Phenomenological study of the lived experiences of women primary school principals in Umgungundlovu District

By

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DECLARATION

I, Pinkie E. Mthembu hereby declare that this dissertation is my own and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

Signed _____

ABSTRACT

This study explored the lived experiences of a selected group of women principals in Umgungundlovu district. In South Africa women constitute the majority of the teaching force and yet school principals are predominantly men. Literature showed a number of barriers that prevent women from being in leadership positions. These barriers included social-cultural factors, societal expectations as well as women's perceptions of themselves potentially being in positions of leadership. An attempt was made to investigate how women principals' lived experiences could shed light on the reasons for their under-representation in positions of educational leadership.

A qualitative phenomenological study was used to generate data guided by two research questions. The data was collected from three women school principals in the Umgungundlovu district and they were interviewed in their natural settings in this case, their schools.

The findings of the study revealed that women principals encounter many challenges as they begin their careers as principals as a consequence of resistance from the staff, as well as in their efforts to balance their home and work lives. In order to cope with these demands, the women had to network to make sure they have a support system; collaborating with both staff and learners also assisted in meeting the requirements of their positions. In leading their schools they utilised a caring approach to the staff and the needs of the learners. Their major achievement was being able to work as team. In understanding the lived experiences of these women primary school principals of the UMgungundlovu District, six themes emerged. These themes are: first experiences as initially challenging; work and home conflicting demands; networking as a way of dealing with challenges; the need for spirituality as a way of coping with these challenges; mothering and collaboration as a way of leading.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Overview of the study

This chapter provides an overview of the study and briefly discusses the background of the research. The chapter discusses the background of the study; the problem statement; purpose of the study; research questions; significance of the study; the summary of methodology; ethical measures; and definitions of terms; limitations and assumptions; provides a summary and describes the organization of the study. This study explored the women primary school principals' lived experiences in relation to gender and leadership. It illustrates and provides an understanding of the experiences of these emerging woman primary school principals. They have described their day-to-day experiences as they lead their schools and the challenges they face as well as their achievements.

Background of the study

The majority of the teaching force in South Africa consists of women at this time and despite this, most principals are men. According to statistics concerning gender, 58 per cent of principals in KwaZulu-Natal are male and 42 per cent are female (Kwazulu-Natal Department of Education, 2012); however, the female teaching force makes up 70 per cent and the remaining 30 per cent are men. Even though there are slight changes taking place as women are gradually being appointed as principals, there are still many challenges due to the stereotypical thinking which still exists that regards men as being better principals than women. In her address at the networking seminar for women principals on the 23 August 2013, the Minister of Education, Angie Motshega also indicated that in South Africa at present, female teachers overwhelmingly dominate the teaching community while in positions of principalship the majority are men. She then raised the concern that the number of women in principal positions is proportionately very low compared to male principals. Illustrating this, she asserted recent statistics indicate that there are 257 633 female teachers (68.3 percent) and 119 579 male teachers (31.7 per cent) in public schools in

the country. Yet, current statistics reveal that there are only 8 210 female principals and 14 337 male principals appointed in permanent posts. Female principals represent only 36.4 per cent of all principals in the country while 63.6 per cent are male.

Literature on women in leadership indicates that women are still faced with obstacles as they access leadership positions. These barriers includes gender stereotyping, i.e. the "consensual beliefs about character traits that describe men and women" (Weyer, 2007, p. 486); hence create barriers for women in the development of their careers (Coleman, 2002). To comply with these stereotypes, women are expected to be "caring, tolerant, intuitive, and gentle" (Coleman, 2005, p. 12). Coleman (2002) also argues that stereotypes of women can be traced to the deep-rooted, patriarchal prejudices of that society. Eagly & Carli (2007) examined the complexities of women leadership from the perspective of situational theorists. They argue "features such as societal values, the culture of the organization, the nature of the task and the characteristics of the followers determine the context of the situation and therefore the appropriateness of particular types of leaders" (Coleman, 2002, p. 2).

Mothering, as another stereotypical characteristic of women, has often been discussed within a dominant ideology that focuses on the nurturing and protective practices of mothers (Lumby, 2013). In a study which examined the theories of prejudice towards women, (Eagly & Karau 2002) found that women emerge less often than men as leaders because women have to meet a higher standard than men in order to be considered highly competent. Competence includes being able to meet the varied requirements of the position as well as the number of hours that the individual is willing to devote to their work. In a South African study, Moorosi (2010) states that even though there are policies that should address stereotypes and the subtle practices of discrimination suffered by women in the work place, there is still no change. Findings from her study show evidence that women face discrimination at the level of preparation, access into principalship as well as after employment as principals and these barriers continue to negatively affect their performance in management (Ely & Meyerson, 2000).

Statement of the Problem

Despite research being undertaken for at least the past two decades on women and leadership, women leaders in education still face challenges when they access these positions. Even once they have been appointed they may still be challenge by being treated differently from their male counterparts. It would appear that there is a lack of knowledge regarding this phenomenon. This resonates with Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011) who asserted that in the body of research only five per cent of the published articles mentioned either gender or race. They also cited Brown & Irby (2005) who found that only nine per cent of dissertations focused on women and educational leadership. This is because female leadership roles in the educational sector have received limited attention compared with their male counterparts (Oplatka, 2006). Consequently the need for the reality of the women principals' lived experiences requires more exploration and this study examines this subject in detail.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experiences of women principals who have provided the researcher with descriptions of their work lives including their resilience as they encounter the obstacles that they confront in these positions. It also explores the coping strategies that these women employed in relation to the demands of being a principal. This research has used a process of in-depth interviews and the reasoning was that women principals' real experiences might assist in illuminating why women are underrepresented in positions of educational leadership. Barriers to leadership opportunities for women and their coping strategies were examined to assist in an explanation for the minority of women in roles of principalship in the Umgungundlovu District.

Significance of the study

This study contributes to the existing knowledge in literature and will assist the Department of Education's (DOE) vision which is to address the imbalances in these leadership positions in relation to gender. This research employed the phenomenological approach with the idea that it would reveal another method of understanding the reasons why there are still gender imbalances, regardless of the attempts the government and DOE have made in addressing this and would assist

policy makers in reviewing the related policies. The other contribution would be that with more women in leadership positions with their characteristics, such as being nurturing and using a collaborative approach, could also bring about improvement in schools. One of the key aims in studying female principals was to contribute to this seldom explored area in research literature on female educational leadership.

Research Questions

The first research question explored the emerging leadership roles among women primary school principals by urging them to tell their stories in their own words. The second question explored the strategies that women employ in their roles as principals; these are as follows:

- What are the leadership experiences of women primary school principals in leading their schools in UMgungundlovu District in relation to gender?
- How do women principals cope with the demands that accompany the position of principalship?

Research questions allowed the participants, women principals, to describe their lived experiences regarding leadership duties, preparation, motivation, obstacles and achievements in the fulfilment of the essence of the study.

Summary of methodology

This section will give a brief outline of the suitability of the design method, how goals will be accomplished, the site of the study, the sample of participants, data collection methods, data analysis, and procedure utilised to ensure reliability. The methodology will be discussed in detail in chapter 3. Qualitative phenomenological research was chose as being more appropriate than quantitative research for the purpose of this study and used to focus on the lived experiences of women principals who told their personal stories in one-on-one interview sessions guided by a set of questions that were administered by the researcher. According to Creswell (2007) the phenomenological approach is most useful for research questions that focus on the description of participants' experiences of a common phenomenon. These women principals brought into focus their own experiences and perceptions which challenged structural or normative assumptions (Lester, 1999).

This study adopted purposive sampling where the selection of the sample was based on personal knowledge and expertise about the population. The participants for this study were women primary school principals who had experienced formal leadership roles as principals in the Umgungundlovu District. Because experience was a necessary factor for this study, three years or more experience in principalship was required. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. All interviews were tape recorded and each lasted approximately 90minutes. Notes were also taken to capture information in case the tape recorder malfunctioned and to reflect cues which the tape recorder cannot reveal, such as facial expressions.

Data analysis followed systematic procedures that moved from the narrow units of analysis on to broader units and further to detailed descriptions that summarised the two elements: what the individuals have experienced and how they experience it (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenology ended with a descriptive passage that discusses the basic understanding of these individual's experiences. The location of the target site for the current study was in Pietermaritzburg and three schools in Umgungundlovu District were involved, one from an urban area and the other two from the townships. Participants were professionals who are middle class females working as principals and the interviews took place in their schools. In order to address validity and trustworthiness, certain measures were taken; qualitative validity was determined through the use of strategies to check the accuracy of the findings. Trustworthiness was determined by credibility, transferability, dependability member checking and audit trail (Creswell, 2007).

Ethical procedures

The researcher first explained the purpose of the study and methods to be used. Confidentiality was also emphasized to protect the participants and pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants and the schools. Each participant was given an informed consent form for signature and the researcher explained the process in detail as well as any area that might affect the participants and requested permission to record the interviews. Participants were told that their involvement was voluntary and that they might withdraw at any time during the study. The researcher

also provided the supervisor's contact details to the participants. The information will be kept for five years.

Limitations of the research

Interviews, which are the only data collection technique used, limited the study three women primary school principals. Hence the phenomenological findings are restricted to the experiences of the individuals employed in the study who were women principals in Umgungundlovu District in 2013. Thus the ability to generalize the findings to other principals in other areas was narrow. This is because the findings of this study may differ in other contexts and to address this, literature was used to justify the data and this enabled rich thick descriptions of the phenomenon to be produced. The focus of this study was on women primary principals, thus the results of this study could not be generalized to women in other educational leadership positions such as deputy principals, or head of departments (HODs). The researcher believed that the responses of the women principals' concerning their lived experiences would be honest in the phenomenological interviews. This could be ensured because the researcher would explain how anonymity and confidentiality will be maintained and that the participation is voluntary and they may withdraw from the study at any time.

Assumptions

The main reason for choosing this topic was the personal interest of the researcher who is a middle aged South African female employed as a deputy principal for eight years. She has been exposed to gender biases and prejudices from outsiders, teachers and colleagues. Regardless of that she has continuously built on her knowledge and skills to demonstrate that women are capable and can perform as well and sometimes better than their male counterparts. My experience and my empathy with other women have inspired me to do this study. Before I began the study, I had assumptions about the phenomenon. The assumption that I had was that women principals believe that to be a leader they need to behave as men do for them to gain respect from teachers. I believed that women role as mothers, impact negatively on their roles as leaders.

Definition of key terms

The following definitions are provided to ensure uniformity and understanding of these terms throughout the study. The researcher developed all definitions not accompanied by a citation.

*Primary school principal*s: Primary school principals are leading primary schools within grade R to 7th grade.

Leadership: For purposes of this study, leadership can be defined according to Northouse (2010, p. 3) who defines leadership as "a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal". Northouse base this definition on the notion that leadership components are, namely, leadership is a process, it involves influence, occurs in groups and last but not least involves common goals. Hence in this study it is the educational purpose of guiding and directing teaching and learning to improve educational outcomes (Bush, 2003).

Women leaders: The term woman leaders, women principals, female principals, female leaders, and woman managers is used interchangeably for the context of this study.

Gender: Gender was used according to Shakeshaft (1993, p. 52) definition, who assert that it 'is socially constructed and describes the characteristics that we ascribe to people because of their sex, the ways we believe they behave or the characteristics we believe they have based upon our cultural expectations of what is male and what is female'.

Lived experiences: Lived experiences are the everyday experiences of a person in the discharge of his/her primary functions which the person reflects on, perceives, feels, endures or enjoys as the case may be. This term is used in phenomenological studies and it emphasizes the importance of individual experiences as conscious human beings (Moustakas, 1994).

Summary

Based on preliminary literature review, studies which have taken place concerning women and leadership indicate that women are still underrepresented in the higher

positions, e.g. principalship. It is also apparent that the presence of women as leaders in schools and other educational institutions are important, especially with regard to all the changes that are taking place globally. Some studies attempt to explain the barriers that women face in trying to enter educational leadership as being due to policies, family roles and the perceptions people have about women. Other studies focus on administrative factors such as the workload or that personal factors also contribute towards underrepresentation of women, e.g. lack of confidence and lack of self-esteem. Most studies involved institutions of higher learning and secondary schools. Female primary school principals have not received much attention or research regarding the realities, hence the need for this study. The next chapter discusses the literature review on women leadership based on local and international literature.

Organization of the Study

Chapter one introduced the study with a brief glimpse into the background, which summed up the motivation for the study. It also indicated the research question, aims and objectives, theoretical framework, ethical measures, the organization of the study and a brief summary.

Chapter two comprised of a literature review and involved an in-depth study of current literature on women and leadership.

Chapter three presented a detailed account of the research design. It included the methods and procedures used in sampling, the collection of data, and an analysis of the data that was collected.

Chapter four presented the findings of the study as it emerged in the data.

Chapter five presented a discussion of findings in relation to the literature studied, conclusions, recommendations, and areas for further research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter focuses on a review of the literature related to women and leadership positions. This study seeks to focus on the actual experiences and perceptions of a selected group of women principals. This investigates how women principals' real experience may clarify the reasons for their underrepresentation in positions of educational leadership. Key barriers are highlighted as well as the constraints faced by these women as educational leaders. These include: the glass ceiling; the glass cliff versus glass escalator, gender and women leadership; gender stereotypes; comparisons of women and leadership and leadership. This study was based on international and South African literature. The thematic review of the literature of the core themes presented in the literature was discussed. Themes included: women and leadership, women and leadership styles, the barriers that they face in their positions. Such barriers include social-cultural factors, societal expectations as well as women's perceptions of themselves in relation to leadership positions. An overview of these key barriers aims to facilitate an understanding of the complexities involved in terms of gender and leadership, as well as information about the differences in levels of participation in leadership between males and females.

Women and educational leadership

The principals' leadership establishes the "tone of the schools, the climate for learning, the level of professionalism and morale of teachers and the degree of concern for what students may become" (Agezo, 2010, p. 701). "This can be created by setting realistic goals that are attainable, in consultation with the subordinates, by linking the achievement with the satisfaction of their needs" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 2). From the perspective of situational theorists in exploring the complexities of female leadership, it is argued that "features such as societal values, the culture of the organization, the nature of the task, and the characteristics of the followers determine the context of the situation and therefore the appropriateness of particular types of

leaders" (Eagly, 2007, p. 2). In a study which examined theories of prejudice toward women, Eagly & Karau cited in Eagly & Carli (2007) found that women emerge less frequently than men as leaders mainly because women must meet a higher standard than men in order to be considered highly competent. Greyvenstein (2000, p. 30) asserts that there is an opinion concerning a gender-related paradox which exists within the education profession that "women teach and men manage in the schools". This resonates with the empirical study by Coleman (2003) which found that mainstream leadership is considered to be male, because men are seen as the norm in these positions while women are seen outside the norm. As a result women believe male traits to be necessary in order to prove themselves as leaders (Coleman, 2003).

Institutions have adapted to the stipulations of the constitution and the gap between men and women leaders is decreasing, but thinking still "reflects the local social construction of gender roles" (Diko, 2007, p. 115). Even when women are well-qualified, the majority of males in leadership positions have resulted in a belief system where male behaviours are perceived as the norm. Consequently women often find it difficult to be accepted by their male counterparts (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012).The study by Diko (2007, p. 106) concludes that: "[g]ender equity in South African education remains elusive. Fewer women than men hold top administrative positions in education, many female administrators fill positions still considered feminine, and women in positions still considered masculine are being pushed out". According to Weyer (2007), the debate about gender and leadership calls for further research if a conclusion is to be reached. Research on female leadership styles tends to conclude that 'women are better educational leaders' than men (Coleman, 2003, p. 41). This claim is justified in terms of women's relationships, teaching, learning, and community building (Shakeshaft, 1993). However this is not reflected by the representation of women in educational leadership.

Women leadership styles' impact on educational leadership

Leadership style is understood to be the "leaders' characteristic ways of behaving that have a consistent meaning or function" (Eagly & Carli, 2007, p. 119) and is viewed as a composite of "relatively stable patterns of behaviour that are manifested by leaders" (Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001, p. 781). As the number of women in the

workforce and in leadership roles increases it is vital that there are discussions around gender and leadership (Belasen & Frank, 2012). Hence debates about the leadership styles of women and men have received more attention because of new research which attempts to identify the styles that are especially adapted to current organizational conditions (Eagly & Carli, 2007). This emphasis on leadership suggests that it is future-oriented rather than present-oriented and strengthens organizations by inspiring their followers' commitment and creativity (Eagly, 2007). Literature on women and leadership often seeks to identify the unique attributes that may distinguish between the styles of men and women in performing leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Van Engen, 2003). In ascertaining these attributes, Blackmore (2002, p. 60) states that "feminist research on women in leadership provides evidence that women managers are more caring, collaborative, communicative, consultative, communitarian, consensus orientated and student and curriculum focused". Consequently female leaders symbolise a new type of leadership "that connotes greater effectiveness and synergy' compared to the leadership of the past" (Agezo, 2010, p. 701).

The new concept of effective leaders, for example, transformational leadership emphasises the empowerment of employees and has broadened the opportunities for women to be appointed as leaders (Avolio & Bass, in Gaus, 2011). This is because some of the elements of transformational leadership, especially the mentoring and empowering of subordinates, appears to be aligned more with the feminine than the masculine gender role; findings suggest that transformational leadership is "in general androgynous or even slightly feminine" (Koenig, et al. 2011 p. 637). The perception that women tend to use transformational styles of leadership more frequently than men was confirmed in a meta-analytic review by Eagly, et al. (2003) of 45 separate studies. This meta-analysis found that women leaders were more transformational and also engaged in more of the contingent reward behaviour than male leaders who exhibited active passive management by exception and laissez-faire leadership. Subsequently, Eagly & Carli (2007) observed that while leadership roles promote similarities in male and female leaders, women generally have a more democratic, participative and collaborative style of leading.

A number of studies suggest that women and men share more similarities than differences, both in cognitive functioning and personality traits (Eagly, et al., 2003) However, traits like emotional intelligence, empathy and compassion are more prevalent in women (Eagly & Carli, 2007).The research carried out by Applebum, Audet & Miller (2003, p. 43) addressed following three questions: "Are women's leadership styles truly different from men's? Are these styles less likely to be effective? Is the determination of women's effectiveness as leaders a fact-based or a perception that has become a reality?" Their research revealed the following:

> …yes, women's leadership style is, at this point, different from men's but men can learn from and adopt women's style and use it effectively as well... [W]omen's styles are not at all likely to be less effective; in fact, they are more effective within the context of team-based, consensually driven organizational structures that are more prevalent in today's world… The assessment that a woman's leadership style is less effective than a man's is not fact- based but rather driven, by socialisation, to perception that certainly persists (Applebum et al., 2003, p. 43).

Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011) present the most recent literature about women's leadership style. This literature suggests that some leadership characteristics are primarily behaviours which are associated with women and may include, but are not limited to, communication, relationships, shared decision-making and building capacity in others. They report that there are five approaches that characterise women's educational leadership, these include: "relational leadership, leadership for social justice, leadership for learning, spiritual leadership and balanced leadership" (Grogan & Shakeshaft, p. 6). Relational leadership refers to being in association with others in a horizontal rather than a hierarchical sense (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). They assert that power is conceptualised as being something that is not power over but power with, and is relevant to women's notions of power. They also cite Sergiovanni's moral leadership, Sergiovanni's servant leadership, Covey's and Sergiovanni's value-added leadership, and Brown & Irby's synergistic leadership theory. Spiritual leadership is another way women lead in education (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011) and is grounded in spirituality as a source of personal strength as well as a way to understanding their connections to others. This resonates with

Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan & Ballenger (2007) who posited that women leaders, irrespective of race, discussed spirituality as one method of modelling behaviour and inspiring others. This is because women acknowledge the importance of their spirituality to them when dealing with conflicting and difficult situations. According to Fry (2003, p. 705)

> spirituality reflects the presence of a relationship with a higher power or being that affects the way in which one operates in the world…[its] quest emphasizes a dynamic process where people purposefully seeks to discover their potential, an ultimate purpose, and a personal relationship with higher power or being.

Leadership for learning is related to the way women lead because women stress the importance of instructional competence in teachers. (Beck & Murphy cited in Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). Although they acknowledge that school must be well-managed, they also prioritise student learning. Balanced leadership is described by Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011) as being a characteristic of women in leadership positions and they describe this as the balance between work, home, and community commitments. Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011) cite the work of Coleman, 2002; Curry, 2000; Dillard, 2006; Grogan, 1996 amongst others, in describing how women must balance home and work more so than men. Typically, men have work commitments and some community commitments that are work-related. However, after work women go home to childcare and household responsibilities.

These domestic responsibilities can disadvantage women, but they can also use these to their advantage. In the South African study by Lumby & Azaola (2013), women saw themselves as women and mothers who either to due inborn qualities or from experience have skills that provide them with advantages as leaders when compared to men. They posited that "either innate mothering attitudes and skills or those acquired through becoming a mother, or both, advantage female principals in their relationships with learners, staff and parents" (Lumby & Azaola, 2013, p. 12). In this way gender stereotypical thinking that women are subordinate and that motherhood is incongruent with leadership is challenged. Therefore mothering is considered another important characteristic of leadership. Their study revealed that female principals

reflected on their mothering skills as a means to self-improvement. They also use their mothering skills to try to overcome social problems in schools and communities. Lastly women principals used mothering skills to overcome gender stereotypical challenges in their schools.

Barriers towards women leadership

In South Africa there are policies in place that should address the stereotypes and discrimination of women in the work place. The government has attempted to ensure equal treatment of everybody by law (Lumby & Azaola, 2011). This resonates with Moorosi (2010, p. 547) who states that "the Bill of Rights of 1996, guarantees equal treatment while the Employment Equity Act No. 55 of 1998 guarantees equal opportunity to employment and promotion". Although there are such policies women still experience challenges as they constantly battle to prove themselves worthy of the positions they are occupying. Diko's (2007, p. 106) study concluded that "gender equity in South African education remains elusive. Fewer women than men hold top administrative positions in education, many female administrators fill positions still considered feminine, and women in positions still considered masculine are being pushed out".

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[KZN] Department of Education, Employment Equity Report, 2012). This is despite the fact that female teaching force is 70 per cent and male 30 per cent. Women who seek leadership positions face barriers and sometimes give up because they become overwhelmed in dealing with these barriers (Rashid 2010). To address these obstacles there is a need for "changes in organizational culture, women's career development, and mentoring opportunities for women" (Northouse, 2010, p. 319).

Organizational barriers not only discriminate against women, but they may positively favour men. According to Moorosi (2007, p. 507) "Structural barriers to women's advancement in organizations have their roots in the fact that most organizations have been created by and for men". Hence a particular form of masculinity in organizational management exists (Moorosi, 2007; Ely & Meyerson, 2000). Grogan cited in Moorosi (2007) also argues that the absence of women in powerful positions suggests that women are seen through traditional theoretical lenses and are measured against ideals that have historically best served men. Fagenson cited in Gaus (2011) argued that organizational culture has hidden barriers for women's career development. She divided the barriers into two, formal and informal barriers. She stressed that the informal barriers cause women to have low aspirations and are related to the organizational culture as well, such as the existence of sex-role stereotyping, negative attitudes, exclusion from male group, lack of mentors, minority groups, occupational segregation and lack of support from superiors (Gaus, 2011).

The barriers experienced by the women on Rashid's (2010) study were determined not only by the more familiar institutional and organizational hegemonies, but also by specific cultural and religious beliefs and values, as well as socio-economic and political factors. It is only when we examine more closely the interrelation of all these factors that we 'will gain some understanding' of the obstacles that exist along the career paths of women in educational leadership and management (Rashid, 2010, p. 221). Greyvenstein (2000, p. 32) asserts that "a lack of women in mentor and role model positions is a major barrier to women aspiring to management positions". This is because mentors for women seeking promotion serve two purposes. A mentor is defined as, "one with whom you form a professional, interpersonal relationship and who provides beneficial career and psychosocial support to you" (Gupton, & Slick, 1996, pp. 90-92). Firstly, mentors can act as guides in an unfamiliar male-dominated

organizational culture. Secondly, they provide sponsorship and legitimate access to power.

Culture impact on women leadership

Culture and tradition have a noticeable impact on women managers. Gillard cited in Khumalo (2006) states that culture consists of habits, traditions and beliefs of a country, society or group of people. Across the social groups, entrenched socio-cultural stereotypes tend to undermine women's ability to be leaders and managers. This is due to the fact that women are likely to meet with reactions which have been shaped by multiple layers of social construction; these have been founded on assumptions entrenched in the culture of the various ethnic groupings (Lumby & Azaola, 2011).Even within education, women in South Africa continue to fight against sexist cultural attitudes in their communities and school environments (Moorosi, 2010). A school is an extended organ of the community; therefore cultural beliefs manifest themselves in the school situation (Khumalo, 2006). Consequently educators, as part of society take their cultural beliefs into their places of employment. This resonates with Moorosi's (2010) article which revealed that women's experiences are often compromised by the traditional cultural value systems and structural arrangements within the schools, which are less favourable to women.

As a foundation for his study Rashid (2010, p. 210) used a three-level model "concerning the culture and traditions affecting the ways in which women can operate within society". This is based on the premise that the experience of women principals is influenced by socio-political, organizational and personal factors. In regard to the investigation of factors causing underrepresentation of women in management positions in Kenya, Amondi (2011) also touched on these and added socio-cultural and the glass ceiling. These levels are: the 'macro' socio-political level, the 'meso-organizational level'; and the 'micro-level' which concerns the individual.

The socio-political dimension focuses on entrenched hegemonic traditions and culture of a region or country (often strongly influenced by religious customs and beliefs) in which women, positioned by circumstances, are obliged to accept in the introduction to an international study of gender and management in education (Rashid, 2010). On the meso-level, attention is drawn to the power relations within organizations and, in

particular, the hierarchical nature of most educational institutions. Acker and Feuverger cited in Rashid (2010) present an analysis of the university as a patriarchal institution inevitably favouring men. Organizational barriers include entrenched cultures and norms, the way power is defined and exercised, selection procedures and lack of mentoring (Amondi, 2011). Also included are promotions on the basis of "who knows who rather than competences" (Amondi, 2011, p. 63). Also discrimination against women during interviews for promotions is a barrier since such panels are male dominated.

The third dimension, concerning the individual can be hypothesized in terms of women's perceived lack of self-esteem (Gold cited in Rashid, 2010) which can be a consequence of the impositions of traditional male hegemony at the macro-level and the patriarchal culture and climate at the meso-level. Individual barriers regard women as being the cause of their underrepresentation due to their not being assertive enough, lacking inself-confidence, not applying for positions and women in management whotend to be more concerned about how others perceive them (Amondi, 2011; Growe & Montgomery, 2000). This is because of the added imperative of dutiful compliance to socialisation and societal norms, values and roles (Rashid, 2010). In her study, Amondi (2011) posited that, while many previous studies had included the fact that women were not interested in power as an individual factor, in her study this fact was disputed. However, in her findings the other factors were confirmed. In addition to these factors, "fear of sexual harassment, broken marriages and divorces, being labelled iron lady, women not supporting each other and women in management tending to be more concerned about how they are perceived by others" (Amondi, 2011, p. 63).

Apart from low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence women may experience lack of leadership identity, which is the feeling of belonging to a group of leaders or to a specific level of leadership and feeling significant within that circle (Brown & Irby cited in Shakeshaft et al. 2007). Lack of a leadership identity can lead to a feeling of isolation and the feeling of being an outsider (Christman cited in Shakeshaft et al., 2007). Studies on women leadership posit that lack of leadership identity, rather than low self-esteem also perpetuates the perception of women that they must get more

information, more education, and more experience in the classroom prior to seeking an administrative position (Grogan & Brunner, 2005; Young & McLeod, 2001).

Gender and women leadership

Women leadership and gender studies maintain that gender still influences on women. Martin (2006, p. 256) asserts that if organizational theories refute the presence and impact of gender in the workplace, "flawed conceptions of how organizations work are promulgated". Hence gender issues have recently been seen as women's issues and included in the deliberations of educational leadership (Coleman, 2002; Hall, 1996). This idea is supported by Shakeshaft (1993), who asserts that gender has been related so closely with women that sometimes they are synonymous. She defines gender as a cultural term which:

> ... is socially constructed and describes the characteristics that we ascribe to people because of their sex, the ways we believe they behave or the characteristics we believe they have based upon our cultural expectations of what is male and what is female (Shakeshaft, 1993, p. 52)

This is because according to Berthoin, Antal & Izraeli cited in Haslam & Ryan (2008) the most important barrier for women in management is the continual stereotype that links management with maleness. Gender by definition is learned; socially, endorsed views of masculinity and femininity are learned by individuals through a variety of cultural properties. From birth people "are encouraged to conform to the gender that the society prescribes" for them (Wood, 2003, p. 22). Implicit theories of management and gender are not only descriptive but also 'powerfully prescriptive' (Heilman, 2001; Haslam & Ryan, 2008, p. 551). There are many definitions and views about gender in relation to leadership. West & Zimmerman (1987, p. 125) posit that "gender is embedded in everyday interaction and is an achieved status which is constructed through psychological, cultural and social means". This resonates with Coleman (2003, p. 37) as she argues that "leadership is a very gendered concept" as it is typically identified with men across cultures. West & Zimmerman (1987, p. 126) propose that gender should not be seen as a set of traits (as femininity and masculinity), a role (as in scripts for behaviour), and social variable (as in salary differences). They then suggest that:

gender is not a trait or variable but is an accomplishment, an interactional activity that we universally use to organise social encounters: Doing gender involves a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micro-political activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine nature's (West & Zimmerman, p. 2).

Lindsey (2011, p. 4) hypothesized that gender refers to "those social, cultural, and psychological traits linked to males and females through particular social contexts". When comparing gender and sex she states that: "Sex makes us male or female; gender makes us masculine or feminine. It is an 'ascribed status because a person is born with it, but gender is an achieved status because it must be learned" (Lindsey, 2011, p. 4).

Research on gender and leadership has been conducted in South African. In their literature review, Booysen & Nkomo (2006) concluded that, firstly, there are mixed results regarding the evidence on gender difference in leadership because there are more similarities than differences in male and female leadership styles. Secondly, the differences between the female and male leadership styles that transpire are still mainly linked "to sex role spill over, gendered behaviour or the extension of their natural roles" (Booysen & Nkomo, 2006, p. 26). Thirdly, leadership style research findings themselves tend to be gender-stereotypical. Fourthly, more recent evidence is to the advantage of women because of the democratisation of the workplace and advocacy of transformational and interactional leadership that favours females more than men. Fifthly, despite this advantage and feminisation of the workplace, leadership is still perceived as a male dominated job. Lastly, if male leadership is then defined as traditional therefore female leadership is non-traditional. In the final analysis Booysen & Nkomo (2006, p. 26) posit that

> …even though the feminine leadership style is seen to be more effective than the masculine leadership style, and there is evidence for a gender advantage, paradoxically it poses the following dilemma- the gender advantage became a gender disadvantage since female leadership is still perceived to be less effective.

Booysen & Nkomo (2006, p. 23) assert that even if women are empowered men will still dominate in leadership due to the 'prevailing dominant masculine culture, masculine stereotypes and adopted masculine leadership mental models'. In comparing findings of the Schein's research findings on 'think manager think male' concept they assert that findings yielded the same results although the second study was conducted 20 years later. This is because the obstacles that women face in leadership arise from the incongruity between the female gender role and the leadership role (Northouse, 2010). Hence women face double standards as they are expected to be competent while depicting feminine qualities. This resonates with Eagly & Carli (2007); Booysen & Nkomo (2006) when they propose that women face a double bind, firstly female role is undervalued and secondly if women display stereotypical male they face a barrier, hence such behaviour is perceived as gender role incongruent.

Gender Stereotyping and role congruity impact

Gender impact on women leadership challenges when seeking positions or already in positions of leadership seems to be inevitable. Chabaya et al. (2009) found that women teachers in Zimbabwe believe that discrimination is implicit in the organizational structure and in the attitudes of those in authority. The challenge for women leaders is whether to transform themselves to fit into a preconceived role, or to redefine leadership in terms of their own experiences and ways of thinking, (Damons, 2008). Daft cited in Damons (2008) defines stereotype as a widely held generalisation about a group of people that assigns attributes to them solely on the basis of a limited number of categories. Mathipa & Tsoka (2000, p. 130) defines prejudice as "an act of forming an opinion about a particular condition before viewing and assessing the actual condition". Prejudice may be due to stereotypes emanating from culture, customs and beliefs (Greyvenstein, 2000). Beliefs about women are descriptive (what we think they are) and prescriptive (what we think they should be).

Eagly & Carli (2007) state that there are two typical associations made when gender stereotyping occurs: the communal and the agentic association which are important for an understanding of the impact of these gender roles. Agentic attributes such as assertiveness, control and confidence are much more often ascribed to men than to

women (Eagly & Johannessen- Schmidt, 2001). Communal attributes, however, are mainly ascribed to women, who are seen as friendly, helpful and concerned with the compassionate treatment of others. When women decide to pursue management positions, they are faced with barriers in the selection processes because of leader stereotypes that focus on masculine characteristics. As they assume leadership positions, these leader stereotypes act as a barrier to their behaviour (Powell, 2011). Instead of devoting their emotional and intellectual energies to the actual managerial work, women continue to fight against the sexist cultural attitudes existing in their communities and school environments.

Gender stereotyping is the "consensual beliefs about character traits that describe men and women" (Weyer, 2007, p. 486), and also cause barriers to women's career progress (Coleman, 2002; Heilman, 2001). According to Wood (2003, p. 110) when people categorise others, they "use a general label to define specific members of a class". She cites an example: if most women you know are not interested in sports, you might conclude that women don't like sport. This stereotype could keep you from noticing how many women are engaged in sport and enjoy attending athletics events. Women are inclined to be categorised as being emotional and physically weaker, while men are as being classified as rational and strong, resulting in people judging women's ideas in terms of the stereotype not the reality (Wood, 2003).

This can lead to people overlooking important characteristics of individuals and recognising them "only in terms of what we consider common to a general category' (Wood, 2003, p. 110). To comply with their stereotypes, women are expected to be "caring, tolerant, intuitive, and gentle" (Coleman, 2005, p. 12). Women who are appointed to positions have to 'prove their worth' as a leader by working harder and better to break the stereotypes associated with them in management and particularly to overcome the "domestic role stereotyping" (Coleman, 2002). This is because stereotypes of women can be traced to the deep-rooted, patriarchal prejudices of society (Coleman, 2002).Stereotyping occurs when individuals are judged not on their unique characteristics or merits, but on generalised characteristics associated with the group to which they belong (Pihler, Simpson & Stroh, 2008). Even women who possess outstanding qualifications for leadership may have the burden of overcoming preconceptions that they are not well equipped to lead (Koenig, et al. 2011). This is as

a result that "stereotypes are resistant to change and do not necessarily reflect current realities" (Powell, 2011, p. 4).

The descriptive aspects of stereotyping make it difficult for women to gain access to roles as leaders, but the prescriptive aspects of stereotyping produce conflicting expectations concerning how female leaders should behave (Heilman, 2001). "Stereotypical myths and prejudicial attitudes about women's competences as school principals are barriers that impact on their performances as principals", (Gender Equity Task Team, 1997, p. 195). Kanjere, (2008) asserts that even now some still believe that women are incapable of leading. Cultural stereotypes and other prejudices against women make it impossible for women to actualise their potential (Kanjere, 2008). Stereotypes and prejudices related to the abilities and attitudes of women are seen to be among the obstacles encountered for the representation of women in management positions (Chabaya, Rembe & Wadesango 2009). On gender stereotyping and leadership Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt (2001, p. 786) stated that:

> …not only may gender roles spill over to organizational settings, but leaders' gender identities may also constrain their behaviours in a direction consistent with their own gender role. Also the female gender role is more likely to be incongruent with leader roles than the male gender role is, producing a greater potential for prejudice against female leaders. Such prejudice could result in sanctions that affect leaders' behaviour.

Gender role stereotyping is one of the major difficulties that female leaders have faced in their work environment and has always influenced people's perception about female leader's behaviour (Northouse, 2010). Literature reveals that female managers are evaluated less favourably than male managers, even when they behave in the same way (Eagly et al., 1992; Heilman, 2001; Ryan and Haslam, 2007). The reasons given for this refer to people's implicit theories about management and gender (Eagly and Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2001; Rudman and Glick, 2001).While literature reveals that women are still faced with gender role stereotyping, Lumby & Azaola (2013) study suggested that in avoiding gender's probable negative influence women insist that gender is not pertinent to their role as leaders and has had no influence on their access to or performing of the role so avoiding its potential negative impact. Heilman (2001)

posit that there are two aspects to gender stereotypes. Firstly, they are descriptive and persist over time. This means distinguishing women and men characteristics. She asserts that men are agentic whereas women are communal. The termagentic means that men get things done are aggressive, ambitious, dominant, forceful, independent, self-sufficient, decisive and rational. Women are communal which means that they care for others and are compassionate, helpful, kind, supportive, sympathetic, interpersonally sensitive and emotional. Stereotypical thinking is therefore that women are communal, but not agentic (Heilman, 2001). Secondly, they are prescriptive, i.e. they suggest how women and men should behave (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan & Nauts, 2011).

This also designates the roles of women and men, how they should be and how they should not be, e.g. agentic behaviour, associated with men is prohibited for women. Agentic females are judged as competent but less likeable and hireable compared to identically behaving men. This is because a woman's success violates gender prescriptions. Hence women who are in leadership roles are "in a double bind: they can behave communally and be liked but not respected, or behave agentically and be respected but not liked" (Rudman & Glick, 2001, p. 744).This puts women in a dilemma; to be hired as leaders they need to endorse agency but risk penalties if they do so. Consequently they are in a difficult situation which forces women to choose between being respected and being liked; this undermines their power to obtain positions of status and power. Rudman et al. (2011) posit that gender also consists of proscribed characteristics; which are the rules concerning how men and women should not behave. These are "relatively negative qualities that are prohibited for only one gender that serve to reinforce the gender hierarchy" (Rudman et al. 2011, p. 166). These normative violations result in disapproval and penalties.

Additionally, Giscombe (2007) found that gender stereotyping literature suggests that men enjoy congruity between how they are perceived and senior leadership attributes. However, women still face barriers in advancing to leadership positions as there is incongruity between how they are perceived and leadership attributes. This resonates with Powell (2011) who asserts that research that was carried out in 20countries over a period of time, as well as recent research in 2006, indicates that male managers are

still preferred over female managers. Powell (2011) notes the reasons behind this as that firstly, the stereotype still persists which is that leaders are more effective when they display masculine characteristics. Secondly, prejudice towards female leaders makes it difficult for them to be effective in their roles as leaders and as a result lessens their aspirations in applying for leadership positions. Lastly, women and men leaders may differ in their behaviours, due to preferences of males as better leaders and because of this organizations led by men yield better productivity and more satisfied subordinates.

As a result of the existing incompatibility between the roles of the leader and the female gender, there is a barrier to the advancement of female managers. Even if women are competent, it does not guarantee that they will be as successful as males in the leadership roles (Powell, 2011). Eagly (2007) states that people view women as lacking the stereotypical directive and assertive qualities of good leaders. Even if "they display these qualities, they are not accepted because they seem to be unfeminine" (Eagly, 2007, p. 4). Women taking up a role as a school principal may therefore face persistent and prescriptive stereotypes which means, whether competent or not, nurturing or not, they will be transgressing one prescription or another, as woman or leader (Lumby & Azaola, 2013). Leader and gender stereotypes put aspiring female leaders at a disadvantage as they must deal with this perceived incongruity.

If women conform to the female gender role by showing feminine characteristics, they do not meet the requirements of the leader stereotype (Powel, 2011). Role congruity theory states that all females experience prejudice as they cannot simultaneously achieve as both women and leaders because gender role is incongruent with the leader role (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The first prejudice may be that women are perceived less favourably than men as potential occupants for leadership roles, and even if they fulfil the prescriptions of a leader role they are regarded less favourable (Eagly & Karau, 2002). The view of Eagly & Karau (2002) is that prejudice towards female leaders may be lessened by change in the description of the roles of leaders.

To illustrate role congruity theory Gervais & Hillard (2011) used Hillary Clinton and Sarah Palin who were competing for top political positions for 2012 United States 2008 elections. Clinton appeared to possess less feminine characteristics and more masculine characteristics than Palin who seemed to possess more feminine characteristics. Both of them were subject to discrimination but differently (Gervais & Hillard, 2011). Clinton's masculine characteristics "are congruent with the leader role but violate prescriptive norms of the female role whereas Palin's feminine characteristics are congruent with the female gender role but violate the descriptive norms of leader role" (Gervais & Hillard, 2011, p. 222).

Heilman (1983)'s lack-of-fit model is a predecessor to Eagly & Karau (2002)'s role congruity theory as it emphasises the descriptive content and the recognition of the prescriptive content of gender stereotypes (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Lack-of-fit model states that the success an individual achieves in a position is determined by the "fit between the perception of an individual's attributes and the perception of the job's requirements" (Heilman, 1983, p. 278). Based on this model, Rudman et al. (2011) state that first hurdle women face is the lack of fit between feminine stereotypes and leadership qualities. Even if they overcome this by demonstrating agency they still face another challenge of being counter-stereotyped and risk being subject to discrimination. Either way they risk being disqualified for leadership roles. Women's attributes are a poor fit that will likely result in failure whereas a man's attributes are a good fit that will likely result in them being promoted. Eagly and Karau's (2002) role congruity theory "transforms [Heilman's] insights into a systemic theory by joining social-cognitive research on stereotyping and prejudice and organizational research on management and leadership" (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p. 579).

Glass ceiling effect on women educational leadership

Historically, the first identified form of gender discrimination in management has been the glass ceiling. The concept of a glass ceiling refers to the invisible, but impenetrable barrier which prevents women from reaching managerial positions irrespective of their achievements or merits (The Federal Glass Ceiling Commission cited in Haslam & Ryan, 2008). This describes the obstacles that are artificial and obscure, but still establish a ceiling on how much women can achieve (Amondi,

2011). Consequently, men will disproportionately occupy more positions in higher ranks in the career field while women are overrepresented in its lower ranks (Sincoff cited in Amondi, 2011). Cotter, Hermsen, Ovadia & Vanneman cited in Macarie & Moldovan (2012) posited that there are four characteristics/criteria of the glass ceiling.

Firstly, the glass ceiling must lead to inequalities and differentiations that cannot be explained by characteristics relevant to the employees' work (such as education, professional experience, abilities or motivation), but are solely defined by making references to an employee's gender. Secondly, the inequalities caused by the glass ceiling grow exponentially with the hierarchical structure as discrimination increases at higher hierarchical levels. The higher the level, the harder it will be for a female to penetrate the glass ceiling (Macarie & Moldovan, 2012). Thirdly, inequalities which are caused by the glass ceiling do not only refer to the present ratio of women to men in higher management positions, but also to the probability of their reaching those positions. Lastly the unequal practices it describes become more significant, in terms of impact and extent over time. Eagly & Carli cited in Northouse (2010) identified limitations with the glass ceiling metaphor including the implication that everybody has equal access to lower positions until all women hit a single, invisible, and impassable barrier. They then arrived with an alternative image of a leadership labyrinth that implies a riddled journey with challenges along the way and not just near the top positions.

Glass escalator and women educational leadership

In the qualitative study by Growe & Montgomery (2000) the interview data suggested that men do not face discrimination in predominantly female professions. They found that contrary to the experience of women who enter male-dominated professions, men generally encounter structural advantages in these occupations which enhance their careers. Growe & Montgomery (2000) state that there has been a rise in the hiring of women in administrative positions. However, proportionately more women tend to occupy positions in the smallest cosmopolitan districts, with the least central office administrators, declining student enrolments, more reported stress on the job, less satisfaction and the greatest vulnerability lethal to school board conflict. Growe &

Montgomery (2000) illustrate by citing that Caucasian women were being hired in very small districts where their duties varied and with minimal pay. African American women are hired in troubled urban districts with inadequate financial resources or districts with a large concentration of minority students who are economically disadvantaged and have low achievement test scores.

Glass cliff effect on women leadership

Extending from glass ceiling and glass escalator, Ryan & Haslam (2007) argue that women are more likely to find themselves on a "glass cliff" in that their positions of leadership are associated with greater risk of failure. They support the study by Williams (1992) that concluded that men in professions considered typically feminine do not encounter a glass ceiling, but rather a glass elevator facilitating their promotion and professional advancement. This is because men enter predominantly female professions with predetermined privileges as they encounter structural advantages, "glass escalator effect" that enhances their career (Williams 1992, p. 263). While men are enjoying this advantage literature suggests that women are faced with disadvantage the glass cliff whereby most women overcoming the glass ceiling are appointed in risky positions (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). These positions do not improve the status of women or eliminate the preconceptions about women in management, but on the contrary, they contribute to the perpetuation of negative stereotypes and discrimination (Haslam & Ryan, 2008). The two phenomena, the appointment of women in top management positions and the weak performance of the respective companies, are rarely treated separately.

Furthermore, companies in difficult economic conditions with the appointment of a woman at the top levels attract public attention; "if the condition of the company is maintained at precarious levels or worsens, there is a high possibility that the newly appointed female manager will be used as a scapegoat, thus perpetuating negative stereotypes" (Haslam & Ryan, 2008, p. 531). This resonates with Growe & Montgomery (2000) who assert that while there is an increase in the hiring of women in administrative positions, proportionately more women tend to occupy positions in the smaller cosmopolitan districts. These districts have declining student enrolments; more reported stress on the job, less satisfaction, and the greatest vulnerability of the

schools. Growe & Montgomery (2000) justify this assertion by citing that Caucasian women were being hired in very small districts where their duties varied and with very little pay. Moreover women managers tend to receive greater scrutiny and criticism than men, and they tend to be evaluated less favourably when performing exactly the same leadership roles as men (Eagly, Makhijani & Klonsky cited in Haslam & Ryan, 2008). Extending from glass ceiling and glass escalator they argue that women are more likely to find themselves on a "glass cliff" such that their positions of leadership are associated with greater risk of failure" (Ryan & Haslam 2007, p. 550).Even if women are a majority it does not guarantee that they will be a majority in leadership positions. Macarie & Moldovan (2012 p. 164) posited that:

> women are either underrepresented in top management (the glass ceiling) or overrepresented in risky managerial positions (the glass cliff)... men have better odds of being promoted, mostly due to informal mechanisms (the glass elevator).

Preparation for principalship

As the key assumption of deputy principals is that they desire to become principals, therefore deputy principal's emergent role is an important stage in their development as potential principals (Harris, Muijs, & Crawford 2003). According to West cited in Harris et al. (2003) there are three probable roles of a deputy principal, namely, deputy as the principal's deputy (traditional role), deputy as a prospective principal (preparation for principalship) and the deputy as deputy principal of school (emergent role), West cited in Harris et al. (2003). Based on current literature, Ibrahim (2011) posits that preparation and development of principals can result in effectiveness and improvement of schools. This is because by preparing and developing principals, this could equip them with skills, knowledge and attributes to lead schools such that teaching and learning practices are improved (Ibrahim, 2011). While that is the case, the experience of being deputy principal is not always helpful in preparing deputy principals because of the lack of direct leadership experience they encounter in this role. It is worse for women deputy principals because the roles and responsibilities allocated to them differ from that of men. This is because 'women are more likely to

deal with pastoral matters and men with discipline and curriculum matters' (Harris et al. 2003, p. 13)

Furthermore, there are limited opportunities for formal leadership training for deputy principals. Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen cited in Peters (2010) assert that aspiring and emerging principals are ill-prepared and are not getting enough support to face the challenging responsibility of instructional leadership and school improvement. The principal remains the key gatekeeper to leadership functions in the school. This is because if the principal does not support a strong leadership role for the deputy principal, chances are that it may not happen (Harris et al. 2003). Hence principals could play a vital role in developing and preparing deputy principals for principalship; this should form part of their duties and responsibilities. This emerging literature could assist in addressing access of women to principalship in education as could develop confidence in women who aspire to be principals. Apart from that principals should be continuously trained and educated in their positions immediately after appointment and this development should continue.

Work - family balance and networking

When it comes to leadership, the ability to work long hours may determine the character of the leader. This applies especially to leadership positions, which can be characterised by the requirement for long working hours and by giving precedence to work before other responsibilities, for example the family (Lumby & Azaola, 2013). Barriers that impede women's advancement to senior positions consist of work-family conflict, lack of significant management experience, exclusion from formal networks and gender-based stereotyping (Giscombe, 2007). Networking could provide support in addressing barriers towards women leadership. Kadushin cited in Grogan & Shakeshaft (2011) defines networks as a set of relationships that can be analysed at the individual level, the organizational level or at the larger level such as state or global. Networking and good working relationships can provide emotional support, information about opportunities, and protection (Cherry, 2010). In the conclusions from their findings, Shakeshaft et al. (2007) stated that although this has continued throughout the past two centuries, it appears that women still need assistance in establishing and effectively using networks; these include not only men who are in

positions of power, but also other women; and, further, that organizations should find ways to support networking.

Wharton (2005, p. 109 – 110) asserts that:

> Workplace being the first shift takes more time while home being the second shift becomes more hurried and rationalised. The longer the workday, the more we feel pressed at home to hurry, to delegate, to delay, to forgo, to segment, to hyper organise the precious remains of family time. This culminates to a third shift; noticing, understanding, and coping with the emotional consequences of the compressed second shift.

Basing her assertion on the literature Greenhaus & Singh (2007, p. 521) states that:

> Work-family conflict occurs when experiences in one role interfere with meeting the requirements and achieving effectiveness in the other role she further states that work-family conflict is bidirectional, i.e. work can interfere with family life and family life can interfere with work life.

According to Wharton (2005, p. 112) work and family are increasingly intertwined resulting in a "time bind". Time bind refers to the "difficulties people face as they try to meet employment expectations and their family obligations" (Wharton, 2005, p. 112). Women have the main responsibility for family and child care. Although work and family life can be incompatible there are possible advantages. Greenhaus & Singh (2007) refers to this as work-family life enrichment which embodies the positive effects that work and family roles have on one another. It also happens when "resources (such as new skills, different perspectives on life, and self-confidence) acquired in one role are successfully applied to the other role, such that performance and positive affect are enhanced in the receiving role" (Greenhaus & Singh, 2007, p. 521). Subsequently this could promote work life balance.

Synergistic leadership theory

When discussing the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership, Grogan and Shakeshaft (2011) mentioned that in a body of research only five percent of the published articles mentioned either gender or race (2011). They also cited Brown and

Irby (2005) who found that dissertations that focused on women and educational leadership were only nine percent. Therefore there is clearly a need for theories that involve men and include women. The Synergistic Leadership Theory (SLT) is a feminine-inclusive leadership theory that was developed for the twenty first century to address the demands and challenges that education leaders face in leadership (Irby, Brown, Duffy & Trautman, 2002). This theory, unlike other leadership theories, is post-modern and challenges the hegemony of modernism that centres and marginalise, creating positions of privilege, dominance and exclusion, silencing alternative views and voices in this case, the male-controlled type of leadership, (English cited in Irby et al., 2002). This is supported by Powell (2011, p. 5) who asserted that "early theories for leadership were based almost entirely on studies of male managers". This contemporary theory (SLT) was developed by female researchers, utilised female samples and included feminine perspectives. This supports Grogan (1998) who asserts that because women's lived experiences differ from men, new theoretical understandings of leadership premised on social justice must emerge.

The SLT is a twenty first century leadership theory that provides a framework to examine and reflect on the feminine voice in educational leadership (Irby et al., 2002). According to Irby et al. (2002) one of its epistemological assumptions is that its elements include:

> (a) organizational structure (characteristics of an organization and may range from a collaborative feminist style to a tightly bureaucratic),
>
> (b) leadership behaviours ranging from autocratic to nurturer,
>
> (c) external forces (influencers outside the control of the organization), and
>
> (d) beliefs, attitudes and values; SLT posits that this factor is described inconsistently by individuals, as individuals or groups would maintain or change specific attitudes, beliefs, or values at different times.

Irby et al. (2002, p. 314) assert that "values, attitudes and values are the foundation for guiding principles that apply at all times in all places". This is because perceptions and decisions whether personal, organizational or community are influenced by values, attitudes and beliefs (Irby et al. (2002). Gender inclusiveness is defined as the acknowledgment of the female perspective and experiences in conjunction with the

leadership attributes inherent to both males and females (Irby, Brown, Yang cited in Leornard & Jones, 2009). The SLT's factors are not linear or hierarchical but suggest that each factor equally affects the success of the leader in context, as well as the organization (Irby et al., 2002). This differs from other leadership theories because it is gender inclusive and acknowledges that women bring leadership attributes which are different from traditional male leadership behaviours (Irby, et al. 2002).

This theory is based on Irby et al.'s (2002) study where they analysed the original development of 24 traditional leadership theories published between 1939 and 1991 commonly taught in U.S. leadership and management courses, (Irby et al. 2002). It is premised on the notion that traditionally theories had been based on the experiences of males, were based on theories from military settings, written using the masculine voice, validated using male participants, hence projected male or androcentric bias, included gender, biased language and excluded female experience, (Irby et al., 2002). Irby et al., (2002) cite Shakeshaft & Nowell who assert that conceptualisation of leadership theory was formulated through male lens and subsequently applied to both males and females. They also acknowledge that there are modern theories that have feminine attributes, namely, interactive leadership, and participative leadership theory. However modern theories have been challenged for their failure to include feminine presence in the theory development, (Leornard and Jones, 2009). The SLT, "openly acknowledges the feminine organization as a major component,' which is not evident in other leadership theories" (Irby et al. 2002, p. 315).

Summary

A review of the literature indicates that there are many factors that contribute towards the underrepresentation of women in principalship. Drawing from a different contexts, i.e., school, higher academic education, business, educational leadership), this chapter provided a broad overview of the experiences women encounter on their journey to the higher positions of leadership. The contributing factors include: the glass ceiling, work and family conflict, limited access to mentoring, male-dominated power structures, gender stereotyping, and perceptions of female leadership effectiveness. The next chapter discusses the methodology and research design.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the research design and methodology that has been developed to explore and understand the phenomenon of the study. It provides the paradigm on how the study will be carried out. This chapter describes the design, the approach and the research method used in this study. The study explores the lived experiences of women as primary school principals in relation to leadership and gender. A qualitative investigation within a phenomenological framework used for this study is discussed. Semi-structured interviews were employed as an effective method to research this subject and the analysis of phenomenological data resulting from the research is demonstrated. Furthermore in order to achieve a quality study, there is a discussion about validity, rigor, trustworthiness and ethical issues. .

Research Design

This study will employ a phenomenological qualitative approach focusing on the lived experiences of female principals; their personal stories will be told through one-on-one semi-structured interview sessions guided by a set of questions that will be administered by the researcher. For this research the decision was taken to use descriptive phenomenological research because of its nature which examines the human experience. In this study, the phenomenon to be examined is the leadership experiences of current female primary school principals and their daily experiences in their various schools. This methodology was chosen as being most appropriate because it would allow the participants, in this case, women primary school principals to tell their stories from their individual perspectives.

Phenomenological methods are particularly effective at illustrating the individual experiences and perceptions and therefore to challenge structural or normative assumptions (Lester, 1999). This is in agreement with Van Manen (1997, p. 9) who

asserts that "modern thinking and scholarship is so caught up in a theoretical and technological thought that the phenomenological human science may strike an individual as a breakthrough and a liberation". Also Ehrich (2005) in relating to management research posits that leadership and management are highly complex interpersonal phenomena that concentrate on the human dimension of management practice; hence this type of research is suitable. Her study argues that phenomenological methodology is useful in exploring and illuminating the meanings of a wide range of human activities and management concepts present in organizations. For this reason, Ehrich (2005) concludes that because phenomenological methodology's purpose is to understand the human experience, it could be effectively used to explore a range of human experiences within management; in this study the experiences of women in leadership positions.

Paradigm

The qualitative nature of this study was grounded in qualitative research, as defined by Denzin & Lincoln (2005, p. 3) who indicate that "qualitative research is characterized by interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world". In other words, qualitative researchers undertake studies in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. This resonates with Creswell (1998, p. 15) as he defines qualitative study as:

> an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detailed views of informants, and conducts the study in a natural setting

Because the researcher's aim was to understand, explain and demystify social reality through the eyes of different participant, the research paradigm for this study is interpretive paradigm (Cohen, Manion & Morison 2007). This is also because the assumption was that the reality was constructed on individual interpretation hence subjective. The other reason was that knowledge was gained through personal experiences, which were primary school principals' experiences. Interpretive paradigm assumption is that social reality is seen by multiple people such that they interpret events differently. Subsequently they leave multiple perspectives of an event.

Interpretivism main ideology is that "research can never be objectively observed by the outsider… rather it must be observed from the inside through the direct experience" (Mack, 2010, p. 8).

Phenomenology

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, phenomenology is a relevant philosophic methodology that is utilised in this study to describe the phenomena of women principals of primary schools. Finlay (2008, p. 8) suggests that research is considered to be phenomenological when it "involves both rich description of the life world or lived experience". Phenomenology was initially developed in the twentieth century by German philosopher Edmund Husserl and is rooted in "the belief that knowledge based on intuition and essence precedes empirical knowledge" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). Different categories are used in describing the phenomenological approach. Firstly he asserts that phenomenology is the study of the lifeworld - the world as we immediately experience it. This aims to achieve a deeper understanding of the nature, or meaning, of our everyday experiences. Instead of giving us "the possibility of effective theory" that can explain or control the world, it offers the option of plausible insights that bring us into more direct contact with the world (Van Manen 1997, p. 9). Secondly, phenomenology is the explanation of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness. That is because it is by virtue of being conscious that we are already related to the world, "whatever falls outside of consciousness falls outside the bounds of our possible lived experience" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 9). Thirdly, phenomenology is the study of essences. "It asks for the very nature of a phenomenon, for that which makes [something] what it is – and without which could not be what is" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 10). Fourthly, the essence of a phenomenon is universal and can be described through a study of the structure that governs the instances or particular manifestations.

Moustakas (1994, p. 13) describes the central principles of phenomenological study as:

> to determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the

individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived, in other words, the essences of structures of the experience (Moustakas, 1994, p.13)

Based on Husserl's phenomenology, Moustakas (1994, p. 100) defines essence as 'that which is common or universal, the condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is'. Phenomenology is the universal effort to "uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning of structures, of the lived experiences" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 10). It is the description of the experiential meanings we live as we experience them. This attempts to describe and interpret these meanings to a degree of depth and richness. It differs from other disciplines in that "it attempts to explicate the meanings as we live them in our everyday existence, our lifeworld" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 11). Moustakas (1994, p. 48) defines lifeworld as "the way a person lives, creates, and relates to the world". Lifeworld is the realm of immediate experience. Citing Husserl, Van Manen (1997) indicates that each lifeworld shows certain pervasive structures or styles which need to be studied. He cites Heidegger as a philosopher who gave the idea of lifeworld structures a worldlier, existential thrust by speaking of phenomenology as the "study of being, our modes of being or ways-of-being-in-the-world" (Van Manen, 1997, p. 183).

This phenomenological method consists of four key qualities: description, reduction, essences and intentionality. Reduction includes bracketing, in which the focus of the research is placed in brackets; other experience is set aside so that research process is rooted only on the topic and question. However, it is necessary to emphasise that the phenomenological reduction was useful in helping to suspend, i.e. bracket theoretical biases and presuppositions regarding the women in leadership phenomenon in order to be alert to the emerging or experiential aspects. Adopting this disciplinary attitude was useful in cases where a theoretical bias might have been unintentionally imposed on the data analysis. This meant that if the prevention of theoretical biases and/or presuppositions was not achieved through the phenomenological attitude, it was possible to significantly minimise, if not eliminate them by adopting the disciplinary attitude. In arriving at essences the "method involves the discovery of knowledge by referring to the things and facts themselves as they are given in actual experience and intuition" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 47). Intentionality indicates the inseparable

connectedness of the human being to the world which is only retrospectively available to consciousness.

Focusing specifically on phenomenological approaches, Giorgi cited in Finlay (2008) posits that 4 core characteristics hold across all variations: the research is rigorously descriptive, uses the phenomenological reductions, explores the intentional relationship between persons and situations, and discloses the essences, or structures, of meaning inherent in human experiences through describing the essential structures of a phenomenon. Structural themes can be derived from textural descriptions obtained through phenomenological reduction.

Data sources and data collection techniques

Data has been collected from interviews with three women principals leading primary schools in Umgungundlovu District. Interview protocol was used as a technique for collecting data (see Appendix B). Interviews were audio recorded, transcribed and then analysed to determine the themes/meaning units that emerged and to ultimately describe the essence of the experiences of these women principals (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews were an informal, interactive process and used open-ended comments and questions (Moustakas, 1994).The approach of phenomenological reduction was adopted, i.e. setting aside natural attitude, while simultaneously remaining conscious of the participants' preconceptions, biases, errors and prejudices, (Creswell, 2007). The primary advantage of interviewing is that it permitted explicit focus on the researcher's personal experience combined with those of the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Patton (2002, p. 104) stated, in describing phenomenology and interviewing, that:

> …how they perceive it, describe it, feel about it, judge it, remember it, make sense of it, and talk about it with others. To gather such data, one must undertake in-depth interview with people who have directly experienced the phenomenon of interest; that is, they have lived experience.

Interviews were audio recorded and the session for each participant lasted approximately 90 minutes. Notes were also taken in case the tape recorder malfunctioned and for example, to describe facial expressions. Data collection

procedure typically involves interviewing individuals who have the relative experience. "Phenomenological interviewing is grounded in the philosophical tradition of phenomenology, which is the study of lived experiences and the ways we understand those experiences to develop a worldview" (Marshall and Rossman, 2011, p. 148). This is based on the concept that the structure and essence of shared experiences can be related and are the focus of these interviews. Prior to the interview process, the researcher must bracket his/her own experiences from those of the participants. To ensure flexibility of responses this study has used semi-structured interviews which were administered in an organised and structured format, (Patton, 2002). According to Moustakas cited in Creswell (2007) in a phenomenological study the participants are asked two broad questions as follows; what have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced or affected your experiences of the phenomenon?

Location of the study

Phenomenological approach involves a return to experience to acquire "comprehensive descriptions that provide the basis for a reflective structural analysis that portray the essence of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13). This refers to knowledge as it appears to consciousness. What appears in consciousness is the phenomenon. Phenomenon means to bring to light, to show itself in itself (Heidegger cited in Moustakas, 1994). This represents a suitable starting point for an investigation and phenomena are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge (Moustakas, 1994). Hence "phenomenology is to the things themselves" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 26). The participants for this study were women who were in positions of formal leadership as primary school principals in the Umgungundlovu District. The real experiences in this study emphasise the importance of the individual experiences of people as conscious human beings. As phenomenology it sought to understand the nature of the phenomenon for what makes it what it is not what it could be (Van Manen in Patton, 2002). Therefore it is committed to understanding social phenomenon from actors' own perspectives.

Sampling Strategy

Moustakas (1994) asserts that the essential criterion for the participants is that they have experienced the phenomenon and are interested in understanding its nature and meanings. The participant must be willing to participate in a lengthy interview, gives permission for audio taping and finally for the publishing of the data in a dissertation and other publications. Each participant was informed of the nature of the study and was encouraged to become a research participant on an equal footing with the researcher (Moustakas, 1994). This study adopted purposive sampling which means that the sample selection was based on personal knowledge of the population. Punch (2005) states that the term purposive sampling is used to describe sampling in a deliberate way with a purpose or focus in mind. This means that the researcher cannot make a random selection, but must make a judgement in selecting a sample to provide the required data. Three women primary school principals were selected. Experience was factor as this study was based on the lived experiences; consequently three years or more experience in principalship was one of the criteria.

Data Analysis

Data analysis followed a systematic process that moves from the narrow units of analysis to broader units and to more detailed descriptions that summarise the two elements: what the individuals have experienced and how they have experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). This phenomenological study ended with a descriptive passage that discussed the essence of the experience for individuals incorporating their real-life experiences. The essence was the culminating aspect of a phenomenological study. Essence means that which is common or universal, the condition or quality without which a thing would not be what it is (Husserl cited in Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994, p. 100) asserts that "essences are never totally exhausted. That is textural-structural synthesis represents the essences at a particular time and place from the vintage point of an individual researcher". This is the final step in the phenomenological research process and the integration of the fundamental textural and structural descriptions into a unified statement of the essences of the experience of the whole phenomenon.

Using Creswell's (2007) and Moustakas (1994) method in analysing phenomenological data, the researcher first sets aside as much as humanly possible, all preconceived experiences so as to better understand the experiences of participants in the study, this process is called bracketing or *epoche*. *"Epoche* the epistemological device that allows us to fulfil a phenomenological way of knowing" (Mortari & Tarozzi, 2010, p. 27). In the *epoche,* prejudgements, biases, and preconceived ideas about things are set aside (Moustakas, 1994). This does not mean eliminating or denying reality, and doubting everything but only the natural attitude (Moustakas, 1994). The researcher did this by describing the experience as she lived through it (Van Manen, 2007). This is illustrated by Moustakas (1994, p. 89) who posits that:

> Each time in my review I set aside biases and prejudgements and return with a readiness to look again into my life, to enter with hope and intention of seeing this person, or situation, or issue with new and receptive eyes

Secondly every significant statement relevant to the topic was listed. This process is called horizonalization where the researcher lists every relevant expression of importance, also known as invariant constituents. This was done by asking two questions: does the expression capture an element of substance that is necessary and sufficient which will aid in the understanding of the phenomenon; and is it possible to label and conceptualize the expression? If the expression can be classified, it is considered and is called, "a horizon of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121). If the expressions did not meet the two requirements, the data was eliminated. Repetitive and vague expressions are "eliminated or presented in more exact descriptive terms" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 121).

Thirdly, statements were clustered into themes or meaning units, removing overlapping and repetitive statements. Clustered and labelled constituents are the core themes of the experience (Moustakas, 1994). Fourthly, the researcher wrote a description of the meaning from the experience of the individuals; this process is called textural description (Creswell, 2007). This will include some exact words from the transcribed interviews. Also using structural description the researcher discusses how the phenomenon was experienced by individuals in the study. Lastly a composite

description is written to present the essence of the phenomenon, also called essential invariant structure, (Creswell, 2007). "This integrates all individual textural-structural descriptions into a universal description of the experience; representing the group as a whole" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 122).

Trustworthiness and Validity of the study

The researcher addressed the validity, trustworthiness and rigor of the research while acknowledging that the study was a qualitative phenomenological research. Qualitative researchers conceptualize the idea of rigor in multiple ways. For the purposes of this study, the work by Lincoln & Guba (1985), which discusses the concept of trustworthiness, was used. Trustworthiness is established when findings reflect the meanings exactly as described by the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Padgett cited in Lietz, Langer & Furman (2006) explains that trustworthiness is not something that just naturally occurs naturally. Hence qualitative researchers must engage in a variety of strategies in order to describe research findings such it authentically represents the meanings as described by the participants (Creswell,1998, 2007; Lincoln & Guba,1985; Lietz, Langer & Furman, 2006).The strategies include member checking, and audit trail (Creswell, 1998).

Trustworthiness was also determined by credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability. Credibility is the analysis of the data through a process of reflecting, sifting, exploring, judging its relevance and meaning and ultimately developing themes and essences that accurately depict the experience. Purposeful sampling increased in-depth understanding by selecting information-rich experiences from participants who have experienced school principalship (Patton, 2002). Dependability was established with the audit trail which involved maintaining and preserving all transcripts, notes, audiotapes. Authenticity was established by reporting each participant's experiences in such a way that it maintained respect for the context of the data and presented all perspectives equally so that the reader can arrive at an impartial decision.

A few days prior to the interview, the questions were provided to the participants. This gave the participants time to read and understand the questions, and they could consider their lived experiences before the actual interview. According to Creswell,

(2007) clarifying bias from the outset will also enhance validity as the reader will understand the position of the researcher and any biases or assumptions that may impact on the study. A pilot interview study was conducted with a female principal who had not been selected for the main research study which allowed the researcher to test the interview questions. The hope was that the participant will be able to offer suggestions, feedback, and any other information which could be used to redesign the questions and protocol. As stated the researcher also employed Edmund Husserl's concept of *epoche* or bracketing (Creswell, 2007), setting aside previous preconceptions and residual knowledge on the subject. The researcher then answers the same questions asked to the participants and the interview was transcribed. A personal journal was maintained throughout the interviewing process to assist in preventing personal bias from entering into the data analysis. Themes were developed from the data collected and rich thick descriptions we recreated. Qualitative validity was also determined by using strategies to check the accuracy of the findings. Member checking was used to determine the accuracy of the findings through taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to participants (Creswell, 2007). The researcher sent descriptions of themes and transcripts of all the data to each participant and requested a response to its accuracy and any changes they might suggest that would more precisely describe the experiences of the participants. Participants indicated that transcripts and themes represented their interviews correctly.

Ethical Issues

Ethical issues are the principles and rules to be considered before conducting a research and during the research process (Cohen et al. 2007). Addressing ethical issues was important for this study because qualitative methods are highly personal because of its naturalistic nature (Patton, 2002) and take the researcher into the real world where people live and work. The in-depth interview process sought to reveal the inner feelings of the individuals. As a phenomenological researcher, "the researcher was guided by the ethical principles existing regarding research with participants" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 109). Qualitative studies involved participants who volunteered to be co-researchers and they were free to withdraw at any time during the research. Detailed information regarding the nature and purpose of the study was

provided (see Appendix A). Information that was considered private and possibly damaging was removed or disguised to protect the participant's identity. Because the interviews were conversational and open-ended, misconceptions were clarified as they occurred. Self-reports were emphasised so that the participant would feel that her contributions were valued and contributing towards knowledge on the topic. As "an illumination of meanings inherent in the question" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 110) the participants can review, confirm or alter the research data to correspond to her perception. Confidentiality was maintained by using pseudonyms to protect the identity of the participants and the schools. The participants were given an informed consent after the researcher had explained the process in detail and how this might affect the participants. In this case the participants were informed that their involvement was voluntarily and that they might withdraw at any time during the study. The researcher also gave the supervisors contact details to the participants in case they need to verify or needed more information.

Summary

This chapter has discussed how the research will be conducted. Data collection methods, the sampling strategy, analysis of data and ethical issues were discussed. In the next chapter the findings of the study will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

Whilst the previous chapter described the methods used to carry out this study, this chapter presents the steps taken for the data analysis as well as the findings analysed from the interviews. The first part presents the participants career backgrounds. The study was undertaken to understand the lived experiences of female principals in UMgungundlovu District and these women provided descriptions of their experiences, including success, and information on the obstacles they have faced, and how they manage to overcome these. In order to regulate these descriptions, data was gathered by means of semi-structured interviews (see Appendix B). Data was presented according to the research questions as discussed in chapter one. The researcher consistently bracketed her experiences and presuppositions throughout the data analysis and allowed meaning units to emerge on their own. This chapter will conclude with highlighting emerging themes.

Participants' career backgrounds

The data collected on the participants' background included teaching experience, number of years of teaching before being promoted to other management positions and how many years they have been in their current positions, i.e. principalship. The women were drawn from three primary schools in UMgungundlovu District and pseudonyms have been used in order to maintain confidentiality. Table 4 below presents the profile of the participants in terms of their career backgrounds. It focuses on their teaching experience, the number of years before they were promoted to management positions and number of years they have been in the current positions of principalship. Their years of teaching are between twenty seven and thirty seven years, with Rose having served the longest, i.e., thirty seven years. Their experience as principals averages between three and seven years.

Table 1: Participants career profiles

Principal	Marital status	Number of years in teaching	Number of years taught before being promoted	Number of years in the management before principalship	Number of years in the current school	Number of years as a principal
Rose	Single	37	15	15	35	7
Jane	Widowed	27	13	10	6	7
Iris	Married	27	14	6	13	3

Rose describes herself as a born again Christian and believes that God has called her to serve at the school. Her philosophy is that that she simply gets on with life and deals with the events on a day by day basis. Jane indicated that her theme is that *you are special* and she indicated that she always lets people know that they are special. For these special people the expectation is special behaviour. She further stated that her role is not to guard people but to guide them. Iris describes her philosophy as *action speaks louder than words* and that she *leads by example*. This has been her principle in terms of moving forward in the teaching profession since she started her career. She further stated that she is passionate about teaching and leading; as well as the needs of each child that is *placed in her hands*.

In examining the phenomenological analysis of the interview data and the description of participants' lived experiences as discussed in chapter three, the researcher listed every significant statement relevant to the topic. This process is called horizonalization. Repetitive and vague expressions were eliminated or presented in more exact descriptive terms. Statements were then clustered into themes or meaning units. The researcher then described what has been experienced which discussed the participants experiences; this process is called textural description. This would include verbatim quotes from the transcribed interviews. Lastly the researcher wrote a composite description that presented the essence of the phenomenon called essential invariant structure or essence (Creswell, 2007). After the discussion of the participants' career backgrounds, the findings will be presented. The presentation will be according to the research questions which included:

1. What are the leadership experiences of women primary school principals in leading their schools in UMgungundlovu Districting relation to gender?

2. How do women principals cope with the demands that accompany the position of principalship?

Question 1: How do principals describe and perceive their leadership experiences of principalship

All the participants were promoted from the same school because of the principal having departed and had never applied to any other school prior to this time. If these principals had not left, they would have continued in their previous positions. They were the deputy principals and appointed to act as principals while the post for a new principal was being advertised. One of the participants, Iris stated that:

> *I acted because the person who was most senior opted not to act, he did not want to act, and I then decided to grab an opportunity as I felt I had been in the profession long enough.*

The other participant, Rose still felt that her intention was never to become a principal, she elaborated:

> *For me I honestly, I don't think I would not have applied to be principal at any other school. I applied here only because that post became vacant I was then deputy and this was the reason; if it had not become vacant I would have been quite happy and carried on being a deputy, it wasn't that I was looking to be the principal ... I came to this profession to teach and I believe that the role of the teacher and the role of the principal are totally different things, I was happy but also sad knowing that my time in the classroom and having my own classroom had passed.*

In preparation for principalship, women principals perceived themselves as being leaders before being actually promoted to a formal leadership position. When describing what motivated her, Jane said:

> *... from the time when I was a level 1 teacher I was very dedicated to my work; if there was anything to be done at school I was always the first one to*

jump, young as I was at an early age, curriculum I was part of it. ... Anything that has to do with leadership I used to share with other schools so I grew as a level 1 and HOD. I was very involved in the department activities; I also worked with the curriculum in the department. I attended seminars; I conducted and facilitated a number of workshops. Whether it was holidays or school time, that's the thing that assisted me, it empowered me as a person.

Apparently, none of the participants had planned to be principals in their careers before the positions became available in their schools. After examining the lived experiences of the participants as to how they became principals, this study presents how the women described their ways of leading.

When sharing their experiences the participants stated that once they had been appointed as principals they found they were challenged by their new status. Iris explained that she had to prove herself to the educators. As she began to explain her experience she stated:

Turbulent, (pause)... yah, I served 10 years in the management and we worked fantastically as a team. But immediately after obtaining principalship I felt I had to prove myself daily, that I was competent enough to hold such a position. There was a lot of resistance. As a female one is often looked as not being capable by male counterparts. Every action of mine was questioned. And sometimes I had the experience of individuals bursting into my office without following protocol, bursting in and throwing insults. I was faced with that challenge of intimidation, I had to be mindful.

In elaborating how she had to prove herself, she indicated:

I felt I had to be guarded in everything I undertook; everything was questioned and as a woman, you are sometimes made to feel small; that your input may be as not as valuable because is not coming from a male, and if a man had to say the same thing somehow people took it in and digested it. It was not easy.

During this process which she found traumatic, she stated that she thought of quitting. She said: *I had to question myself that do I need this, do I really need it? And there were times when I felt that for my own sanity let me quit (Iris).* In sharing her experiences the Jane related her experience to gender as well as age and she stated that:

> *… it wasn't easy especially because there were people who were acting up and because in terms of age as well there were senior staff. Senior people are of the opinion that they know better, younger people can't tell them anything. It was worse because it was a male so … (pause) even among staff I use to notice that when we would discuss something I would share something and instead of people coming to consult with me, they would rather consult with the person who had been here for years who is older and a man, rather than myself, mmm that used to happen.*

Jane was also challenged by the staff members who appeared to accept her as an individual with her own style of leadership although they still compared her with the previous principal. In her response she also indicated that:

> *There was also a lot reference to a previous principal, when principal so and so was here we used to … so even when I introduced new programmes, people would, say we see mam's programme but when we used to do it like that etc. I ended up saying you know when the previous principal left he left twenty people he was the only brain that left. I am willing to take your ideas, let's put our heads together, but it is not going to assist us if we say we used to do it like that.*

Rose had a different experience in that she was supported by most of the staff members. She attributed the reasons for the support she received as follows:

> *… there was a time they thought you never know when a new person takes over what he was going to do, which way the school will go, will it be a good thing or bad thing. I was someone they knew… they could have had someone who wasn't as good and then the school would have been led in a different*

direction. So I had a lot of support, and they also encouraged me to apply and they were all very thrilled when I got it.

When asked if they were given an induction by their immediate supervisor when they started work as principals, they indicated that they received no introduction. There was no guidance which created a huge challenge for each of them. One woman said:

I never had anyone to say, mam we need you to have these policies one to twenty policies to start and consult, you need you to open this file and you have to open that file to do those things, nobody said this, not even my immediate supervisor. On the day he left here he said, mam I am leaving you here waiting for the results at the end of the year and that was it.

She recalled an incident when an official visited the school a week after she assumed her role as principal. This official requested information regarding school nutrition. She recalled:

I tried to open a brown folder I had found with 'nutrition' written on it and I gave it to him. He asked, mam is this a nutrition file; he looked at me as if there was something wrong with me, I had only been in school for a week, he then asked me what he should do with the nutrition file? I opened the file tried to put things, documents… nobody told me.

Another instance that she remembered was when she had been expected to report to the departmental official concerning the finances. She had not received any information on financial management, and no documents had been given to her.

There was this guy from finance who wanted everything and nothing was being handed over to me to say that mam at this school as the principal, these are the financial documents; this is how I've been doing finance here, this is how the department expects you to do finances, I've never received not even a half hours training on that.

Rose had a similar experience when she found herself in a situation where she didn't know what she was doing. However, instead of blaming the lack of information and

training, she said that she regretted not having the opportunity to learn from her previous principal while she was the deputy principal. She stated:

> *... it's nice to know what the principal does before you become a principal because she (previous principal) literally did everything and I was teaching; it's just certain things where she asked me to help and then she would ask the head of department (HOD) to help with others but I didn't really know too much about what she was doing in the office ... when I became principal I didn't know what filling system there was there or no filling system, didn't know how anything worked, didn't know what to do, this was a challenge because I didn't really know the way it worked; it took me a long time to get on top of that as it was a big change and it wasn't as smooth running as I thought.*

After all the frustration and challenges that she experienced, Jane stated: *I just learned along the way and it has made me stronger, it has made me stronger.* She also acknowledged that eventually there was an induction program but felt it was still not enough:

> *... even when they've got these induction programs, SMT induction programs it's a one day program to say you need the curriculum and manage this, you manage that. There's actually nothing to give us guidance.*

Although these women indicated that they experienced challenges when they began their careers as principals, they still believed that they did rise above the challenges and have made some remarkable achievements. In leading their schools, women principals manage to use their role as a mother to their advantage to gain respect from learners and educators. Jane indicated that women could be better principals because of this ability. She stated that: *women mother everyone and everything;* she further stated that if there are issues with teachers:

> *As loco parentis I take it as my priority that I must play that role, I will deal with discipline but at the end of the day play the role of the mother, motivate*

them, encourage them, mould them to be better people ... You sit, listen, you talk with them, give guidance. Men will just say you do this and nothing else ... by being warm and motherly they make an effort to please you as a mom, they do best they can to make you happy because you make them happy.

Iris took it further from just seeing herself as a mother but to seeing the whole school as a family. She indicated that:

The roles that we play as women have helped me see things in a broader spectrum. It has helped me to put people first ... I firmly believe in teamwork and see all school as a family. I recognized the strengths in each member of staff, learners, and members of the SGB and drew on this to help me move forward.

Apart from using their maternal style as part of the way in which they carry out their roles, women principals also mentioned that they use a collaborative style of leadership. Jane stated that:

Collaboration to me is the key. Everyone gets involved; whatever we do is never top down. There is a lot of consultation. I'm a very open person; I am very loving and caring, very loving and compassionate. Everyone must feel important.

Although the Rose didn't specify collaborative in particular, she stated that she attempts to get cooperation from all involved:

I always speak to management or consult with someone ... I encourage and support others to help develop themselves. I am not one that is forceful, overbearing, or just making demands. I always try to be reasonable, get cooperation of everyone and to work with everyone.

Having indicated that they use collaborative style of leadership, two of them asserted that they sometimes need to use an autocratic style of leadership. One of the principals noted: *Once in a while you need to set the rules, the tone, this is how you do it and there is no other way.*

She cited an example:

With extra-curricular activities some would go on duty, some would not want to go on duty, so you just tell people this is part of your job description. For professional development workshops, during school holidays people would squeal. It is going to empower you. Our roles as teachers is to teach in the classroom and to do the extra-curricular activities, do ground duty, those are the things teachers do not want to do. Then you need to tell them that these are non-negotiables.

Iris also shared her experience:

Sometimes, yes I did feel should I threatened that we women feel compassion, and there were times when I felt hey, are they taking an advantage of the fact I am a female, especially when it came to leave taking, absenteeism and late-coming, issues like that.

Further emphasizing her philosophy which to lead by example Iris stated:

I put myself in with them. I do not mind picking up the broom if the cleaning staff is not available. For teaching staff, if the teacher is away I am not going to dictate to sit in the office, if it means stepping into the class and taking over until we sort things out. The priority is that children need to be actively involved.

Iris described herself as a situational leader. She stated that this is because *it depends is because sometimes there are non-negotiables.* She cited a scenario whereby somebody has violated South African Council for Educators (SACE) code of conduct; this is when an autocratic style should be used and also regarding policies that need to be enforced.

All participants stated that the autocratic style of leadership is the most challenging in the sense that people become resistant, as Iris noted:

When you pass things on to individuals as a leader, you going to get resistance … if you going to get the desired effect that you are looking for. You

are not going to get team of workers that are be very excitely, enthusiastically motivated to take on tasks.

Although participants pointed out that being collaborative works, they indicated that it comes with certain disadvantages, as Jane pointed out: *Teachers sometimes take advantage of you by asking for favours like leaving early because they want to go to the bank to apply for loans during school time (Jane).* Rose related this to a challenge she had with members of staff to her leadership style. She described:

Because I was fair and not demanding and strict, I was trying to be reasonable and kind they took advantage. Because of my personality and my style they took advantage of that.

Rose suggested that one cannot be both collaborative and autocratic as it would not work:

You either be too considerate, too lenient and too compassionate and people take advantage which I realise some people do… the other extreme is to become someone you are not which I don't, just make decisions do this, do that and they don't care which I know some principals do … Its very difficult to have a bit of both, you can't be both. I prefer to be reasonable and lead by example.

Iris indicated that being collaborative also benefits the staff and is of benefit to her as principal. How Iris described being collaborative is that:

… you don't see yourself in the position as I know it all. You see in others their strengths and what they have to offer and sometimes you learn so much even from younger and newly qualified teachers, and you are putting all the heads together and you come up with this beautiful plan of how things should unfold.

Participants suggested that when leading schools they prefer to consult with the staff on decisions. They also indicated that they tried to cooperate with everyone. They noted that sometimes staff would take advantage of them and acknowledged that sometimes they need be autocratic which itself presents more challenges.

When sharing their experiences about the greatest achievements that the participants feel they have accomplished as principals, it was noted that for all of them people are very important. They indicated that managing to ensure that teachers work together as a team is a great achievement. Jane said:

I think uniting the staff is my greatest achievement. I can proudly say now, everyone in school takes part everyone now has got something to lead and when we used to sit together I could see that there was tension. We intermingle with anyone we are a family; we are a family.

Iris indicated that for her it was *getting all on board as a team. Make everyone feel that they are important (Iris).* Rose saw her main achievement as related not only to staff but also to learners. She said:

I would say just the lives that I've touched. I think that it is the biggest thing to be given the lives of our children … in fact I think the biggest thing is people, you can't always measure it maybe but I think those are lasting things and more valuable than anything else. Also with the staff, the lives that I've touched they have always appreciated the help that I've given them; inspiration I give them and just to be there when they are going through tough times more than a place, to know there a place where they loved and accepted, and the children too because sometimes they are not getting that at home; I believe is that's why I'm here.

Women also saw professional development as important in enhancing teaching and learning and to promote teacher leadership by ensuring that everybody be involved.

I've got people here who are high flyers today; when I got here there were in a cocoon. I remember if there were activities or projects to be done and I would call my colleagues and say you need to do this; they used to sit there timidly and not do anything or respond to anything. Until I called them casually, so and so when I look at you I look at your age and your personality, I think you have a lot to offer. I'll give you all the support; maybe identify two or more

people you will be comfortable working with. Believe you me today I've got people who are in charge of sport people in charge of lot of programs in school (Jane).

As her most important achievement Iris noted: *settling the school into a teaching and learning organization, and making everyone feel as important and focusing on the importance of team spirit.* She associated her achievement with the Principals' Management and Development Programme (PMPD) that was initiated by Education Department to newly appointed principals that had boosted her confidence and her self-esteem. As much as they want to bring everyone together they are sometimes faced with a challenge of people not wanting to co-operate and being resistant.

Although the participants have achieved things that they embrace, they have also had to deal with the many challenges. All participants shared their experiences of the trials that they faced in their principal positions. Jane shared her experience:

The worst is when a person does not want to work with you. Sometimes you find that instead of consulting with you they consult with somebody else. They would not consult with me as a principal, but would consult with Mr... who is the deputy principal or the head of department. Sometimes you discuss matters with school management team (SMT) before you go to the staff and the staff they already know what you are going to say. So these were some of the challenges, because now he wants to be seen as still leading though he is not in the office, those were some of the challenges .

While the participants see resistance as a challenge, they indicated that they could use that to their advantage. Iris stated: *This is because if someone is rejecting your idea you see your pitfalls. There are many times when I could draw on from his expertise (Iris).* Sometimes even giving them the extra respect they need, especially the older men, by agreeing could help – this was Jane relating to her experience:

Sometimes it helps you to submit, for example, Mr (name of the teacher) who is 61. I also had one male teacher who was over 60 and it worked to my advantage because submitting to them was not so that they would walk over

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me. I would approach them by giving them respect that they are like fathers to me. I would say baba (father) 'would you be able to help me with this'. When you consult that way he feels, you know what, mam needs me she can't move without me. So he feels you respect him irrespective of that you are the principal and he is post level 1. It makes him feel important. He would respect you and will give you support. Just because you are younger and female, she's older than me. I found that it has worked in my favour

Apart from having challenges with the staff, the other challenges faced by these women principals were financial challenges, administrative challenges and workload. Iris indicated that:

... the other one is financial constraints in providing the excellent and quality public education in the community where the school is situated. Serving a school from poor socio-economic communities where funds are always limited ... yeah one can say financial constraints. It is very hard, you have to go out there and fundraise, go out there and beg. You have to go to the corporate world and speak to businesses to beg for help.

Rose indicated that there is an enormous amount of paperwork and forms, as well as maintaining a filing system, to keep up with all the issues related to the principal's position. She attributed this challenge to not being able to be a delegator which, she said, seemed to be easier for men:

I mean when I come to school, all the things I plan to get done, often out of ten things I might have done I have completed one. Continual interruptions and following up on things on the children or the parents or the department or staff or something ... I think that one of my drawbacks is that I don't delegate enough coz when I have delegated things don't always get done properly. So I end up being hands on which doesn't help coz I would be so busy which I end up doing things which other principals, men principals are giving other people to do.

When sharing their experiences about their challenges, they stated that resistance from members of staff is one of the common challenges that they face at the schools.

Another challenge is administrative work, financial constraints and time constraints. Having presented the findings on how participants described and perceived their experiences, this study will discuss how the participants cope with the demands that come with being the principal in a primary school.

Question 2: How do women principals cope with the demands that come with the role of the school principal?

For the purposes of motivation encouragement, and to get support, participants felt that networking was important, but frequently due to time and financial constraints this is not possible. Two participants recalled how the women principals support network used to help them.

> *We had a women principal support network UMgungundlovu District that was initiated by one woman district official. We were hoping that it would grow and to extend it to all members of school management. But we did not have funds to run programs like these, we normally asked for sponsors; that's why we had hiccups here and there. But it was very useful (Jane).*

The other principals shared the same sentiments:

> *Networking is vital and is much needed, being part of the UMgungundlovu women principals network forum has sure helped me see my position in not being the only female to experience the challenges we are facing with the sharing of innovative ideas, information and advice from experienced and successful principals is crucial for the success of your own organization. It helped one grow from strength to strength. That resistance, pull her down syndrome, we shared ideas and problems (Iris).*

> *We meet now and again; what I do which is how one of the principal started networking it's almost like a breakfast and motivational talk that they do once a term; one of the private school principals started it. Now it has really grown and is for all principals for all kinds of schools, we meet once a term, and there is a motivational speaker to inspire and build us up coz we give, give, and give. It was a wonderful initiative and all the principals are looking*

forward to it and we look forward to going for the meeting, we go there to network and we discuss thing with other principals around the table with a bit of breakfast, we have inspirational talks and come away feeling really inspired and uplifted; it's really great, it really is a great time (Rose).

Even though networking is important, participants felt that time is always a factor, *as all principals are busy with the demands of the day (Rose).* Unlike men, women may have additional responsibilities that prevent them from taking the opportunity to network. This was asserted by one Jane who said:

A man can just drive from work go anywhere to network, being a wife with a husband you can't drive from school suddenly you are meeting another principal to network. There's no time not that there's no time.

This is also as a result that women are seen to work differently than men. One woman indicated:

We as women we have to consult while a man can just go anywhere after school, even though he is late to pick up a child it's still okay; somehow we as women, I think we are more responsible than men I would say, for any task we do we always make a plan men can suddenly do this and that's it, we work differently (Jane).

Apart from the networking, women principals indicated that they have taken it upon themselves individually to make contact with more experienced principals, regardless of gender, to support them. For an example one principal indicated that:

when it comes to other things, sometimes I would phone my ex-principal to ask her if she could conduct a workshop for staff on methods of discipline and the alternatives to corporal punishment. You don't want to do things yourself in the school, you ask other people outside; it's part of networking and you would say that I would come. I've had a principal from one school that came and motivated staff and did some of the workshops with us; it does help to network (Jane).

It became apparent that these woman principals struggle to balance their positions between home and work. This is ascribed to the fact that the role of the principal and of the mother both demand time. A principal one does not work normal hours like the rest of the teachers and this balance becomes a challenge. One woman indicated:

> *It is hard; it is very, very hard. I try to my best of my ability not to disadvantage one against the other. When I leave school at the end of the day at around 15H30, I put on the cap of the mother. I also squeeze my time. But there are days that are difficult, sometime you have to be called while you are at home, but I try to balance. On Saturdays I balance work and home, but Sundays is my home time. Putting the needs of others first has always been my way of life from as long as I can remember. This stems from my home background and early childhood. I try to balance life and school (Iris).*

Another woman shared her dilemma:

> *Sometimes I feel guilty because by the time I get home sometimes I can't cook. I end up buying takeaways. I hardly have time for myself. My work does not finish at 14H30 like everybody else. After work sometimes I have to run to the bank, run to the department before I leave at around 16H30 to rush to pick my son up, go home and cook, help him with homework and it is already night. By the time I am finished, there is no time. Not just I do not make time for myself there is just no time. My social life is hopeless (Jane).*

For the other principal:

> *.. well I think in the roles of principals generally, we are very, very busy, so the problems of home sort of hit you when you get home and then it's go, go and its very busy at home, having to do a bit of work at home or sit to be with my mother who has not had anyone to talk to all day. So I've got to spend time with her and do things at home so its demanding my time and I end up going to bed late which I probably should to get everything done, probably just being tired I have to wake up early in the morning to sort her out as well and help her with things and to get her ready for the day, so it's a challenge to*

get everything done in the morning and get to work on time and when work comes you forget about the home problems and that there's something I've got to try and arrange or need to go somewhere. You get to beginning of term and its go, go, go so it's just a very busy life, but at the moment I'm coping and the big thing is to just look after my health and I must say that I quite appreciate being well (Rose).

All participants mentioned that spirituality helps them to be where they are, to overcome or to cope with the challenges that they come across as principals.

God plays a big part my life that is why I believe I'm an inspiration today, He called me to be here and that's why I'm serving and administer to others as the principal at the school… I became born again Christian filled with the Holy Spirit and I became more confident, changed, and just believed on what God want me to do then he will equip me to do it (Rose)

On balancing home and work life, Iris stated *[it] is hard; it is very, very hard. I try to my best of my ability not to disadvantage one from the other.* She dedicated her ability to cope to the spiritual awareness programme where she had been involved: *…subscribing to the universal principles of love, truth, right conduct, peace and non-violence helps me balance my time.*

When Rose was faced with a challenge from staff members when she had just been promoted, she believed that praying about it helped her to overcome this:

When I first started here we had a lot of issues with the general assistants, especially with unions getting involved and if they were late and you tried to give them a warning they would run to the unions. So that was a big challenge … I believe that it was only through God I was helped, we've prayed about it and now we are all working together so well but that was a big challenge to overcome.

When she was not successful in getting an office-based promotion post she had applied for, Jane indicated:

... I am taking a religious point of view to say, you know what, sometimes because God reigns supreme ... God felt He needs me here I will be more effective here than there, I even say this to staff (Jane).

Women principals describe their leadership experiences as initially very challenging. This they believed to be a result of the resistance they faced from the staff because they are women in positions of leadership. The other statement was that they felt that they were not prepared for principalship and they were not inducted. Balancing home and work was also a challenge to the principals because of both these demand time. The other challenge that was mentioned was financial constraints and paperwork. To cope with these demands, the women felt they had to network, in order to make sure they have some form of support systems and they collaborated with both the staff and learners. In leading their schools they were motherly as part of their approach to the staff and also to the learners' needs. Their major achievement was working as team.
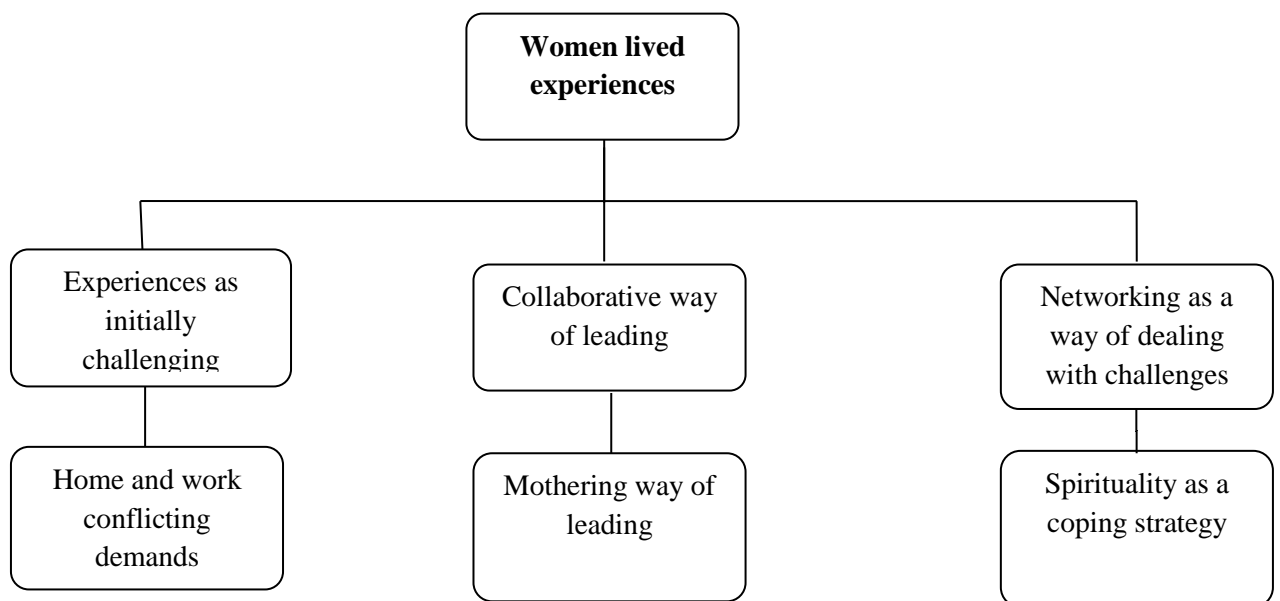
Figure 1: themes/ meaning units map

Summary

This chapter has presented the finding of the phenomenological study for the primary school women principals. Three overarching predominant attributes appeared from findings, namely, the challenges faced by women faced, the way in which women lead, and their coping strategies. Six themes emerged from the results about how woman primary school principals experienced principalship. These themes are: experiences as initially challenging, collaborative way of leading, home and work conflicting demands, networking as a coping strategy, mothering as way of leading, and spirituality as a coping strategy (see Figure 4). The next chapter will discuss the findings based on the themes that emerged in presentation of findings that was discussed in this chapter as shown in figure 4.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Chapter four presented the essence of the participants' experiences of principalship. It also presents how they made sense of their experiences. The final chapter of this dissertation consists of an overview of the study, a discussion of how it relates to the literature reviewed and the conclusions drawn from the study. It begins by discussing the general findings which have emerged from this study as a whole within the context of the association to other existing literature. This chapter then provides the conclusions which have been drawn from the study. The final portion of the chapter is comprised of recommendations for further research.

The study explored and described the lived experiences of female principals in UMgungundlovu District. In addition to describing the phenomenon of women principalship, this study was also aimed at understanding how women principals become successful in their roles as principals. This included the challenges faced by these women principals and how they managed to overcome these. In understanding the lived experiences women primary school principals of UMgungundlovu District, six themes have emerged. These themes are: challenging first experiences, work and home conflicting demands, networking as a way of coping with challenges, spirituality as a way of coping with challenges, collaborative methods of leading and mothering as a leadership style.

Experiences as initially challenging

Participants revealed that at least twenty one year's experience as well as teaching in order for women to be promoted to principalship. Frequently women received their promotion to principalship because the former principals had departed and the post was vacant; they became acting principals and eventually permanently appointed. Interestingly, what emerged is that all participants willingly seized the opportunity. This is in agreement with information gathered from literature reviews. The study by

Eddy (2008) revealed that several of the women did not initially have ambitions to become college leaders. For all participants the opportunity arose because of the previous incumbents departing. According to Eddy (2008) the reasons for women being seen as lacking ambition are firstly, that women are satisfied with their current positions and as a result do not contemplate career moves. Secondly this is because no one has encouraged them to seek a higher level of leadership (Eddy, 2008). This disclosure is in agreement with synergistic leadership theory proposed by Irby et al. (2002) and as it indicates that beliefs, attitudes and values contributes towards the absence of women in leadership positions.

As they assumed principalship, women principals described their leadership experiences as initially challenging. When sharing their experiences about their difficulties, they stated that resistance from members of staff was one of the most frequent challenges that they faced at the schools. Others were administrative work, financial and time constraints. Furthermore two women principals indicated that once they had been appointed as principals they were confronted with challenges of not being accepted as principals due to resistance from members of staff; this resistance was experienced differently. Iris described her experience being that the men would always question her decisions. She felt that the reason for this was that men believed that she was incompetent as every action she took was questioned by then. Current literature agrees with this as it states that women emerge less frequently than men as leaders mainly because women must meet a higher standard than men in order to be considered highly competent (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Moorosi 2010).

Findings has shown that women principals did not make themselves visible for principal positions as they had not attempted to apply to other schools before being promoted in their schools. Harris, Muijs & Crawford (2003) assert that one key supposition regarding deputy principals is that they aspire to become principals. Hence their current role is an important stage in their development as potential principals. Although that is the case, data revealed that no introduction or instruction was provided to support women principals and the previous principal did not hand over or communicate the various requirements of the position to the new individual. Hence they created their own support systems which have been already highlighted,

e.g. networking. One participant stated there were no induction programmes for her immediately after she was appointed, although after a while there was a day's induction program which was inadequate because it did not provide guidance but only instructions as to what was expected. Another participant indicated that one of the challenges that she faced with the general assistants was that when she had to address issues, for example, being late, this was difficult as she had no previous experience of this problem while she was deputy principal. The previous principal had not exposed her to leadership responsibilities as *she literally did everything* (Rose). She believed that if she had witnessed some of these incidents, she could have been better prepared for principalship. This concurs with the literature which states that preparation before and immediately after commencing principalship is essential (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Orr & Cohen, 2007; Peters, 2010; Ibrahim, 2011; Harris et al., 2003).

Literature has also illustrated that aspiring and emerging principals are ill-prepared and do not receive enough support. In other words being a deputy principal does not necessarily prepare one for principalship because of the lack of direct leadership experience (Harris et al., 2003; Peters, 2010). Even though there should be courses or development programs for deputy principals, principals should also be properly introduced to their schools and educated immediately after their appointment. Principals should also support and train their deputy principals as they remain the gatekeepers to leadership functions at the school (Harris et al. 2003).

Work and home conflicting demands

Women principals spoke about how their social lives had been affected by their access to principalship as by spending more hours at school they had to adjust their private and home lives. This has resulted less time for socialising and carrying out their home responsibilities, e.g. cooking for their families and taking care of their dependents, whether these are minors or senior family members. Recognised roles as a woman at home created a challenge to balance home and work and all participants indicated that this is very difficult. Two participants who had children mentioned that it was very demanding and one stated that sometimes she could not even cook as she would arrive late from work. Although the other participant did not have children she also had difficulties because she was looking after her frail mother. This is convergent with the literature as Vachon & Lavis (2013) found that Canadian women were still

responsible for more household roles than men. Their study revealed that the roles that women had were not only childcare but also care of the elderly. Also Wharton (2005) posited that the workplace is the first shift and this takes more time often resulting in home as the second shift becoming hurried and shortened. Subsequently women with full time careers find that 'they are balancing second shift at home' resulting in them having less leisure time than men (Vachon & Lavis, 2013, p. 20). Consequently this results in a 'time bind' where women will have difficulty in trying to meet work expectations and family obligations (Wharton, 2005, p. 112).   This resonates with Irby et al. (2002); Rashid, (2010) who posit that external factors that are beyond control of an individual and organization can impact negatively on women. This is because women are positioned by circumstances based on traditions and culture, for example, women's home responsibilities.

Networking as a way of dealing with the challenges

In trying to cope with the challenges and demands it has emerged that women needed to network. Findings revealed that participants felt that networking was important, but frequently due to time and financial constraints, this is not possible. They attributed the importance of networking to assisting them in getting motivation and encouragement as well as support. Two participants recalled how the women principals support network has assisted them with problems. Networks are less formal connections than sponsors or mentor relationships. Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan & Ballenger (2007) noted that lack of established networks for women is still a barrier which reduces the amount of support available to address the barriers towards women in leadership. Networking and good working relationships can provide emotional support and information concerning opportunities and protection (Cherry, 2010). The study by Shakeshaft et al. (2007) concluded that after twenty years the literature still shows that women need assistance in establishing and effectively using networks which include both men and women in leadership positions. They also concluded that organizations should support networking as these should not only be viewed at a personal level but also at an organizational level.

Spirituality as a way of coping with the demands

Apart from using networking to cope with the demands as another form of support system, all women acknowledged the importance of spirituality as a source of personal strength in difficult situations. Rose indicated that *God plays a big part my life that is why I believe I'm an inspiration today.* Even when she was experiencing challenges with the staff, she believed that through her faith in God, she was able to pray about it and this helped her in her decisions. Another participant, Iris, dedicated her ability to cope with balancing home and life to a spiritual awareness programme in which she had been involved. Zane, the other participant, mentioned that when she did not get the post she had applied she thought: *God felt He needs me here I will be more effective here than there.* This is evident in the literature as it showed that spiritual leadership is another way for women to lead in education (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). It is grounded in spirituality as a source of personal strength as well as a way to understanding their connections to others. Women acknowledge the importance of their spirituality in dealing with conflicting and difficult situation (Shakeshaft et al. 2007). This was also evident when women leaders, irrespective of race, discussed spirituality as one of the ways of modelling behaviour and inspiring others (Shakeshaft et al., 2003). It became evident that participants relied on their values and faith to maintain confidence and motivation and to cope with the challenges they encountered. Spirituality guides them and gives them a source of security for their roles.

Collaborative way of leadership

Findings have shown that women described their leadership as democratic, participatory, people orientated, relational, collaborative, consultative and leading by example. This has revealed that all participants perceived that they see themselves as being collaborative, consultative and caring for others; compassionate and people orientated in their decision-making practices. To them team work is very important. This resonates with literature about women's leadership styles as discussed in Chapter two. SLT posits that leadership behaviours ranging from autocratic to nurturer should be noted when studying women leadership in education. Literature has indicated that women use collaborative, relational, participatory, building capacity, consultative

(Eagly, et al., 2003; Eagly & Carli, 2007; Applebum et al. 2003; Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011; Eagly & Johannessen-Schmidt, 2001; Eagly, 2007).

Literature suggests that that the leadership behaviours that are associated with women may include, but are not limited to, communication, relationships, shared decision-making and building capacity in others (Grogan & Shakeshaft, 2011). It also suggested that apart from people orientated way of leading; women also practiced leadership as a learning approach by prioritizing student learning. This was evident in the findings as all indicated that they believe in staff/professional development and developing others in order to enhance teaching and learning and to support teacher leadership. Women stated that although they use this gender stereotypical way of leading, sometimes staff would take advantage of them. As a result two participants indicated that sometimes they would apply autocratic style especially when they had to enforce policies. They acknowledged that by being autocratic they would encounter resistance from other teachers. These findings support other authors who draw attention to gender and leadership in their studies. For example Koenig et al. (2011) found that women tended to use both masculine and feminine methods of leading.

One participant, (Rose) believed that one could not be both collaborative and autocratic. This was even though she had experienced challenges as she stated: *Because I was fair and not demanding and strict, I was trying to be reasonable and kind they took advantage. Because of my personality and my style they took advantage of that.* This is convergent with literature as it stated that women in leadership positions face a double bind. According to Synergistic Leadership Theory by Irby et al. (2002), values, beliefs and attitudes which is a foundational factor in leadership as it speaks to how people view leadership with regards to gender. The organizational structure may manifest bureaucratic or collaborative structure based on the beliefs, values and attitudes of their organization.

Women principals faced challenges when they display masculine characteristics as they are judged as being counter-stereotypical. If they display feminine characteristics, they are also faced with challenges as they do not fit the role of the leader (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Firstly they can be judged as being counter-stereotypical feminine if they are agentic, i.e. have masculine characteristics, or

stereotypical feminine if they are communal which violates the description of gender role., i.e. have feminine characteristics (Eagly & Karau, 2002). This also resonates with lack-of-fit model by Heilman (1983) that stated that the success that is achieved by an individual in a position is determined by the fit between the perception of an individual's attributes and the perception of the job's requirements. Regardless of the challenges participants faced, it was interesting to note that all participants described themselves as being collaborative and consultative; they believe that this method of leadership helps them to achieve their goals and they used it to their advantage. For example Iris indicated that uniting the staff was her greatest achievement. Rose stated that for her it was supporting and developing others and receiving cooperation from everyone.

Mothering as a leadership style

Evidence from this study suggests that women principals who have children, namely, Jane and Iris used their mothering experience to their advantage to gain respect from learners and educators. This has helped them to put people first and to see the whole school as a family. As stated earlier, SLT suggests that beliefs, attitudes and values are foundations for the guiding principles that influence leadership behaviour as demonstrated through actions. This could result in certain leadership behaviour. Jane indicated that women could be better principals because of their ability as mothers. She stated that: *women mother everyone and everything*; she further stated that if there are issues with teachers by being motherly she would motivate them, encourage them and mould them. This resonates with the literature review as Lumby & Azaola (2013) study found that female principals used their mothering skills to try to overcome social problems in schools and communities, and also to overcome gender stereotypical challenges in their schools. Jane also mentioned that even when dealing with resistance from senior men she applied the maternal role of submitting to them to gain cooperation. With that they felt important she stated:

> *I would approach them by giving them respect that they are like fathers to me. I would say baba (father). It makes him feel important. He would respect you and will give you support. Just because you are younger and female, she's older than me. I found that it has worked in my favour.*

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From the data women have successfully managed to use mothering as way of dealing with staff and learners. This challenges the literature that proposes that gender stereotypical thinking that women are subordinate and that motherhood is incongruent with leadership (Lumby & Azaola 2013).

Conclusions and Recommendations for further research

This chapter has discussed the general findings emerging from this study within the context of their relationship with other literature on women and leadership through conventional research approaches. In the this research study, the researcher made a conscious effort to discuss the findings in relation to the review of the literature as a result attempted to answer the two following research questions as stated in Chapter 1.

What are the leadership experiences of women primary school principals in leading their schools in UMgungundlovu District?

How do women principal cope with the demands that come with the role of principalship.

Data analysis revealed that all participants were promoted from the same school where they worked when their principals had departed. This study concludes that women did not make themselves visible for promotion for principalship by applying for the positions. On that note it then became apparent that for them to be selected as prospective principals was by default because of the principal retiring or passing on. The study also revealed that women experienced principalship as challenging as they began their roles in their schools. It emerged that women principals were not prepared as they did not receive training or guidance before assuming principalship. Even after assuming principalship they did not receive induction that could help them to navigate their way in their roles as principals. It also emerged that women did experience some resistance from members of staff as they assumed principalship. In copying with these challenges it has emerged that women used some support systems that would help them.

Another challenge that women experienced were the conflicting demands of work and home as both demand time and frequently these women principals arrive home late and still have duties to carry out in the home when they are already exhausted.

Networking has emerged as a method used by women principals as a support and participants were members of support networks in their surrounding schools. Spirituality has also emerged as important coping strategy for women to deal with the challenges and demands that come with the role of the principal and of the women. The study has also revealed that women's way of leading was collaborative. They believe in consultation and teamwork. What was also astounding from this study was that women believed that their gender as mothers was also important in their leadership.

Recommendations emerging from the study

From the research study and the experiences that were shared by women primary school principals, several recommendations became apparent that may benefit the educational administration and women leadership positions in primary schools. These recommendations may also raise the awareness of policy makers in education administration. It was apparent from this study that these women were only appointed as principals because they were already deputy principals. As the posts became available they then had an opportunity to fill the positions of principals. It also emerged that these women felt unprepared for principalship as they had not been trained nor mentored to be principals. This has been indicated by the fact that simply being the deputy principal did not prepare them for principalship. Hence the recommendation is that deputy principals need to be trained and prepared for principalship so that when they are appointed they can take on the position with confidence. This could include mentorship as part of the roles of the principals so that they can instruct and guide deputy principals for future positions of principalship. Women should also take the initiative by working closely with the principals to acquire the skills and advance professionally. They should also connect with other women principals and expose themselves to programmes tailored for women so that they will be empowered and gain confidence. As a form of networking, experienced women principals should be linked with novice and aspiring principals to give guidance and mentorship. Also networking groups should be encouraged and funded where women could meet to empower each other and to share their experiences.

Suggestions for further research

As it has emerged from the literature, women leadership calls for more research studies. Some of the areas that would benefit from further research area;

- A study on women deputies and school management teams would be appropriate in order to gain information regarding their experiences in those positions.

- As it has become clear, a research study that would focus on women deputy principals on how their roles can benefit them as aspiring principals would also contribute towards understanding the underrepresentation of women in leadership.

- A study of existing principals of schools regarding how they prepare and develop women deputy principals for accessing principalship.

- From the findings, new women leadership characteristics have emerged, namely, spirituality and mothering. More research studies on these will add more insights to women leadership literature.

- As the researcher's findings were limited to women primary school principals in UMgungundlovu District, similar research should be conducted in other contexts to present a clearer picture of women primary school principals' experiences. Similar research could be conducted with male principals to compare to the findings of this study.

- A replication research study that will have a larger sample could also be beneficial.

Summary

This study focussed on women principals' lived experiences as it sought to explore and understand why women are underrepresented in principalship positions even in the primary schools where the majority are women teachers. The study revealed that there are several different barriers that hinder women from accessing principal positions and also when they have accessed principal's positions. Apart from organizational/structural barriers it has emerged that socio-cultural and personal factors do also contribute towards underrepresentation of women in principal positions. These factors also affect women when they are already in the positions as principals. The researcher believes that this study adds to the understanding of women

principals in primary schools and hopes that it will assist in facilitating future research on women and leadership.

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COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
 (HUMAN AND SOCIAL SCIENCES)

Participant Information Sheet

Dear Participants,

I am studying Master of Education (Education, Leadership and Management) at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and this research is part of the degree. The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of women principals who will give descriptions of their work lives, including their resilience and the obstacles they faced, in order to determine how female principals are successful in obtaining their positions. This will be accomplished through in-depth interviews. Barriers to leadership opportunities for women and resilience factors will be examined to help describe some of the reasons women continue to be underrepresented in the role of principalship. As you are a woman principal in your school situated in UMgungundlovu District, I would like to listen to you talking about your experiences as a women principal. I also would like you to share your beliefs and perceptions about leadership, how these factors influence your access to leadership as well as challenges as a female principal. I will interview you at your convenience and it should take approximately 90 minutes. The interview will be recorded using an audiotape with your permission and I will ask you to give consent and sign a written form prior to the interview. The information collected will be used to write a research report for my thesis and an electronic copy of the thesis may be wildly available, as Masters Theses are required to be put in the University of Natal Research Space

database. It is also possible that articles and presentations may be the outcome of the study. All the information about you and your responses will be kept confidential and only I and my supervisor can access it. The findings will be presented in such a way that you cannot be identified. Also, the name of the school will be anonymous. The notes, documents and recordings will be stored for a period of 5 years before they are destroyed.

If you take part in the study, you have the right to refuse to answer any particular question, to check and make any amendments to the transcripts of your interview. You will be able to withdraw from the research anytime during the study. You can ask any further questions about the study during your participation and you will be given access to a summary of findings from the research when it is concluded.

Please read through this information sheet carefully and then sign the consent form on the next page. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to email me at pemthembu@yahoo.com, contact no. ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ or contact my supervisor using contact details below:

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Thank you very much for your help!
Pinkie E. Mthembu

Consent Form for Participants

I have read the Participant Information Sheet for this study and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I am free to withdraw from the study before analysis has commenced on the data or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to provide information to the researcher under the conditions of confidentiality set out on the Participant Information Sheet.

I agree to participate in the research conducted by Pinkie E. Mthembu. I also agree for the information to be used for the writing of the thesis, the publication of the articles and conference presentations.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Additional Consent as Required

I agree / do not agree to my responses to be tape recorded.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Researcher's name and contact information:
Pinkie E. Mthembu
Email: pemthembu@yahoo.com

Appendix B: Interview protocol

Introduction to study

1. Brief explanation of the study purpose, confidentiality of the process and expectations, use of a tape recorder

2. Questions from participant (if any)

3. Consent form completion and collection

Main questions

1. How do women principals perceive and describe their leadership experiences of principalship?

2. How do women principals cope with the demands that come with the role of the school principal.

Guiding Questions for the Interviews

1. Briefly tell me some information about yourself personally and professionally. What is your marital status? Do you have any children? What degrees do you hold? What teaching experience do you have?

2. How long have you been working at this school? And how long have you been holding your position? How would you describe your experiences immediately after obtaining the principal position?

3. In the discharge of your leadership position, how do you relate to your teachers and the students?

4. Do you consider yourself one who operates the under authoritarian or collaborative leadership styles? Which of these seem to be more of a challenge to you?

5. Tell me, how do you balance your family and professional obligations?

6. Tell me about the greatest achievement you have accomplished as a principal.

7. What is the biggest challenge you have ever faced in order to be successful in your job? How did you rise above it?

8. It is said that leadership is more suitable for men. What is your point of view regarding this perception?

9. Can you think of a reason why there are such a low percentage of female principals compared to the number of classroom teachers? What experience did you encounter that made the principalship more accessible? Is networking with other principals vital for your success?

10. What type of support do you have for your professional career? Do you consider yourself a mentor to other aspiring principals? Based on your experiences, what strategy and recommendations would you offer women aspiring to be principal?

11. Please, describe what kind of a leader you are in school?