prevalence of patriarchal norms that strengthen gender differences.

### 13. Equal opportunities initiatives

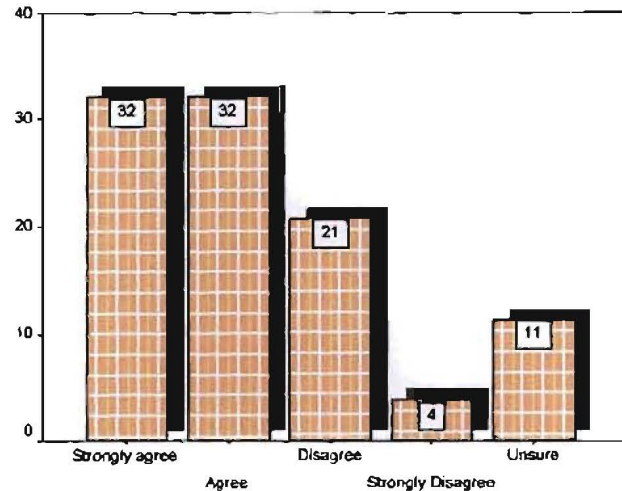
**Graph 5.21: Addressing inequities**



According to Graph 5.21, 11.3 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 43.4 percent agreed, 26.4 percent disagreed while 5.7 percent strongly disagreed. 13.2 percent indicated that they were unsure. More than half of the respondents felt that managers are becoming enlightened about equal opportunity initiatives and the promoting the cause of women; however a significant number of respondents are of the view that school managers are not bringing about changes at grass-root levels.

## 14. Gender equity policies

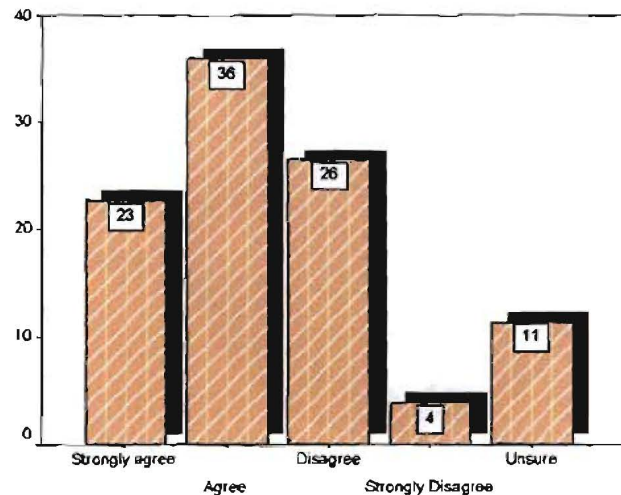
**Graph 5.22: School Selection Committees: Informed or Ignorant?**



It is evident from Graph 5.22 that 32 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that schools selection committees lack knowledge about gender equity initiatives, 32 percent agreed, 21 percent disagreed, 4 percent strongly disagreed while 11 percent were unsure. Most women are of the opinion that efforts must be made by knowledgeable and committed individuals in the educational administration faculty to educate those persons who are involved in hiring school leaders. Policies are tantamount to nothing unless a concerted effort is made to understand its contents and implications. In order to redress the current imbalances in education members of the governing bodies should receive training on issues of gender and discrimination.

## 15. Patriarchal structures in school selection committees

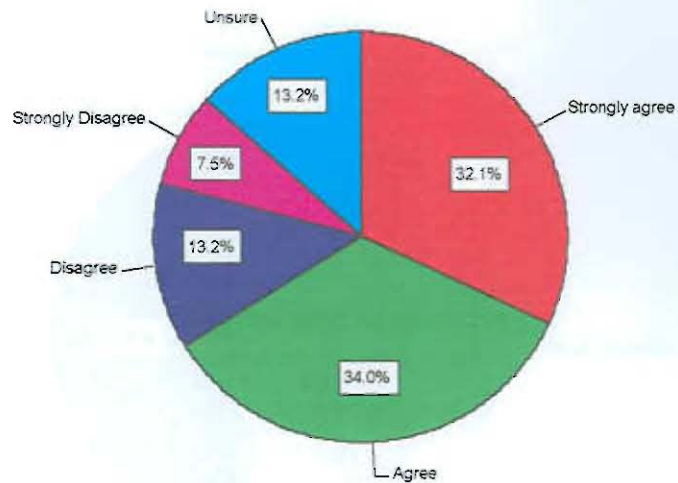
**Graph 5.23: Male dominance a huge hurdle**



Statistics reflected in Graph 5.23 reveals that 23 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement, 36 percent agreed, 26 percent disagreed, 4 percent strongly disagreed and 11 percent of the respondents were unsure. Males are seen to be the gatekeepers. Recruitment very often occurs through the old boy's network. Application filters are evident in questions pertaining to biographical data which places women at a disadvantage. When interview panels consist of mostly males then selection takes place according to stereotyped gender role criteria.

## 16. Management styles of women managers

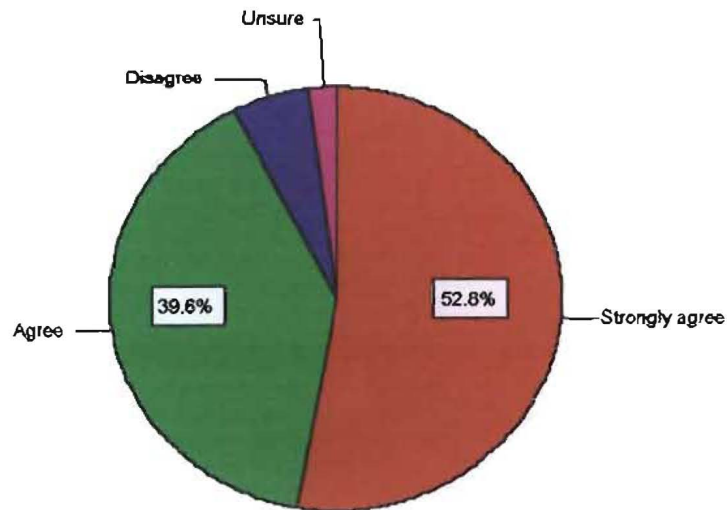
**Graph 5.24: Stereotypical views of women as ineffective Managers**



According to Graph 5.24, 32.1 percent of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that women are being sidelined based on certain misconceptions. 20.7 percent of the women disagreed or strongly disagreed while 13.2 percent were unsure. It is evident that women have to contend with stereotypes that position them as 'soft', ineffective managers. Many of the behaviours and skills deemed to be essential for management positions such as control and authority seem to be intrinsic to definitions of masculinity. This means that women are sidelined for promotion posts.

## 17. The implementation of gender equity laws and policies

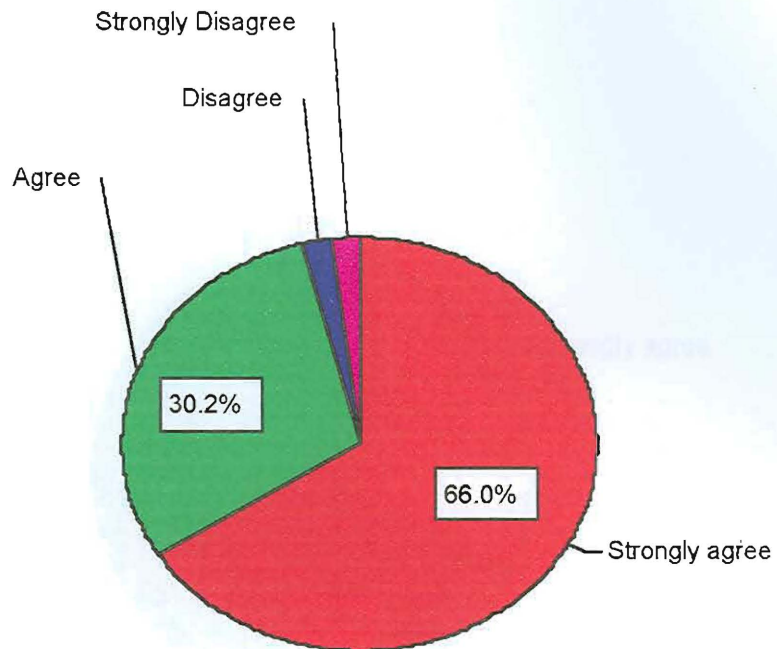
**Graph 5.25: It's about time!**



Statistics reflected in Graph 5.25 reveal that 52.8 percent of the women strongly agreed with this statement. 39.6 percent agreed, 5.7 percent disagreed and 1.9 percent was unsure. It seems that the vast majority of women believe that formulation of equity laws and policies will be purely symbolic gestures if unaccompanied by implementation procedures to address gender imbalances in positions of leadership.

## 18. Promotion: an end result of skills and expertise

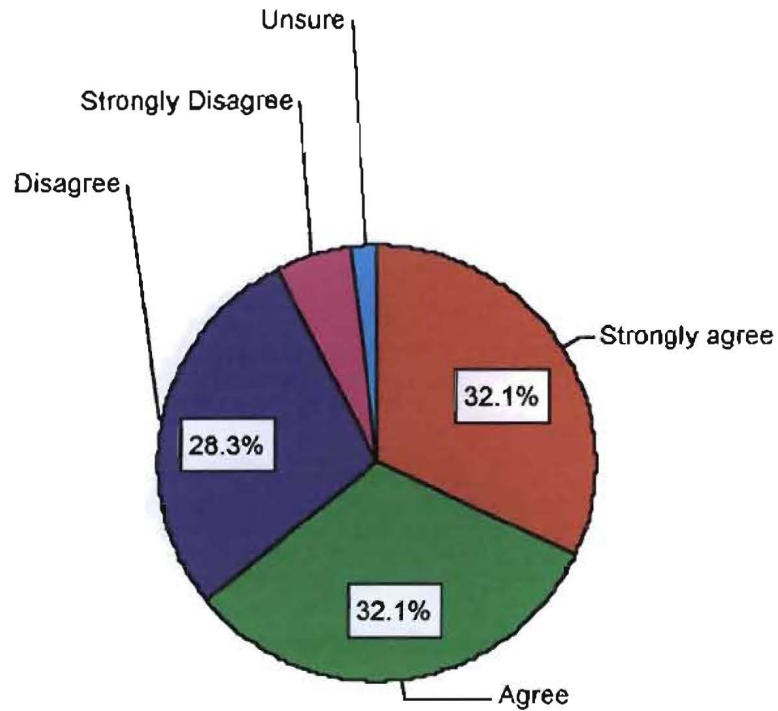
**Graph 5.26: No way to tokenism!**



According to Graph 5.26, 66 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement, 30.2 percent agreed, 1.9 percent disagreed and 1.9 percent strongly disagreed. Many women believe that while it is vital that the implementers of policy acquaint themselves with gender equity laws and policies and not discriminate against women based on patriarchal norms and hegemonic beliefs, it is crucial that their capabilities and skills be taken into cognisance when being awarded promotion. Women are opposed to being awarded token posts as their self-worth and competencies become highly questionable.

## 19. Degree of expertise

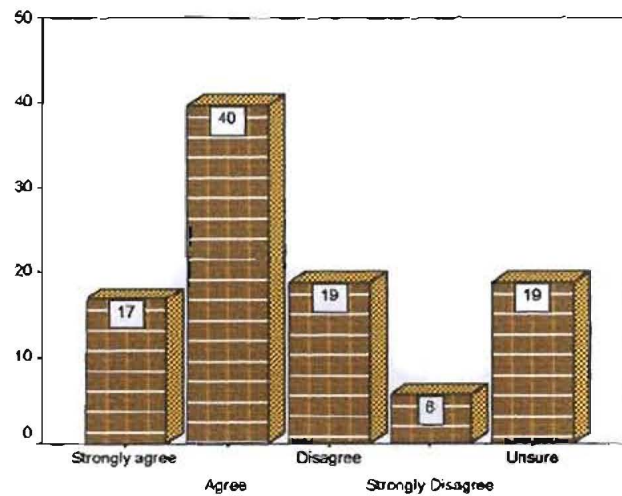
**Graph 5.27: Training for management positions**



Statistics reflected in Graph 5.27 reflected that 32.1 percent of the women strongly agreed with the statement, 32.1 percent agreed, 28.3 percent disagreed, 5.7 percent strongly disagreed and 1.9 percent was unsure. A large number of respondents indicated that they have acquired the desired skills, competencies and valid experiences to progress to management positions.

## 20. Career advancement

**Graph5.28: Advancement or Stagnation?**



It is evident from the data reflected in Graph 5.28 that 17 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement. 40 percent of the women agreed while 19 percent disagreed. 6 percent strongly disagreed while 19 percent of the respondents were unsure. The majority of women have expressed uncertainty or ambivalence about career advancement. Traditional patriarchal norms and a lack of gender equity initiatives have diminished women's interest in a career in the teaching fraternity.

### 5.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH FINDINGS

#### 5.3.1 Introduction

Consistent with guidelines for inductive analysis of data all the descriptive categories and ideas discussed in this section emerged directly from the data. Five major themes emerged from the analysis of the data. There were sex-role

stereotyping, leadership-a masculinist enterprise, support and mentoring, management styles, and gender equity and redress.

### **5.3.2 Sex-role Stereotyping**

#### **5.3.2.1 Introduction**

Socialised stereotyping of traditional gender roles and the associated attitudes of both males and females are major factors underlying the under-representation of women in educational management. This theme is further sub-divided:

#### **5.3.2.2 A woman's place**

Family and home responsibilities are considered to be major stereotypical gender based barriers. The relationship between family and career roles causes conflicting roles and expectations. The biological role of childbearing has resulted in the myth that women belong at home. Gil (1990:100) argues that "one important source of discriminatory practices against women is the traditional expectation for mothers to assume primary responsibilities for the care of their own children." These expectations when put into practice have the effect of limiting considerably the freedom and rights of women to choose and also enter into demanding senior leadership positions. Helen succinctly puts it:

*My children were all placed first so I did not pursue promotion because I knew I couldn't give what is needed at the time...my three children were more important and came first. So I suppose school came second.*

Boniswa declared:

*There is that attitude that a woman's place is in the kitchen and that they are minors no matter what. I think that most South-African women are facing this problem but it is double when you are a black woman.*

Stereotypical attitudes about women are often based on typically female characteristics such as gentleness and passiveness. Women are seen as suitable for the caring professions such as teaching and nursing.

Boniswa remarks:

*Actually I knew I could be a teacher. The other thing that was open for girls then was nursing.*

Newman (1994) points out that because women seem to be accepted often only in traditional roles, they are often excluded from dominant forms of authority and leadership. He believes that women are “allowed some privileges on the expectation that they would eventually leave home and therefore present little challenge” (Newman 1994:193). Greyvenstein (1990) supports this assertion when she remarks that the early patterns of socialisation do not prepare women to make occupational choices that would lead to management careers.

### **5.3.2.3 Culture and Tradition**

The research participants also articulated that culture and tradition were important considerations through which women came to

acquire notions of gender domination and racial exploitation and conflict.

Devi explains:

*In Hinduism we always held our husbands in high esteem and because of that we accepted...I believe also in the African culture that acceptance could mean how they treated you and you were second class...*

Boniswa, a Xhosa who married a Zulu articulated how culture and tradition impacted negatively on her personal and professional life.

In response to the question as to whether there is a perception among black people that women are not effective managers she replied:

*Especially among the Zulus. I thought when I first came here that they think a woman's place is at home.*

She explained further:

*I would be reminded time and time again that I don't belong here and I still get that experience even at my place of work.*

Gardiner et al. (2000:102) stresses the acute conflict experienced by minority women managers between traditional roles and expectations and professional roles and responsibilities.

Boniswa remarked:

*They (women) are the target of scorn and what I mentioned earlier about the paternalistic nature of our society. It also keeps women from availing themselves from this (promotion) because it is what they grew up with at home. I can't say they differentiate between home and work.*

Devi notes that women are making a paradigm shift with regard to their place in society.

She remarks:

*This is the determination that we as women have and it is no barrier...not even our children ...not even our household chores is a barrier if you are determined.*

The participants maintain strongly that woman can succeed provided that she is determined, understands 'the rules' and follows them. In putting the matter into perspective Newman (1994) postulates that women are presented as having the qualities and aptitudes that allegedly constitute the new pillars of organisational effectiveness: co-operation, commitment and trust.

#### **5.3.2.4 Lack of assertiveness**

The research participants reflected that there exists a disturbing view that women lack assertiveness and are devoid of the essential leadership ingredients of decisiveness and authority.

Devi notes:

*Some principals feel that in management you need women because they wouldn't fight back. They will be accepting...they feel that women are submissive.*

Boniswa further substantiated this argument when she avers:

*Women managers keep quiet with their problems.*

The participants noted that even though these cultural stereotypes have oppressive tendencies, there is a shift in the way women perceive themselves. They are more and more making demands powerfully and passionately.

Devi says:

*We want to be assertive and approachable at the same time.*

Grogan (1996:25) sums it up when she says: "women must make their demands and their claims along with others; make them powerfully and passionately. Only then can discrimination and stereotyping be effectively eliminated".

#### **5.3.2.5 Conclusion**

The data presented thus far reflects that women are systematically discriminated against because of social stereotyping. Family and home responsibilities appear to be major barriers. This is compounded by the fact that culture and tradition entrench patterns of domination. Although women are experiencing stress as a result

of conflicting professional and personal roles, they are making a paradigm shift with regards to their place in society. The participants perceived themselves to be assertive beings who could display decisiveness and authority.

### **5.3.3 Leadership - A Masculinist Enterprise**

#### **5.3.3.1 Introduction**

Despite the overarching discourse of gender equity to which all subscribe, discourses of leadership which were both race and gendered, structured the lived experiences of the research participants.

#### **5.3.3.2 A Paternalistic Society**

Shakeshaft (1989) notes that one of the impediments to women's promotion to leadership positions relates to men's dominance and hegemony in key positions in society and the prevalence of patriarchal norms that strengthen gender differences. Data from this research corroborated this viewpoint.

*Devi: It could be the situation where male dominance was acceptable and I think as women we are to blame because we accepted male dominance...Male managers...they always want to put you down and make you feel that you are inferior.*

Lack of recognition as a result of autocratic attitudes was one of the key issues for the women in this study. This lack of recognition was

linked to feeling unsupported. The participants felt utterly undermined.

Lara sums it up when she declares:

*He was an old authoritarian and traditionalist who just closed his door and if you go and ask him anything he will just look at you like you are a bit crazy and wouldn't give you responses.*

### **5.3.3.3 Filtering**

The participants reflected that males who were the gatekeepers held on steadfastly to the notion that the 'ideal employee' was a disembodied and 'rational' figure that fits in more closely with the image of masculinity than femininity (Acker1990; Gherardi1995). Interview and selection filtering occurs when the selection committees consist mostly of males and selection takes place according to stereotyped gender role criteria. They expressed concerns that such contentious beliefs would be major obstacles for women aspiring for promotion.

*Devi: The Board of Governors feel that autocracy is the way to go.*

*Boniswa: I actually didn't get the post because one of the parents felt that it was a man's job.*

*Lara: Traditionally leadership belongs to a man.*

The women managers felt that gatekeepers need to undergo extensive paradigm shifts if the careers of women educators were to be advanced.

#### **5.3.3.4 Tokenism**

Women who successfully enter the management hierarchy experience further barriers as a result of being awarded token posts. One of the participants felt that they were merely representatives of their gender group and not judged as individuals.

Lara remarked:

*The principal was male and I encountered flack. When I got there he told me you do not do anything, you do not tell teachers what to do, you leave them alone, they are doing their job all the time without you. They don't need you to come along and tell. So it was a token post.*

Lara reflected on her inherent worth as manager and revealed that she disapproves of tokenism. She said:

*I don't think it is specifically female. I think it is who is best because there are times when I favoured a male over a female and I think we must move away from 'we must get a woman.' We must get the best person.*

Lara acknowledges that there is a glass ceiling. She avers:

*You don't always get to the top. I think we need a mindset change that women need to believe that they can do it, and we CAN .*

### **5.3.3.5 Conclusion**

The above data illustrates that male dominance and hegemony are impediments to women's progress. Women are sidelined for promotion posts because selection committees still see leadership as being synonymous with images of masculinity. Women wish to be promoted because they have vital skills to impart to management structures. They do not wish to attain promotion through symbolic gestures such as tokenism.

## **5.3.4 Management Style**

### **5.3.4.1 Introduction**

In a meta- analysis of educational administrators' management styles, Eagly et al. (1992) noted that female managers tend to have a more democratic leadership style than do their male counterparts.

### **5.3.4.2 Participatory management style**

Women are more likely to engage in participatory styles of management, to resolve conflicts and be good communicators. These qualities are now identified as relevant to effective educational management (Bolam et al. 1993).

Boniswa remarks:

*I talk with people. I think talking breaks barriers and I listen as well because I have a tendency to be sensitive to other people's problems. If you listen you get the co-operation that you need.*

Although the consultative style of management was generally advocated, it is sometimes difficult to convey intentions:

*They know when they do things I am going to listen and understand. Your being kind has a negative influence. I discuss things with people. I also trust people. I have had nasty experiences where you trust a certain person who is qualified to do a certain piece of work only to find out that the person is not doing the work in the manner it is supposed to be done (Boniswa).*

Whilst advocating a consultative style, it sometimes becomes necessary to rule out pure democracy:

*I face the person and talk to him and give him a directive on how things should be done and another thing is that whenever I am giving out an instruction I always write it down, so somebody wouldn't say he did not hear it or he thought that (Boniswa).*

Research findings found that all four female administrators were more likely to allow others to participate in decision making and were less likely to be dominating or directive toward subordinates.

Devi Ramsunker pertinently puts it:

*I am approachable...because I come down to the level...I don't have a superior attitude. I believe we are all colleagues. My emphasis is on teamwork and working as a family.*

The descriptions of leadership orientations provided by the women involved in this study resembled research findings that indicate women's leadership styles tends to be transformative and inclusive (Eagly et al 1992, Grogan 1996).

Lara Adams a deputy principal states:

*I think women tend to listen more which is not a bad thing and you are more open to negotiation and seeing the problem for what it is and I think you actually intercede with the principal on behalf of other staff members and learners as well because you are more approachable. I think women bring something special to the profession.*

The intention to maintain an open and collaborative style of management extended to ways in which the participants were accessible to staff, learners and the community. Helen emphasises:

*I know I allow the managers and teachers here a lot of leeway and there is a lot of understanding but at the same time I expect the job to be done and I have the calibre of person who can do that.*

Devi acknowledges the value of the participative management style when she says:

*I have an open door policy with the community, (my) children and the educators.*

The management styles exhibited by these research participants demonstrated the importance of an 'open' school climate which favours consultation about decision taking. These findings conform to the conclusions of Hopkins (1994) on school improvement, and Bolam et al. (1993) about effective school management. These findings are also consistent with the conclusions of other research projects conducted internationally.

#### **5.3.4.3 Conclusion**

The research participants favoured a democratic, participatory leadership style. They saw these as essential ingredients for effective educational management. Through maintaining open and collaborative management styles, they were able to establish networks with the staff, learners and the broader community.

### **5.3.5 Support and Mentoring**

#### **5.3.5.1 Introduction**

According to a number of scholars, women more than men, require encouragement to pursue careers in administration (Edson 1995;

Hart 1995; Schmuck 1995). Edson (1995) found that professional endorsements and personal and professional support were important.

### 5.3.5.2 Professional Endorsements

All of the women in the study indicated that they had been encouraged to enter management. The encouragement came from another manager:

*I had a principal, a male principal who saw my worth and he encouraged me and always told me that I have it in me and that made the difference. (Devi)*

*I am extremely grateful to that principal who saw my worth. (Lara)*

This type of encouragement is what Marshall and Kasten (1994:6) refer to as ‘the tap on the shoulder’. Participants marked the receipt of encouragement from their supervisors as critical in their decision-making to pursue the field of management. Devi shared that her principal “*insisted I apply for promotion and because of her intervention in my life that I became who I am today.*” The encouragement appeared to boost their confidence in their leadership ability.

The participants involved in this study placed so much importance on the support they received from their superiors that they, in turn, felt an obligation to mentor and endorse other women.

Helen remarks:

*I think the staff are given adequate opportunities to become leaders and so I do look around the staff...I do ask what people's aspirations are. If they say they would like to become HODs or they do want to be promoted then I will give them certain jobs to prove themselves.*

### **5.3.5.3 Personal Support**

Like professional endorsements, a number of scholars have noted the importance of personal (family) support for women in management positions. The comments of the participants endorsed this assertion. They explained that they received most of the support from family. Parents were particularly influential.

Lara explained:

*My mother was very supportive...If it were not for her and her support I don't think we would have achieved what we did.*

Boniswa remarked:

*...he (father) supported me and gave me all the support I really needed and at times it would appear as if I was the favoured one.*

Devi explained:

*She (mother) was my mentor. She was my role-model.*

Mothers were cited to be great sources of support and inspiration. These findings are supported by studies that asserted the importance of

female administrators' families, particularly their mothers, in supporting their efforts to become educational leaders (Gross & Trask 1976; Paddock 1978).

For those women who were married, their husbands were cited as sources of support; however spousal support appeared to be somewhat different from support provided by families.

Boniswa remarked on the ambivalent nature of her ex-husband's support:

*...but my husband was very, very supportive, but yes he had a destroying factor in him. He was very jealous although he was supporting.*

Devi on the other hand described her husband as extremely supportive. She remarked that he encourages her to reach for the stars. She also values the fact that he supports other women too.

Lara echoed similar sentiments when she said:

*He is very supportive in that both my degrees I acquired after marriage and I needed a lot of help... it required both of us to pitch in and help.*

A number of studies have noted the importance of support from husbands particularly in terms of sharing home responsibilities (Jackson 1981). Given this situation, it was not surprising that the

respondents had remarked that trying to balance their home and professional careers proved to be a major challenge. Helen explained that there are tensions for those who try to meet the demands of family and administration equally well.

She pondered:

*How to balance a home life and everything that is expected of you in a position, but I know I couldn't have done this job had I still been married with three children. So I really don't know because I don't think you can do all those things equally as well at the same time.*

Literature on women in education has documented the potential importance of mentors and sponsors in assisting women's entry into and progress within administration (Edson 1995, Shakeshaft 1989, Grogan 2000). Data from this research suggests that role-models that women encounter play an important role in their decision to enter management.

Boniswa remarks:

*...there are so many people from whom I got inspiration. They are in various spheres of life. I liken them to stars. They shine in their own way...you get a certain shine from that star but when you combine them, they give you radiance.*

When asked the question about the person about who inspired her to a large extent, she explained:

*It was a brother to my father. He was a good teacher and whenever I listen to his former students they always praise him. I wish someday people could talk like that about me.*

Lara explains:

*There have been people that have touched my life over the years and perhaps one of my teachers at school who made me decide to be a teacher...Various people in my career have touched me and then I worked with two extremely good principals...I am very grateful to that principal who saw my worth and he was the finest administrator I ever had to work with. I think a lot of what I do I model on what he did.*

These findings are consistent with that of Morrison (1987) who suggests that the psychological profiles of women who succeed in positions of executive leadership may be more like those of their male counterparts than they are like those of women in general. Perhaps this is because of the lack of positive female role-models in senior positions.

Research in South Africa carried out by Tsoka (1999) highlighted that even the few women who make it to top leadership positions find themselves faced with the reality of the absence of female models that would have inspired them. Without such a vital inspiration, the few successful women find themselves faced with no choice except to look up to men as their only role-models (Tsoka 1999:22).

#### **5.3.5.4 Conclusion**

The above data illustrates the value of both personal and professional support in the organisational lives of the women. Women who received familial and professional support were able to access and negotiate management roles more easily. The importance of mentors and role-models for women striving for leadership positions is also well documented.

### **5.3.6 Gender Equity and Redress**

#### **5.3.6.1 Introduction**

In South Africa equal opportunity policies were implemented to improve the position of women in educational management. Such policies are usually intended to break the hierarchical management structures dominated by men; however there have been difficulties in implementing these at the grass roots levels of schools.

#### **5.3.6.2 The legacy of Apartheid**

Between 1994 and 1999 new discourses of social justice and gender equity signalled the entrance of a larger corps of women into educational management. Prior to 1994 the apartheid bureaucracy had undermined the leadership potential of women.

Lara notes:

*Well, back then it was law that women could not hold positions...promotion posts. You know we were paid less as well and we got one notch lower than males got.*

Lara's argument points to the fact that women educators also suffered economic exploitation. This gender subordination according to race and gender oppression is referred to as a 'double bind'.

The research participants explained how the harsh realities of apartheid constructed their gendered identities. Helen an English immigrant testifies:

*...but at the very last minute I was told that I could not have that place because I did not have Afrikaans...so I couldn't go there( university) and that was quite traumatic.*

Boniswa spells out the adverse effects of apartheid when she declares:

*It was with great regret that my parents had spent so much money talking me to faraway places for education and yet there was a place next door where we could have gone, but we couldn't because of the government of the day.*

These comments clearly indicate that whilst the racial classifications of apartheid no longer carry legal weight, they still carry social and political weight and have shaped the relationships of the participants.

### **5.3.6.3 Glass Ceiling**

The women managers noted that in spite of enlightened legislation they still have to contend with 'glass ceilings' that effectively block their advancement.

#### **5.3.6.4 Governing Bodies**

The participants noted that the selection committees of the governing bodies have an image of management that is both traditional and hierarchical. Leadership images are linked to dominant forms of masculinity and authority. This, they said, had obvious discriminatory implications for women's appointments to promotion posts.

Lara says:

*I think the mind-set needs to be changed. They (Governing Bodies) still see a man being the leader and should be in control so you have trouble convincing them that you are the right person for the job.*

A compounding problem seemed to be the lack of training of selection committees. Boniswa succinctly puts it:

*I think too much is expected from the governing bodies without due training.*

Devi supports this view when she says:

*What they need to do is to train the governing bodies.*

#### **5.3.6.5 Breaking the glass ceiling**

The research participants suggested various strategies to improve the under-representation of women in key leadership positions. They recommended that the Department of Education and Culture provide training courses to the selection committees.

Devi suggests:

*You have to understand that the board of governors ...I believe strongly that some of the terminology is not understood and it is not well explained. Should it be well explained ...should all these factors come about with regards to imbalance and the fact that women can do it, they have great potential and let's give them a chance.* Devi is advocating that governing bodies be exposed to workshops so that they become au fait with interpretation of the promotion document, management styles of women and the effects of sex-role stereotyping.

A further recommendation is the compilation of a database of women managers so as to track progress.

She stipulates:

*...they need to look into some kind of avenue where they do constructive appraisal...looking at each area where the imbalances are and do a motivation.*

The value of workshops for governing bodies and other role-players was stressed. Devi suggests:

*...have many workshops with the governors, women in management, even male principals need to encourage women.*

Lara declares that the governing bodies need to be gender sensitive since they are the implementers of equity policies at school level.

She answers:

*Governing Bodies choose appointees so how much real influence does the Department of Education have on an appointment at school. I think very little. It still comes down to the governing bodies and how gender sensitive the governing bodies and principals is and that is going to impact on who actually gets appointed.*

These research findings are consistent with studies conducted internationally. Grogan (1999) and Skrla et al. (2000) state that although it is important to encourage and support women's decision to enter the field of administration, few changes will be made in their representation in actual positions unless we address entrenched biases. Individuals involved in hiring new administrators should receive training on issues of gender and discrimination (Skrla et al. 2000). Hudson (1988) advocates the application of pressure on school boards to use equitable hiring practices.

#### **5.3.6.6 Grooming women for leadership positions**

The participants remarked that women themselves have a significant role to play to address the 'gendered' crisis in education. Women must undergo training courses and attend workshops where they are encouraged to apply for leadership positions. Boniswa says:

*I usually have meetings and encourage them and sometimes I invite people from the outside to come and address them and I encourage*

*them to attend as many workshops as possible to groom and develop themselves for the job that they do.*

To this end, the words of Mbowane (2001:18) are educative when she enquires “were these women given the support, training and exposure they needed to do their respective jobs accordingly.” The real answer according to Tsoka (1999:70) is that “there is presently no institution that caters for the leadership skills women actually need to become successful leaders.”

#### **5.3.6.7 Conclusion**

The research participants highlighted the devastating effects of apartheid on both their personal and professional lives. They commented that although gender equity policies are put in place, it has failed to reach grass roots levels of schools, as the efforts of the government were not synergised with those of the gatekeepers of the schools. Selection committees still see leadership in the traditional, autocratic sense and are adverse to promoting women generally. To compound matters selection committees lack training and skill. Various strategies such as work-shopping selection committees on management styles of women and the negative effects of sex-role stereotyping were suggested.

#### **5.4 SYNTHESIS OF RECURRENT ISSUES ARISING FROM THE DATA**

This exploratory study was successful in identifying possible reasons for gender imbalances from the viewpoint of fifty seven women managers. The

women provided insights into the influences that affected their career paths. To comprehensively analyse these perceptions the quantitative and qualitative data was used to interpret the reasons for gender imbalances in positions of leadership at schools.

The forces behind the complex issue of the under-representation of women managers in educational administration are summarised as follows:

- Women hold the necessary academic and management credentials but are nevertheless discriminated against when it comes to being awarded promotion posts.
- A large number of women indicated that there was no point in studying further as higher qualifications do not necessarily translate to upward career mobility.
- Women managers are positioned at lower levels of management. There appears to be a gross under-representation of women at middle and senior management levels.
- Women managers regard themselves as dynamic and independent in their professional lives. Gender role socialisation can no longer be perceived to be an intrinsic promotional barrier.
- Women's motivation and professional aspirations are not only linked to promotion but also to other factors such as achievement of learners.
- Women are taking note of their own self-worth but they also acknowledge the value of mentoring and support as being crucial to their development as managers.
- Women no longer accept that men have 'natural' managerial talents and do not believe that men's careers should be advanced because of gender.
- Women have to cope with the conflict between the traditional roles of wife and mother and a career role.
- Men's dominance and hegemony in key positions in society is still prevalent.
- Most women felt that school managers are becoming more enlightened about equal opportunity initiatives.

- The general opinion of women was that school selection committees are not knowledgeable about gender equity initiatives.
- The composition of school selection committees is largely males; therefore selection often takes place according to stereotyped gender role criteria.
- Women are seen as 'soft' managers who are unable to deal with complex issues such as learner indiscipline; however women see the participatory management style as been relevant to effective educational management.
- Women are of the firm opinion that the formulation of equity laws and policies be accompanied by implementation procedures and continuous monitoring.
- Women are opposed to be awarded token posts. They favour promotion which is based on skill and expertise.
- For many women culture and tradition are constructs through which they came to acquire notions of gender domination and racial exploitation.
- Women acknowledged that they themselves need to play a significant role in addressing the 'gendered' crisis.

## **5.5. CONCLUSION**

Data reveals that there are many reasons that contribute to the under-representation of women in management posts in schools. The 'glass ceilings' that emerged were determined not only by institutional and organisational hegemonies, but also by specific cultural values, and socio-economic and political factors. It is only when we look closely at the inter-relation of all these factors that we gain some understanding of the hurdles along women's career paths en route to educational leadership.

# **CHAPTER 6**

## **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND A CALL FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **6.1 INTRODUCTION**

The objective of this research focused on clarifying the position of women managers in schools in Ward 142 of the Ethekeweni Region of KwaZulu Natal with specific reference to the low proportion of women in educational management. The literature review informed decisions regarding the direction of the research. Quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques were used to enable an analysis of the position of women in leadership positions at schools. In the analysis of the findings a number of questions arose that related to the experience, attitudes and perceptions of women. These were addressed using in-depth discussions with women managers as well as by utilising the survey technique. This chapter draws together the conclusions arising from the study, sets out recommendations for change as well as directions for further research.

### **6.2 CONCLUSIONS**

Emerging from the literature review and findings of this research, it may be concluded that although women constitute a larger work corps in the teaching fraternity, they are extremely under-represented in management positions both nationally and globally. Data collected for this study reveals that women are situated at lower management levels, but are grossly under-represented at middle and higher management positions.

In order to level the playing fields a greater number of women managers should be offered senior management positions. The respondents felt that this would not only heed the call for gender and social justice but would allow for women in senior positions to act as role-models and mentors for other women who are aspiring for promotion.

The barriers experienced by the women managers were determined not only by institutional and organisational hegemonies but also by specific cultural beliefs and values and by socio-economic and political factors.

It was felt that effecting institutional changes requires an understanding of the intersection between personal, institutional and societal change to sustain efforts towards transformation. Institutions will have to reflect on their own gendered landscape and envision a non-gendered institution in relation to structure, and organisational culture work relationships. Internal transformation efforts have to be synergised with broader macro policies in order to create an environment that will support and nurture gender justice goals.

As educators women should seize every opportunity of leaving behind the gender discrimination which is prevalent in most educational institutions and commit themselves to becoming equal partners in the development of the culture of learning and teaching in South Africa. It is therefore paramount that socialised stereotyping of traditional gender roles and the associated attitudes of both males and females be eradicated and be replaced with a new

philosophy pertaining to the universality of mankind where both men and women are valued for their unique contributions in education.

### **6.3 A WAY FORWARD: PRESENTED AS RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following essential suggestions are being put forth as workable solutions to resolve the gendered crisis in education.

#### **6.3.1 Collection of Data**

This research has highlighted the lack of adequate data on the position of women in educational management. The first set of recommendations therefore relates to the area of compilation of a data base. Policies designed to address gender imbalances cannot be evaluated unless there is a system in place that tracks and monitors changes in schools. It is recommended that:

- ✓ The Department of Education and Culture collect, analyse and publish records of applications and appointments by the type of post, type of school and gender.
- ✓ Schools conduct an annual gender equality audit in relation to their staff composition. Such records should be submitted for analysis on a regional and national level.

#### **6.3.2 Planning for Equality**

In an attempt to address the current gender imbalance it is essential that structured interventions in the form of in-service training are provided at different levels with the view to effecting attitudinal change in a number of critical areas. It is recommended that:

- ✓ Training courses be made available to women. The aims would be to:
  - **Encourage women to apply for leadership positions.**

- **Provide a supportive environment for them to discuss options for growth.**
  - **Provide a forum in which alternative styles of management can be discussed and analysed.**
  - **Establish a system of networking with other managers.**
  - **Women be consulted in all programmes that are designed to help empower them.**
  - **Part time empowerment courses be offered to working women.**
  - **Develop close relationships with organised teaching profession, national women's organisations, teacher unions, organised student bodies and the gender machinery within the government to pursue the aims of establishing gender equity.**
- ✓ The Department of Education and Culture draw up guidelines on the composition and operation of selection committees and monitor the same.
  - ✓ Training courses be provided for prospective members of school selection committees. These courses should include:
    - **Discussion on alternative styles of management.**
    - **The effects of sex-role stereotyping on attitudes, assumptions and value judgements.**
    - **The contribution of women to the education sector.**
  - ✓ The issue of gender imbalance and in management and career development be incorporated into all pre-service educator training.

### **6.3.3 Building Partnerships**

It is essential to build partnerships with like-minded organisations and gender machinery within the government. It is recommended that:

- ✓ Work with community based organizations be encouraged to contribute to a strong, active civil voice.

- ✓ The framework and strategies of Women in Development (WID) and Gender and Development (GAD) be used to promote the cause of women in management.
- ✓ Strategic planning that will define the gender change route within the institutions, be instituted.
- ✓ Gendered institutional dialogue be created.
- ✓ Organisational procedures to guide implementation of equity policies, be developed.
- ✓ A new kind of leadership which is transformative, be modelled.
- ✓ Strategic management teams to track the process for sustained transformation, be incorporated.
- ✓ Skilled teams, trained to be effective in implementing gender goals be developed.
- ✓ A rationale that demonstrates the value of gender competence to all stakeholders be articulated.
- ✓ Change management system for relevant stakeholders be developed.

These recommendations, if put into effect, will succeed in redressing the gender imbalance in educational management.

#### **6.4 CALL FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

It is evident from the study of gender in educational management that serious gender inequities do exist in South Africa and there is a need for further research on women in educational management. Research becomes crucial to monitor whether the government's commitment toward equity and equality has manifested itself in any significant way. It is important to ascertain whether the equity policies and strategies harnessed by the national machinery have translated to greater number of women in educational management and more especially in senior management positions.

This exploratory study brought to light the gross under-representation of women in leadership positions in schools and was studied from various perspectives; however it was by no means an exhaustive one. The gendered framework which continues to position women as outsiders in organisations, the multiple obstacles, resistances and expectations facing women in management require further examination.

## **6.5 CLOSING REMARKS**

This research is an exploratory study in that it delved into an area that has been poorly researched in the South African context. It focuses on the gender imbalances that exist in management structures at schools. The rationale behind this study was to reflect upon and critically evaluate the reasons for the under-representation of women in management positions at schools. This study therefore has relevance for all stakeholders in education namely educators, policy makers, policy implementers, school governing boards and the Department of Education and Culture. It calls for positive interventions to address the gendered crisis.

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## **Appendix A**

### ***INTERVIEW SCHEDULE***

*DEAR RESPONDENT*

- *Everything is confidential.*
- *The report will preserve your anonymity.*
- *Your answers can be as long or as short as you like.*
- *At a post-interview session you will be given an opportunity to review your responses, to make deletions or inclusions.*

#### **A. BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS**

Describe your childhood in terms of place of birth, parents, siblings, schools, attended, and how these experiences have shaped who you are today.

#### **B. PROFESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS**

1. Which educational institution/s did you attend?
2. What academic and professional qualifications do you possess?

#### **C. MARITAL STATUS**

1. Are you married?
2. Do you have children? How many, and what are their ages?

#### **D. EDUCATIONAL INFORMATION**

1. What motivated you to become an educator?
2. How would you describe your career pattern to date? Was it drift or luck or well planned?
3. Relate some pleasant experiences with regard to your teaching career.
4. How long did it take you to receive your first and subsequent promotions? What do you think is the reason for this?
5. Have there been obstacles to your career advancement? If yes, could you describe them?
6. How did you feel when these obstacles were placed on your path?
7. What strategies did you employ to overcome these barriers?
8. What are some of the challenges facing women in leadership positions?
9. In what areas do women managers need improvement?
10. What are some of the leadership styles that you have adopted to face these challenges?

### **E. SUPPORT/ MENTORING**

1. Did your parents treat your career aspirations any different from that of your siblings?
2. Do you receive adequate support from your spouse? How do you compare your career aspirations with that of your spouse's?
3. Do you think that having children and being a caregiver has blocked women's career advancement?
4. Do you have any mentors/sponsors? If so, then describe the nature of these mentorship's/sponsorships.

### **E. GENDER EQUITY**

1. Do you think that the Department of Education and Culture views gender equity as a serious issue? Explain.
2. What are your views about gender imbalance in management structures of schools?
3. How do you think the playing fields in respect of gender imbalance could be levelled?

## Appendix B

### RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE ON WOMEN IN MANAGEMENT

Dear Respondent

Although the Constitution of South Africa guarantees gender equity, there appears to be a serious disjuncture between policy and practice. This study focuses on the possible reasons for gender imbalance in positions of leadership in schools. The information gathered from this study will be used to make recommendations for addressing gender inequity in education, and for informing further research.

Your participation in this study will be most sincerely appreciated.

#### A. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

##### *Instruction*

- *Circle ONE response to each question unless otherwise indicated.*

#### A1. PERSONAL DETAILS

##### 1. Age in years

25 and under	1
26-34	2
35-44	3
45-54	4
55-59	5
60 and over	6

##### 2. Population Group

African	1
Indian	2
Coloured	3
White	4
Other. Specify.....	5

##### 3. Marital Status

Single ( never married)	1
Divorced/separated	2
Widowed	3
Married. Living with partner	4
Other. Specify.....	5

4. Do you have any children?

Yes	1
No	2

4.1 If yes, then complete the following table.

	5ys&under	6-12	13-18	over18
No. of children				

5. No of dependants

None	1
1-2	2
3-4	3
5-6	4
More than 6	5

6. Qualifications

6.1 Academic (e.g. Matric, B.A).....

6.2 Professional (e.g. H.ED, B.ED).....

7. Current Studies

7.1 Are you presently studying?

Yes	1
No	2

7.2 If yes, what degree or diploma are you registered for?.....

7.3 If no, state briefly what your reasons are for not wanting to study.....

.....

.....

**A2.EMPLOYMENT HISTORY/ HISTORY OF SCHOOL.**

1. How many years are you teaching for?

0-5	1
6-10	2
11-15	3
16-20	4
more than 20	5

2. What is your relative education qualification valuation (REQV)?

13	1
14	2
15	3
16	4
17	5

3. What promotion post are you holding?

H. O.D	1
D.P	2
Principal	3

4. How many H.O.Ds, D.Ps and Principals, in terms of gender are there in your school?

No. of males .....  
 No. of females .....

**B. OPINION SURVEY**

Use the key below to complete the grid for Question 1. Please place a cross (x) in the appropriate box.

Strongly Agree	1
Agree	2
Disagree	3
Strongly Disagree	4
Unsure	5

**STATEMENT**

- |   |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| <p>1. Most female educators regard themselves as dynamic and independent in their professional lives.</p>               | <table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1   | 2  | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| <p>2. Most female educators experience self confidence as professional educators.</p>                                   | <table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1   | 2  | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| <p>3. Female educators are reluctant to apply for promotion because of lack of motivation.</p>                          | <table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1   | 2  | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| <p>4. A lack of women in sponsor, mentor and role model positions is a barrier for women aspiring toward promotion.</p> | <table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1   | 2  | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| <p>5. Female educators believe that femininity is not in keeping with typical requirements of a manager.</p>            | <table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1   | 2  | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| <p>6. Both men and women define their roles in education by means of gender.</p>  | <table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1   | 2  | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| <p>7. Women educators should change their attitudes in order to be promoted.</p>  | <table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1   | 2  | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |
| <p>8. The majority of men educators practice subtle forms of</p>  | <table border="1" style="display: inline-table;"> <tr> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1   | 2  | 3 | 4 | 5 |   |   |

discrimination against women educators.

9. Female educators find it convenient that men take charge of professional situations.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

10. Women educators often find that they have to perform tasks within the confines of their gender.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

11. Women aspiring towards promotion have to cope with conflict between traditional role of wife and mother and career role.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

12. Traditional patriarchal views which pervades education makes it difficult for women to get promotion.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

13. School managers show commitment towards providing equal opportunities for women.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

14. School Selection Committees are not knowledgeable about gender equity initiatives.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

15. The composition of School Selection Committees is largely males and this disadvantages women with regard to promotion.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

16. Very often women are overlooked for promotion because School Selection Committees believe that they are unable to deal with complex management issues such as learner indiscipline.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

17. The State should make promotion posts more accessible to women by ensuring the implementation of gender equity laws and policies.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

18. Women educators believe that promotion should be based on skill and expertise and not as a result of tokenism.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

19. Women educators have received adequate training to become skilled in management tasks.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

20. Many women educators have contemplated leaving the teaching profession because of a lack of career advancement.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

## Appendix C

FOR ATTENTION: V.I.NGIDI  
Fax: 031 3374261

18 Challen Avenue  
Northcroft  
Phoenix  
4068

Reference: Mrs. S. Nandraj  
Telephone: (031) 5079387  
Cell : 0834192669  
Telefax : (031) 5395733

5 August 2003

Sir

### MASTER OF EDUCATION STUDIES

I am presently researching the topic: Gender Imbalances in Positions of Leadership in Schools.

In order to conclude this project successfully, I need to study a selection of women educators employed at Wards 142/143 Phoenix North schools. I hereby apply for permission to access the above target area.

In support of my application, I wish to supply the following information:

1. I have registered this topic at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (photocopy of letter attached).
2. Gender and Education has been under-researched in KZN, and in South Africa as a whole.
3. The data will be gathered in the form of questionnaires and interviews. I hereby undertake to collect the data strictly outside instruction time.
4. I am presently serving as an educator with the KZN Department of Education and Culture. My Persal Number is 10964428.

I would greatly appreciate it if your office would grant me permission to conduct my research.

Sincerely

.....  
S. Nandraj (Mrs)

## Appendix D

Consent Form: Possible Reasons for Gender Imbalances in Positions of Leadership at Schools.

Researcher:	S. Nandraj School of Educational Studies University of KwaZulu-Natal
Supervisor:	Dr. S. Singh University of KwaZulu-Natal
Purpose:	To explore possible reasons for gender imbalances in positions of leadership at schools

I understand that:

- Participation in this study is voluntary.
- I may withdraw from this study at any time.
- I may refuse to answer any of the questions.
- There will be a maximum of two interviews.
- The interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed for purposes of analysis.
- Confidentiality will be guaranteed.

I consent to participate in this study.

-----  
Signature

-----  
Date



## APPENDIX E

eTHEKWIINI REGION

ISIFUNDA SASETHEKWIINI

eTHEKWIINI STREEK

Address:	Turo House 17 Victoria Embankment Eastgate	Private Bag: Iqilwama Depot Private Bag	Private Bag K34323 Durban 4000	Telephone: United: Telephone: Fax:	(031) 360-8911   (031) 337-4261
Signature:	V.J. NGIDI	Reference:		Date:	18/05/03
Initials:		Initials:		Umsuzo:	
Stamp:		Version:		Date:	

## APPENDIX E

**Mrs S. Nandraj**  
**Govind Secondary School**

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN WARD 141 AND 142

1. The above subject bears reference.
2. Permission to conduct research in the above wards of the Department of Education and Culture, KZN, is granted.
3. You are advised however, to make necessary arrangements with affected schools to ensure that daily programs proceed uninterrupted.
4. Wishing you all the success in your endeavours.

  
 REGIONAL SENIOR MANAGER

18/05/2003  
 DATE