# WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT: PRESENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

by

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# DECLARATION

I declare that **WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT: PRESENT AND FUTURE CHALLENGES** is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

MRS S. PILLAY

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**Dedication**

To Rajan, Shamyra and Shanya for their loving support and encouragement during this extremely difficult period in my life. Hold yourself responsible for a higher standard than anybody else expects of you. Never excuse yourself. Never pity yourself. Be a hard master to yourself – and be lenient to everybody else (Henry Ward Becher).

# SUMMARY

The current situation in South-African education warrants a rethink on how we use our leadership expertise and skills. It is a statistical fact that women are under-represented in positions of educational leadership in our schools. Society needs to acknowledge that all our resources must be utilised: women being one of our major resources in the field of education.

Experiences from this study show that there are many intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to the progress of women in educational management. These barriers amount to beliefs, assumptions stereotypes, socialisation, organisational constraints and value systems. These beliefs and assumptions have cast women into teaching roles rather than educational leadership roles.

The experiences of the women principals who were involved in this study suggest that women have the capacity to manage effective schools. Furthermore, these women have the willingness and desire to involve all stakeholders in the process of education.

The data indicates that it may be worthwhile to start professional and educational training programmes to empower women to take their place in school leadership. Training sessions need not only to bring women to consciousness but, also to critically analyse these barriers and constraints. An awareness of these imposed limitations will give rise to improved practice and self-driven professional development.

**APPENDIX 1**

# FACE SHEET

Interviewee's name _____

Pseudonym _____

Date of interview _____

Place of interview _____

Sex _____

Age _____

Education _____

Race _____

Marital status _____

Number of children _____

Place of residence _____

Occupation _____

Name of school _____

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# CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION, STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND RESEARCH DESIGN

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Statistics prove beyond doubt that women are under-represented in management positions in education (Davies 1990:80, Taylor 1995:123). While women constitute a large percentage of the teaching corps in education, they make up the minority in positions of leadership (Blackmore 1999:90-92). This under-representation in leadership positions is universally evident in primary schools, secondary schools and in higher education. A report in *Daily News* (9 December 1996:2) points out: "While the winds of change continue to blow across the country, a lot of huffing and puffing is still needed before women can occupy an equitable position in society."

The past and present participation of women in educational management, internationally and in South Africa, confirms that there is a marked degree of gender imbalance in educational management (Lemmer 1994:3-29). Although the pattern in which women are found to be progressively under-represented as one moves up the promotional ladder in education is evidenced in the literature as a universal trend, fully researched explanations for this phenomenon are few. Whilst there has been considerable research on gender imbalance in educational management in the United States of America (USA) for the past two decades and in the United Kingdom (UK) for the past decade, very little research has been done in South Africa. According to Shakeshaft (1989:326-328), research on women and gender in educational management in the USA has progressed through six stages. The first five stages document the lack of

women in educational leadership and the sixth stage transforms theory, as we understand women's and men's experiences'. To date "we have very little exploration of the impact of gender on interactions in organisations" (Shakeshaft 1989:328).

So too, in Britain, most of the research on women and educational management concerns the under-representation of women (Hall 1993:23-25). Hall (1993:23) contends: "Compared to the USA, research on women in educational management is in its infancy." In South Africa, the research on women in educational management is very limited.

In the light of the limited research in the field of women in educational management in primary and secondary schools in South Africa, the researcher deemed it necessary to investigate the current status quo of women in educational management. Furthermore, in order to gain more insight into the leadership styles of women educational managers in primary and secondary schools, and to explain the challenges that they face, the researcher analysed leadership theories and styles, which have been put forward to explain women principals' experiences in primary and secondary schools. After analysing various theoretical perspectives and the practices of women in educational management, the researcher was able to draw up tentative guidelines for women educational managers to cope with present and future challenges.

Although this study did not attempt to investigate the leadership styles of women managers in the corporate world, certain analogies have been drawn from the corporate sector in order to place the investigation in context.

## 1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

### 1.2.1 General

From the researcher's personal experiences as an educator, it was noted that female and male principals implemented different leadership styles. Shakeshaft's review of research in the 1980's, which considered how women and men manage differently, concurred with my observations. Thus I decided to explore these assertions.

Thus, the genesis of this study was conceived during an informal discussion with this researcher's colleagues. I have been involved with education for the past twenty years: ten years as an educator and ten years as an educational manager. During the last twenty years I have worked under the leadership of five male principals and two female principals and I am currently working under a female principal. Staff noted that in spite of difficulties, as a result of the transformation of the South African education system, staff morale was still high. These staffs are now involved to a much greater extent in the corporate life of the school. Their decisions are relevant, and their inputs are appreciated. Against this background I decided to compare the theoretical perspectives of leadership styles with the actual practice of women principals in primary and secondary schools in South Africa.

What followed was a pilot study with five female principals.

### 1.2.2 Pilot study

After a brief review of major leadership theories, it seemed apposite to use a pilot study to come to a better understanding of the phenomenon and its manifestation in educational management.

Five women principals were selected: two from secondary schools and three from primary public schools in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal (cf.1.5). The respondent group was representative of each of the four major population groups of South Africa. The respondents were selected from a list of principals supplied by the Regional Education Department based in Truro House, Durban. The rationale for the selection of the respondent group was based on the accessibility of the respondents and the composition was a mini-representation of the envisioned study, described in Chapter Four.

The respondent group was asked to comment on the reasons for the under-representation of women in educational management. Each of the respondents was asked why they thought that there were so few women leaders in primary and secondary schools. The respondents agreed that women were disproportionately represented in educational management and explained the possible reasons from their experiences and perceptions.

Principal A, who has been in the profession in the primary school for thirty years, explained that the Department of Education did not regard women as competent. She also believed that her male colleagues viewed women as unable to manage. Further, since the superintendents were largely responsible for promotions, and were mostly men, these men wanted to keep the positions of principal an "exclusive male club". The resistance to women in positions of power in schools could be described as the "devaluation" of women and as a challenge that women experience in their aspirations. Shakeshaft (1993:48) concurs that hundreds of studies indicate that negative attitudes toward women by those who hire constitute the major barrier to female advancement in school administration.

Principal B who has been in the secondary school for twenty-five years and in the position of principal since 1991, believed that women were wary of

accepting principal status because of the pressures that this position entails. She believed that discipline problems experienced in secondary schools was one of the major reasons for women not aspiring to the principalship in secondary schools. Gender stereotypes, prominent in our culture, support the idea that women do not possess the toughness to be principals, and in particular, principals of secondary school (Owens 1995:314).

Principal C, a primary school principal for ten years asserted that women are under-represented because of the past imbalances in gender equity in educational institutions. She argues that while the present government has enshrined in its constitution equal opportunities for women, much has to be done to redress the current imbalance in educational management (cf. 6.2.2).

Principal D, who has been employed as principal of a primary school for five years, argued that many women face challenges that are gender-specific in education. Her problems arose from the fact that women "bosses" intimidated many men. She said that often women do not enjoy confrontation and will not apply for the position of principals because management is perceived to involve assertiveness, competition, aggressiveness and showmanship.

Principal E, from a secondary school, alluded to the fact that women are often marginalised when applying for positions of management in education because of their own inadequacies. She believed that women are not assertive enough and therefore fall short at the interviews.

According to Adkinson (1981:312-339) the reasons why women find themselves under-represented in managerial positions in schools can be attributed among other things to the stereotyping and socialisation of women, organisational constraints on women's promotion and theories related to gender based careers. In this study the researcher undertook an investigation of

Adkinson's (1981:312-339) assertions to explain the leadership styles of women, and to examine the challenges that women faced in these leadership positions.

### 1.2.3 The problem as it is indicated in the literature

#### *1.2.3.1 A global problem*

In most countries in Europe teaching is predominantly a female occupation. Within Europe, the percentage of female primary school educators ranges from 80 percent to just under 50 percent in Germany, but constitutes about 40 percent of principals. In secondary schools women constitute about half the teaching force, but are again substantively under-represented as principals (Davies 1990:88).

According to a survey published annually in the *American Board of School Journal*, in 1993 women represented 10.9 percent of the secondary school principals and 43 percent of the elementary school principals in the United States of America (Taylor 1995:123).

Figures from the National Ministry in Canada (1991) reveal that women make up 76.8 percent of the educators in elementary schools and 44.8 percent of the secondary school educators. In comparison with the percentage of women educators they were disproportionately represented in the status of principals. Only 26.2 percent of the principals in elementary schools were women and 15.6 percent of the secondary school principals were women (Taylor 1995:123).

Growing awareness, globally of the under-representation of women in educational management in primary and secondary schools has led to

statements such as that by the Hansard Society Commission (Davidson & Cooper 1992:171): "Getting women into top jobs demands strategic planning: it does not just happen through goodwill or good intentions."

### *1.2.3.2 A South African problem*

Figures supplied by the National Education Department (1999) indicate that females constitute 73.32 percent of the educators at public primary schools in South Africa and 46.26 percent at secondary schools. Women in primary schools make up 48.38 percent and males constitute 51.62 percent of the principals. In secondary public schools females make up 28.86 percent and males 72.14 percent of the principals (Department of National Education, 1999).

As these figures and those indicated from a world perspective show, women dominate in the areas of level one status especially in primary schools, where skills are perceived to be akin to caring and mothering. This will be further discussed in Chapter Three.

From the evidence gleaned from statistics above, an interesting pattern emerges. Proportions of women educators seem to decline as the age or status of learners' increase. This is also true for the status of principals. Davies (1990:64) asserts that probably, the younger the learner, the more his or her nurture is associated with the "natural" female role. Following this reasoning, it would appear that, the networks and allegiances among existing decision-makers at each level must be unmasked and tackled if women are to carve out positions and change the administrative climate" (Davies 1990:64) (cf. 6.2.2).

In this study the relationship between leadership and women is examined in order to link the practical and theoretical concepts of leadership in primary and

secondary schools. Extrapolations from the concepts of leadership and its particular influences which tend to shape educational management is used as the researcher focuses on women leaders and the possibility for change within educational organisations. It is postulated that real change can occur only through effective leadership of people, and not specifically through the changing of structures and processes, although alterations to an "apparatus" and its "rituals" would give support to possibilities for leadership (Jarvis 1992:63).

Thus, the researcher analysed the leadership styles of women educational managers in primary and secondary schools with reference to leadership theories used in educational management. Moreover, the researcher examined the present and future challenges and problems that women principal's experience in schools, with the view to formulate strategies that will assist in facing these challenges.

## 1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Al-Khalifa (1989:100) avers that whilst this decade has been promoted as Opportunity 2000 - a new era of opportunity for women in employment as leaders and managers, women in education seem to be losing out rather than gaining. Although teaching has become a "feminised" profession in South Africa with women constituting 73.32 percent in the primary schools and 46.26 percent in the secondary schools, women remain located in the lower levels.

Thus, in order to bring to the attention of those involved in the existing education system, the value of women educational managers and as a means to attract capable women into educational management, an investigation of women in educational management is essential. In this study the research problem is indicated by the following questions:

- What are the leadership styles of women educational managers?
- What are the existing theories in educational management?
- What are the problems that may arise thereof?
- How can these research findings contribute to the development and implementation of possible guidelines to assist women educational managers in primary and secondary schools in coping with the present and future challenges and arising problems?

The overarching research question of the core research problem is the following:

- What are the present and future challenges women educational managers and those aspiring for principalship in primary and secondary schools face?

## 1.4 RESEARCH AIMS

The specific aims of this study, which are set out below, derive from the general context outlined as well as the local context. In order to investigate this research problem, five research aims have been identified, namely:

- To document theoretical studies on leadership styles and theories, and link theoretical frameworks with existing practices of women in educational management in primary and secondary schools.
- To investigate the leadership styles of women educational managers in primary and secondary schools.
- To explore and to analyse present and future challenges that women educational managers in primary and secondary schools face.
- To identify and to analyse the problems that arise from the present challenges and those problems that may arise from future challenges.
- To develop guidelines to address present and future challenges.

## 1.5 METHOD OF STUDY

In an attempt to explore the leadership styles of women educational managers in primary and secondary schools and the specific present and future challenges that they face, a literature study of local and overseas sources was undertaken. The focus of this phase of the research was on leadership styles, leadership theories, women in educational management, pathways to leadership and the challenges and problems that women face in educational management. This was supplemented by a pilot study (1.2.2) in which five primary and secondary principals in KwaZulu-Natal were interviewed (August-September 1997).

Furthermore, a literature study of educational legislation documents, journals, staff minutes and official documents concerning the employment of educators, conditions of service for educators and school governance was done.

A qualitative approach was used to gather data through techniques, such as in-depth interviews, artifacts and observations in order to investigate the leadership styles of women educational management in primary and secondary schools and the challenges that they face. Although the relatively small sample characteristic of the qualitative methodology cannot be said to be representative of the entire population of women principals in South Africa, this kind of research yields *rich descriptive data* (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:52). According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992:52), data analysis should be done inductively.

While a detailed exposition of the research methodology, the rationale for the choice of the methodology as well as the research design are fully explained in Chapter Four, a brief overview is given here.

According to Schwartz and Jacobs (1979:7) the basic premise of the qualitative research orientation is that in order to understand the phenomena, the researcher needs to discover the "actor's" definition of the situation, that is, her perception and interpretation of reality and how these relate to her behaviour. In this view it is critical to discover the daily activities, the meanings, the actions and reactions of the individual in the context of her daily life. The qualitative researcher therefore aims to understand the motives and beliefs behind people's actions on a personal level (Bogdan &Taylor 1984:2). In this study I am interested to come to an understanding of the leadership styles of the woman principal and the challenges she faces in her life-world.

In addition, qualitative research reports observations in the natural language and Schwartz and Jacobs (1979:5) argue that this method is best at gaining access to the life-world of other individuals in a short time. The life-world includes motives, meanings, emotions and other subjective aspects of the lives of individuals and groups. It also includes their daily actions and behaviour in ordinary settings and situations, the structure of those actions and the objective conditions that accompany and influence them. The qualitative approach was deemed appropriate for this investigation because of the researcher's need to interact with the respondents in order to gain access to their life-world.

The sample for this study is drawn from eight public schools in South Africa. The respondents were selected on the criteria of two nominated categories: four women principals from secondary schools and four from primary schools; two women each from the four major population groups. The rationale underlying this delineation was to obtain as broad a perspective as possible of women principal's perceptions and experiences.

Selection was done via gatekeepers who recommended principals from primary and secondary public schools in South Africa who met the criteria of

the nominated categories. Selection in this manner obviated the danger of bias and enhanced reliability. The in-depth interview, observations and artifacts was used as means of collecting data from the principals of the chosen schools. The decision to use the in-depth interviews was based on the advantages of the method:

- The interview allows flexibility, depth of clarification and permits probing in order to obtain richer more complete data.
- The interview is holistic in that it enables the conceptualisation of individual's careers within their total life experience and therefore takes account of historical influences on career development.
- The in-depth interview has its advantage in the fact that the researcher was able to maintain a rapport with the respondents to access the respondents' level of knowledge, and to monitor and ensure the effectiveness of communication (Schurink 1997(b): 300).

The in-depth interview using guided interview schedules was considered to be the most appropriate form of interviews. Guides provided an outline of the topics to be covered to make data collection more systematic and comprehensive for each respondent, while providing sufficient flexibility to explore the concepts as fully as necessary. In this way the interview remained both conversational and situational.

In order to enhance the reliability and validity of the data, each interviewee's response was recorded verbatim to facilitate transcription, and to allow the respondents the opportunity to verify interview transcripts, clarify all responses and to make additions and or amendments. The data was finally analysed by a process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts and other materials accumulated by the researcher to present that which was discovered by others (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:145). The decision to combine interviews with observation was based on the premise that, "observation is a

fundamental and critical method in all qualitative inquiry" (Hoberg 1999:28). It was also a means of triangulation in order to enhance reliability.

This research was designed to be exploratory and descriptive and thus no attempts were made to establish cause and effect relationships under experimental conditions. The primary aim was to understand and describe the leadership styles of women principals and the challenges they face, from their own frame of reference (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:45).

## 1.6 OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH

1 The statement of the problem, motivation thereof, the results of the pilot study, as well as literature study and an overview of the study is presented in Chapter One.

2 Chapter Two deals with the prevailing theories and studies of educational leadership in primary and secondary schools.

3 It is imperative to examine the status quo of women in educational management in conjunction with the leadership styles of women in order to present a holistic approach to the study. Therefore, an investigation of the leadership styles of women principals, the present and future challenges that women experience, and the problems that arise thereof are the focus of Chapter Three.

4 Chapter Four provides a further discussion of the methodology (cf. 1.5) used in this study. Technical as well as epistemological considerations and the rationale underlying the choice of qualitative methodology are included. Data collection strategies are also discussed in this chapter.

5 In Chapter Five an exposition of data analysis is given. The analysis of the data collected is described and the results concerning the leadership styles of women educational managers in primary and secondary schools and the specific challenges they face are presented. Moreover, the limitations of the study are presented in this chapter.

6 The final chapter (Chapter Six) provides a summary of the research findings. Guidelines to assist women educational managers in coping with the present and future challenges are outlined. These recommendations are based on the findings of the empirical investigation into the experiences of woman principals. Moreover, suggestions for future research are made.

## 1.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter an introductory overview of the study was presented. This study is motivated by a realisation of the need to assess and examine the leadership styles of women principals and the challenges that they face. Furthermore this study aims to suggest guidelines whereby educational provisions can contribute to the development of these women so that their talents are fully utilised.

Moreover, a change in the practice of leadership and management is occurring in schools. Thus, the provision for continuous training and education for women in educational management is essential. Given that men occupy the majority of educational leadership positions in South-African schools; there is a need for a shift in this imbalance. Thus, this study was designed to serve as a means of increasing our knowledge of the needs of women principals with a view to indicating the implications for educational provisions for women in educational management.

Having written this, Chapter Two will involve a literature study regarding the theory and practice of leadership and management in the school context.

# CHAPTER 2

# THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT IN THE SCHOOL CONTEXT

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter One an overview of the research project was given. Chapter Two concentrates on what school leadership and management entails. In this chapter leadership and management are discussed from the standpoint of traditional thinking and the implications of this thinking when applied to women's lives. A brief review of the neglect of women's experiences in educational leadership and management is identified in the subsequent discussion with a view to establish a frame of reference for the study.

Since the early 1990's feminist writers have made a contribution to how we view leadership from a woman's perspective and have campaigned for women's experiences to be included in the field of educational management. Traditionally, a dominant ideology in society has been that management and leadership is the domain of males (cf. 3.1). Much of the documented research on leadership has revolved around male experiences (Shakeshaft 1989:324). However, over the past few decades there has been a growing recognition of the value of women's experiences as educational leaders. Regan and Brookes (1995:2) make this thought provoking comment in this regard: "Women's experiences as school leaders has value and that knowledge constructed from this experience should be disseminated to men and women alike."

According to Shakeshaft (1989:324) the experiences of women leaders have important implications for theory and practice in education. She argues that the

field of educational management is not inclusive of women's experiences as leaders and thus presents only a partial view. De Witt (1990:515) concurs with Shakeshaft when he contends: "The role of women in educational management has been shamefully neglected in the past and accorded scant reference even in educational management publications."

Moreover, Gray (1989:39) argues that there has been no significant discussion or educational writing of the implications of gender-considerations in the study of schools as organisations. Similarly, Adler, Laney and Packer (1993:126) make the following important comment:

> "We believe that there is a need for more books and articles charting the experiences and work of women as teachers, educationists and managers, both by documenting practice and expounding theory, literature can have influence."

Against this background, I deemed it necessary to focus on the following:

- How is leadership defined?
- How is management defined?
- What is the difference between management and leadership?
- What are the characteristics of an effective leader?
- What existing leadership theories are there?
- What are the leadership styles that are used by leaders?
- Feminocentric scholarship
- A feminocentric critique of existing leadership theories

## 2.2 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SCHOOL PRACTICE

### 2.2.1 Interpretations of leadership

In order to understand educational leadership, a brief discussion of the classic-scientific, humanist, and feminist interpretations of leadership is necessary.

#### *2.2.1.1 The classic-scientific interpretation*

The classic-scientific approach to leadership is associated with the works of Max Weber, Henry Fayol and FW Taylor. It is a combination of the classic approach to management in general and the scientific approach in particular. The scientific school of management operates on the notion that a given task will greatly influence productivity within an organisation if the task is approached in a scientific way (Van Wyk 1996:32). It emphasises the importance of planning and structure in organisational performance and advocates the production of organisational outputs through efficient and orderly organisational activities.

According to Blackmore (1989:19) the following assumptions are embedded in educational and administrative theory about leadership:

- formal authority is synonymous with leadership;
- authority is necessarily imparted through hierarchical relationships;
- leadership is a technique and expertise; and
- leadership means making rational decisions based on empirical evidence.

Blackmore (1989:19) maintains that underlying such assumptions is an epistemology of positivism and it is based on the male view of leadership, similar to Rosener's (1990:19) description of "command and control" of male

leadership. In conventional educational leadership and management, gender has been ignored. By conceptualising leadership in terms of gender-neutral personal attributes and focussing upon the individual merit in apparently value-free contexts, the lack of female leaders can be readily attributed to the socio-psychological unsuitability of women, rather than the way in which educational leadership is conceptualised and practised (Blackmore 1989:20).

#### *2.2.1.2 The humanist interpretation*

The humanist approach to educational leadership emerged as a means of "softening" the classic-scientific view (Blackmore 1989:20). The humanists argue that leadership is a moral, political, and social activity that requires the making of value-judgements and not merely decisions based on facts. However, this perspective still endows particular individuals with the innate or acquired capacity to make higher-level judgements based upon abstract and universal moral principles. The work of Kohlberg, upon which much of this strand of humanist administrative theory is premised, exemplifies how a particular theory regarding stages in moral development imparts males with apparently greater moral capacities (Blackmore 1989:20).

#### *2.2.1.3 The feminist interpretation*

Feminist theorists have focussed upon:

- individual female administrators who have been successful in male terms: their attributes and career pathways are judged against male norms (Still & Jones 1984:278-284);
- emphasising life histories and life cycles. This is a critical element to feminist analysis because they bring the private and the personal into the public arena and illustrate that the male career model is not that of women;

- feminist cultural studies have focussed upon the notions of a woman's culture and women's ways of organising a predominantly female situations which focuses upon the collectivity of women created by their subordinate positions in the workforce;
- feminist epistemological concerns which refer to dominant notions of human rationality and morality which exclude women's experiences; and
- women's ways of knowing, thinking and making moral judgements which give rise to the notion of an "ethics of care" premised upon a relational view of morality (Blackmore 1989:20-22).

Feminist theory challenges traditional administrative theory and the dualism implicit in leadership between:

- emotionality and rationality;
- the individual and the community;
- assertiveness and passivity;
- the public and the private; and
- dependence and autonomy, as not only being false, but also as limiting the potentiality of both men and women to promote social change (Blackmore1989: 21).

Moreover, according to Grogan (1996:171) in feminist literature, instead of leadership being associated with:

- assertiveness;
- independence;
- competition;
- individuality;
- hierarchy; and

- abstract, transformational leadership is required for schools of today.

### 2.2.3 Leadership in education

Leadership is a concept that has been around for centuries, but only in recent times has any kind of theory emerged. The ensuing discussion entails a definition of leadership and describes the practical aspects of leadership in the school situation.

#### *2.2.3.1 Leadership defined*

The study of leadership in organisational behaviour has produced literally hundreds of definitions (Hoy & Miskel 1996:373; Owens 1995:134). A review of various trends in the history of the development of the concept of leadership reveals that educational leadership borrowed largely from the military and industry. However, while there are varying definitions of leadership, the following is amongst the most recurring:

- Leadership is a group function: it occurs only in the processes of two or more people interacting.
- Leaders intentionally seek to influence the behaviour of others (Owens 1995:116, Hoy & Miskel 1996:374).

Cole (1993:46) maintains that three elements are essential in order to understand leadership:

- It is intimately linked with behaviour and is essentially a human process at work in organisations.
- Leadership is a dynamic process, not a static process.
- The role of the leader is to direct the group towards group goals.

Thus, leadership is essentially a human process in a group whereby one individual influences the others to contribute voluntarily to the achievement of group tasks in a given situation (Cole 1993:46). The issue central to leadership is that of the relationship between those who lead and those who follow. According to Bond (1996:13): "Fundamental aspirations which are shared connect leaders and followers." Wynn and Guditus (1984:24) argue that, leadership cannot be separated from the needs and goals of the followers.

From the above definitions it becomes apparent that leadership concerns human relationships. The leader influences one or more individuals to set and achieve certain predetermined objectives and goals (Owens 1995:122). The leader leads his or her followers to committment to the organisation and empowers them so that their combined efforts result in the attainment of their goals. In schools, the principal as leader influences others to enthusiastically reach goals. Van der Linde (1995:8) contends that, the quality of a school is clearly linked to the quality of the principal. Moreover, Shum and Cheng (1996:166) argue that, educational leadership is influence through the dissemination of educational knowledge and information. According to Cole (1993:45), the most significant task of the manager's job is his or her capacity to obtain the committment of people to the organisation's goals.

Thus, any concept of leadership deals with exercising influence and according to Owens (1995:116), power is an important ingredient of leadership. Fiedler and Chemers (1974:4) concur with Owens in their definition of leadership when they contend: "Leadership is a relationship between people in which power and influence are unevenly distributed on a legitimate basis." Hence, the ensuing paragraph is a discussion on leadership and power.

### *2.2.3.2 Leadership and power*

Leadership is generally considered to be the ability to influence others and different kinds of power can be used to achieve this influence. The following five sources of power are identified:

- reward power: controlling rewards that will induce others to comply with the wishes of those who have power;
- coercive power: having control of potentially punishing resources at will induce others to avoid you;
- expert power: having knowledge that others want for themselves so much that they will be induced to comply with the powerful;
- legitimate power: having authority conferred by holding a position in the organisation that is recognised by others as having a legitimate right to obedience; and
- referent power: when the power holder has a charisma, ideas or beliefs admired by others that they are induced by the opportunity not only to be associated by the power holder but, to become more like him or her (Owens 1995:118; Allais 1995:286-287).

The issue of power is a contentious one. In a dispensation where racial, ethnic and gender groups speak out strongly against power as oppressive, many people will view this power as a negative view of hierarchy and oppression (Owens 1995:116).

However, on the other hand effective leaders are powerful people, but the exercise of power may not necessarily be oppressive (Owens 1995:116; Allais 1995:286). There are different kinds of power arising from different sources, and there is a difference between the power of those who lead and those who command. By its very nature, official positions in a hierarchy comprise a

legitimate right to command by legal power. When used it is often viewed as oppressive.

However, the power that effective leaders have, is voluntarily granted by followers who accept the leader's influence and direction by shared agreement (Owens 1995:117). These followers are drawn to the ideas of leaders, share in the values and beliefs of the leader and are convinced that the leader can represent them because of mutual committment. Although leaders exercise various kinds of powers, they engage with followers in seeking to achieve, not only goals of the leader, but also significant goals of the followers.

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### 2.2.4 Management in education

Although management is a part of leadership, leaders do more than just manage an organisation. Leadership helps turn plans and decisions into action (Leigh & Walters 1998:17). The ensuing discussion aims at defining management and placing leadership in the context of schools.

#### *2.2.4.1 Management defined*

The word management comes from the Latin word *manus,* meaning to handle (Calitz, Viljoen, Moller, & Van der Bank 1992:2). A workable definition of management reads as follow:

- Management is a process, which involves the skilful handling and supervision of people and or goods by a manager in such a way so that pre-determined goals are reached in a certain time.
- Management is a universal process of efficiently getting activities completed through people.

- Management is the unifying and the co-ordinating activity which combines the actions of individuals into meaningful and purposeful action.
- Management is a process of getting things done by people (Calitz et al 1992:2-3).

Thus, management is a specific task, which is goal-orientated. In order to run smoothly, management needs trained people. Moreover, management takes place within an organisation, which in this study, is the school. Having defined management, the ensuing discussion revolves around the principles of management.

#### *2.2.4.2 The principles of management*

The principles of management include planning, organising, leading and controlling. These principles are central to management.

- Planning is the process whereby the manager looks to the future and makes plans to tackle specific tasks and execute them successfully.
- Organising is the establishment of relationships between the activities to be performed, and the personnel to perform them and the physical factors that are needed.
- Leading is a process in which the leader influences the subordinates to perform the tasks.
- Control is the process of monitoring activities to determine whether the individual and the organisation itself are obtaining and using their resources effectively and efficiently (Calitz et al 1992:10).

### *2.2.4.3 Differences between educational management and management of other organisations*

According to Bush (1988:5), there are six major areas in which management of educational institutions differs from the management of other organisations.

- The objectives of educational institutions are much more difficult to define than commercial industries. In schools, there are no clear-cut educational equivalents to profit maximising, output maximising or product diversification as found in the private sector.
- It is very difficult to measure whether or not objectives have been achieved in schools. In industry it is possible to measure success in financial terms, however in schools it is much more difficult to assess certain outcomes such as "being a good citizen".
- The focus of educational organisations is young children. They are entirely different from the raw products that one might find in a factory.
- The managers and educators at a school are from a common professional background with shared values, training and experiences. The client relationship between educators and learners differs from other client links. Educators have several and extended contacts with their learners, unlike other professions.
- Many external influences and groups influence the climate for school decision-making: governing bodies, departmental officials, parents and other pressure groups.

Thus, educational management is a field of study and practice concerned with the operation of educational organisations (Bush 1988:1). Since educational management takes place within an educational organisation, it is apposite to discuss the school as an organisation. The ensuing paragraph is based on the school as an organisation.

### 2.2.5 The school as an organisation

Since the beginning of organisational studies, organisations have been conceptualised as either bureaucratic (classical) or democratic (Owens 1995:66-67). Much research has viewed schools as bureaucratic organisations, where in order to achieve goals, the school's activities must be regulated by an impartially applied consistent system of rules. Moreover, the duties of the members of the staff must be officially prescribed, divisions of labour maintained, and a hierarchy of authority (Musgrove 1973:163).

However, more recent research argues that schools cannot be considered as bureaucratic organisations. Challenges to the application of Weber's (1974) bureaucratic approach to organisations gave rise to a newer thinking in schools as organisations:

- The constant growth of change in technology, politics economics and society has left bureaucracies struggling.
- The world-wide rise in expectations for increased democracy, personal freedom, individual respect and dignity and personal fulfillment has left bureaucracies stranded (Owens 1995:67).

#### *2.2.5.1 The school as a bureaucratic organisation*

The bureaucratic approach tends to emphasise the following five functions in dealing with issues controlling and co-ordinating the behaviour of people in organisations:

- to maintain hierarchical control of authority and close supervision of those in lower ranks;
- to establish and maintain adequate vertical communication;

- to develop clear written rules and procedures to set standards and guide actions;
- to promulgate clear plans and schedules for participants to follow; and
- to add supervisory and administrative positions to the hierarchy of the organisation as necessary to meet problems that arise from changing conditions (Owens 1995:67-68).

Thus, bureaucracy describes the school as a formal organisation, which seeks maximum efficiency through rational approaches to management (Bush 1988:30). However, schools are complex human organisations and there are difficulties in applying the bureaucratic approach rigidly to schools.

#### *2.2.5.2 The school as a democratic organisation*

The following five features are characteristic of a democratic organisation:

- They are strongly normative. This approach argues that management ought to be based on agreement.
- They are appropriate for organisations with professional staff. Education requires a professional approach because learners and educators require personal attention.
- They assume a common set of values held by members of the organisation. These values may arise from the socialisation that occurs during educator training.
- They assume that staff has a formal representation within the various decision-making bodies.
- They assume that decisions are reached by a process of consensus or compromise rather, than conflict or division. The belief that there are common beliefs or values leads to the view that it is possible to resolve issues by agreement (Bush 1988:50-51).

However, it is important to understand that schools may not be exclusively democratic or bureaucratic. Certain aspects may be bureaucratic, while others may be democratic. The next paragraph is a discussion of the difference between management and leadership.

### 2.2.6 The difference between management and leadership

Researchers contend that management and leadership are different but not mutually exclusive. As previously alluded to, a leader must also be a skilled manager. Fiedler and Chemers (1974:31) maintain that leadership and management are related but not identical. According to Lemmer and Squelch (1994:10) management is the process of planning, organising, motivating and guiding. Leadership is a process of encouraging and influencing people to co-operate in achieving goals that are mutually satisfying.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the relationship between management and leadership.

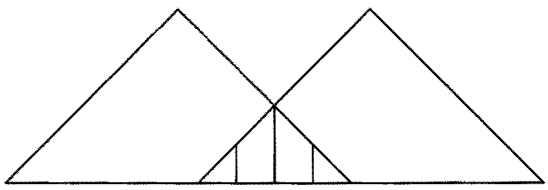


Figure 2.1 The relationship between management and leadership (Squelch & Lemmer 1994:11)

On the other hand, there is also research evidence that management and leadership are not only different but also mutually exclusive. This argument arises from the view that managers manage things, while leaders lead people.

According to Wynn and Guditus (1984:28), leadership means implementing change to achieve goals that serve the needs of the organisation and the individuals who are part of it. Management, on the other hand is typically

involved with maintaining existing structures and procedures. The emphasis on procedural aspects of the school tends to focus more on things than people. Sergiovanni and Starrat (1993:196) mention the following differences:

- Leaders tend to focus on the vision.
- Managers often are the ones who know how to make things work.

Although leadership and management are often thought to be synonymous, they are in fact different. These distinction between management and leadership allude to the belief that they are incompatible concepts. That is to say that the task of the manager is to maintain the status quo, while the role of the leader is to bring about change. However to view these two concepts as counterproductive "would be to deny the realities of organisational life" (Wynn & Guditus 1984:28).

Thus, in conclusion, both management and leadership are important facets in organisation. Moreover, in order to maintain a high level of efficiency the leader must possess certain characteristics. These characteristics are described in the ensuing paragraph.

### 2.2.7 Characteristics of educational leaders

Educational leaders fulfil one of the most important leadership roles. Much research has been done on what makes a good leader. Prior to 1945 most studies on leadership were devoted mainly to traits or qualities of leaders (Squelch & Lemmer 1994:3). This approach derives from the "great man theory" and identifies the following characteristics as essential to effective leadership:

- physical and mental well-being;

- a sound philosophy of life;
- humility;
- selflessness;
- optimism, enthusiasm and drive;
- intelligence and drive;
- a flair for languages;
- will-power;
- adaptability and flexibility;
- understanding; and
- character (Gerber, Nel & Van Dyk 1987:329).

However, research conducted on children, professional, business and military personnel has not isolated a single uniform trait or group of characteristics which distinguishes the leader from members of the group (Allais 1995:288). According to Allias (1995:288): "The trait approach to leadership has not made any significant contribution toward improved understanding of leadership at school." The trait theory claims that good leaders are good leaders regardless of their followers.

On the other hand Van der Westhuizen (1991:186) maintains that there are four basic characteristics of an educational leader that are necessary for him/her to carry out management tasks effectively:

- Empathy: This is the ability to understand the feelings and intentions of others.
- Respect and warmth: This is recognising the rights of others and also showing recognition and appreciation for outstanding work.
- Sincerity: A school principal should be honest, open and spontaneous in his/her interaction with others.
- Clarity: A school principal should avoid being vague and generalising.

Van der Westhuizen (1991:187) expounds: "When I show basic respect for another person; I am able to enter his world of existence or feelings." By showing empathy the principal is genuine and sincere towards himself/herself and the other person. In this way the principal is able to communicate purposefully and in a concrete manner. In contrast to the above Van der Westhuizen (1991:187) states that the following characteristics and actions are harmful to sound relationships in a school:

- indecisiveness
- autocracy
- blaming the group instead of the individual
- taking sides
- tediousness
- egoism
- treating staff like children.

A discussion on leadership styles follows in the next section.

## 2.3 Leadership styles

According to Hoy and Miskel (1996:387), leadership style refers to the underlying need structure of the leader that motivates behaviour in various interpersonal relationships. Moreover Allais (1995:300) alludes that leadership style may be defined as the behaviour pattern used by the leader when he or she is trying to influence the performance of others. While recognising that there are numerous approaches to leadership, it is suggested that leadership styles have certain basic elements. These elements are proposed in the ensuing discussion.

### 2.3.1 Classification of leadership styles

Blake and Mouton (1978:12) identify the following leadership styles:

- the autocratic leadership style;
- the democratic leadership style; and
- the laissez-faire (permissive) leadership style.

#### *2.3.1.1 The autocratic leadership style*

This style of leadership is leader-centred. The leader dominates the group, sets the objectives towards which the group must work and determines the roles of group members. Authoritarian leadership makes great demands on the staff, and questioning the authority of the leader is discouraged. In this type of leadership, the organisation's interest is more important than the group's interest. The leader gives instructions and the subordinates follow with very little participation in decisions that are made. The principal who uses this leadership style likes to do things his/her way and uses his/her position and power to get things done. The autocratic leader solely determines policy and personally gives orders to subordinates.

According to Calitz, et al (1992:5) this style of leadership may be useful in certain situations, but it is not suitable for dealing with professional staff. Some of the most important disadvantages of this leadership style in schools are:

- lack of cooperation
- suppression of initiative and creative thought
- inadequate communication
- a tense atmosphere at school (Van der Linde 1995:17).

Calitz et al (1992:5) contend that the authoritarian leader is obsolete today and it could be disastrous to adopt such a style in modern circumstances. This leadership style places strong emphasis on production and could result in low morale of staff. The general pattern of this leadership is:

- The work of educators comes to a standstill when the leader is away.
- Educators are not used to making decisions on their own and usually wait for higher authority before carrying out any instructions.
- Educators end up being disloyal.
- The autocratic leader is in constant fear because he/she believes that his/her position is constantly being threatened (Calitz et. al 1992:5).

#### *2.3.1.2 The democratic leadership style*

The democratic leader involves the whole staff in sharing authority and in jointly working together to take decisions. Calitz et al (1992:5) argue that a democratic leadership style should enhance "esprit de corps" and mutual understanding, thereby influencing the organisational climate in a positive manner. Democratic leaders ensure that members of the group discuss all activities. They allow members to be involved in decision-making, and encourage the development of an egalitarian atmosphere. Policy is decided by means of group discussion and the leader plays the role of facilitator (Allais 1995:290). According to Van der Linde (1995:17): "The democratic style of leadership lies between the extremes of laissez-faire and autocratic leadership." The democratic leader guides the followers through examples and persuasion. There are essentially four key dimensions of the democratic leadership style:

- creating and communicating vision
- building trust and organisational committment
- utilising the organisation's expertise
- developing the organisation team (Van der Linde 1995:17).

However, according to Calitz et al (1992:4), there are disadvantages to being too democratic. The leader may sometimes allow himself/herself to be influenced by the majority decisions when, in fact, the minority might be proved to have made the right decision. Participatory decision-making and two-way communications are sub-categories of the democratic leadership style. A brief discussion of these categories follows.

a) Participation occurs when people are involved and influence decisions that are likely to affect them. Participatory decision-making expands the influence in the organisation of those who are lower down the hierarchy and affected by decisions. Participative management can lead to useful involvement in decisions and joint problem-solving (Leigh & Walters 1998:145). Evidenced in the interviews and observations the women principals displayed participatory decision-making strategies. All the interviewed principals agreed that it was important that their staff were involved in decision-making (5.8.1).

b) Two-way communication allows for feedback and provides opportunities to develop mutually acceptable ways of dealing with issues (Leigh & Walters 1998:70-71). It allows for dialogue and constructive means of solving problems. Although the dialogue may be problematic the resulting outcome is fully owned by both parties (Leigh & Walters 1998:72). The principals interviewed in this study maintained that their staff was fully involved in discussions and that there were open channels of communication between all the relevant stakeholders (5.6.3,5.8.1).

#### *2.3.1.3 The laissez-faire leadership style*

Squelch and Lemmer (1994:7) aver that this type of leader is very casual. In this type of leadership, no vision of the organisation's mission is projected.

The individuals are left to do things as they feel led. The leader is reluctant to make decisions or to deal with problems directly. This kind of leadership may work if the professional staff is highly motivated. If adopted in the wrong situation, it could lead to:

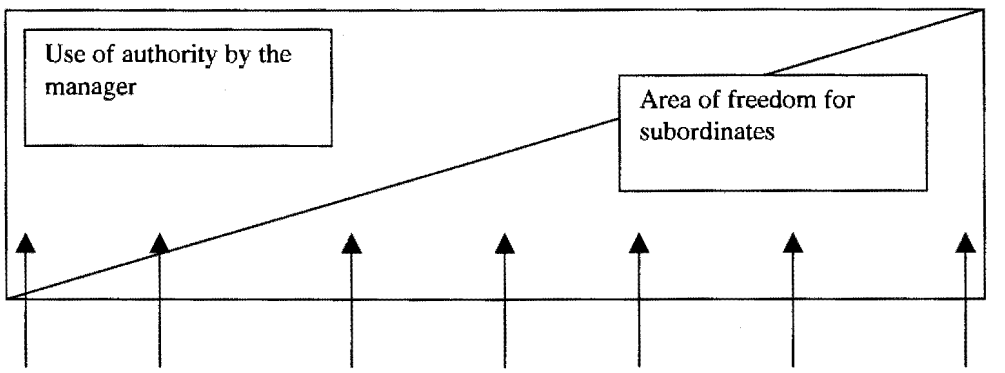
- disunity
- conflict and confusion
- confidence in and respect for the principal being forfeited
- negative organisational climate (Calitz et al 1992:5; Van der Linde 1995:18).
- others to consider options. Leaders and followers work together as a group to reach goals.

#### *2.3.1.4 Continuum of leadership styles*

In 1958 Tannenbaum and Schmidt advocated a leadership continuum which illustrated the situational and varying nature of leadership. In practice no one leadership style is best in all situations. A variety of leadership styles are illustrated on a continuum varying from highly leader-centred (autocratic) to a highly subordinate-centred style (democratic) (Allais 1995:295).

Manager-centred leader

Subordinate-centred leader




| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manager makes decisions and announces them. | Manager persuades subordinate to accept decisions | Managers make suggestion and allows subordinate to ask questions | Manager suggests tentative decisions subject to change | Manager presents problems and gets inputs from subordinates before the decision is made. | Manager gives parameters within which decisions can be made | Manager and subordinate makes joint decisions within parameters set by the enterprise |

Figure 2.2 Tannenbaum and Schmidt's leadership continuum (1958) (Allais 1995:295)

## 2.4 LEADERSHIP: A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Over the centuries, various leadership approaches were employed in organisations. The ensuing discussion on leadership theories forms an important framework for this study.

### 2.4.1 Trait theory/character theory

According to Allais (1995:287), trait theory examines successful leadership

from the perspective of the individual's personal characteristics, what is it about the person that indicates a good leader. This approach derives from the so-called "great man theory". It is one of the earliest theories on leadership.

The following table illustrates trait variables into three categories. A discussion on the trait variables follows the table.

| PERSONALITY | WORK MOTIVATION | SKILLS |
|---|---|---|
| Self confidence | Task | Technical |
| Stress tolerance | Interpersonal needs | Interpersonal |
| Emotional maturity | Values | Conceptual |
| Integrity | Expectations | Administrative |

Figure 2.3 Trait variables (Hoy & Miskel 1996:378)

- Self-confident leaders: They set goals for themselves and for their followers.
- Stress tolerant leaders: They are likely to make good decisions and to stay calm in stressful situations.
- Emotionally mature leaders: They tend to have an accurate awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, to be orientated towards self-improvement and do not dwell on their shortcomings or fantasise about their successes.
- Integrity: This means that the behaviours of leaders are consistent with their stated values. They are honest, ethical responsible and trustworthy (Hoy & Miskel 1996:379).

Moreover, Gerber et al (1987:330) describe the following as relevant leadership traits:

- physical characteristics such as height, appearance and energy;

- intelligence and ability;
- personality traits such as adaptability and aggressiveness;
- traits relevant to the task, for example, motivation, perseverance and initiative; and
- social characteristics such as interpersonal skills, administrative abilities and adaptability.

### 2.4.2 Situational theory

According to situational theory different personality traits are required in different situations. Leaders arise in times of need and are called upon as a result of time, place and circumstances. The following illustrative table is an example of situational factors in educational leadership.

| **Subordinate** | **Organisational** | **Leader role** | **Internal environment** | **External environment** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Personality | Size | Position, poise | Climate/culture | Social |
| Motivation | Hierarchy | Task situation | Status | Economic |
| Abilities | Formalisation | Procedural rules | | |

Figure 2.4 Illustrative representation of situational theory (Hoy & Miskel 1996:380)

- Structural properties of the organisation: Refers to the size, hierarchical structure, formalisation and technology.
- Role characteristics: Refers to position, power, type of task, procedural rules, content and performance expectations.
- Subordinate characteristics: Refers to education, age, knowledge, experience and tolerance for ambiguity.

- External environment: Refers to the complexity, stability, uncertainty, resource dependency and institutionalisation.
- Internal environment: Refers to climate, culture, openness, participation, group atmosphere, values and norms (Hoy & Miskel 1996:380).

Thus, according to the situational theory, persons who are leaders in one situation may not necessarily be leaders in another. The fundamental concept underpinning this model is that of "fit" or adaptability which gives rise the following assumptions (Allais 1995:297):

- There is no one "best" leadership style.
- In order to be effective leaders must adapt their leadership styles to fit the demands of the situation.
- The most critical situational factor to assess when selecting a leadership style is the task readiness, that is, the ability and willingness of the follower.

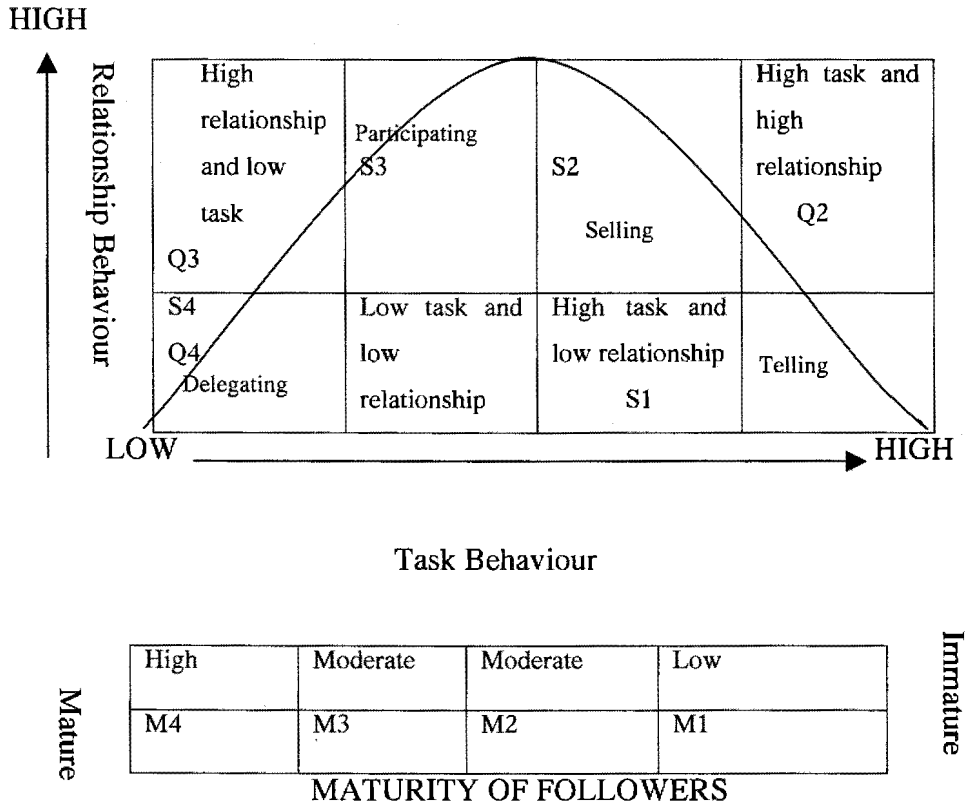



Figure 2.5 Model of situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard 1982:152)

Task behaviour is the degree to which leaders organise and explain tasks to group members. Relationship behaviour is the degree to which leaders maintain relationships with group members. Maturity levels include the following (Hersey & Blanchard 1982:154):

- M1: Low maturity refers to subordinates who are not willing to execute a task.
- M2: Low to average maturity refers to subordinates who do not have the ability to execute a task.
- M3: Average to high maturity level refers to subordinates who have the ability to do the task, but are unwilling to do the task.

- M4: High maturity refers to subordinates who are willing to do the task and who do it.

In Figure 2.5 the four quadrants represent a separate leadership style and are discussed below:

- S1: Telling or directing (Q1) refers to high task behaviour and low relationship behaviour. The leader directs and explains the task fully without any consultation with the subordinates.
- S2: Selling or consulting (Q2) refers high task behaviour and high relationship behaviour.
- S3: Participating (Q3) refers to high relationship behaviour and low task behaviour. Subordinates participate in decision-making.
- S4: Delegating (Q4) refers to low relationship behaviour and low task behaviour. Supervision is of a general nature and work is not continuously checked as subordinates are fully capable of executing the tasks and are willing to do so (Allais 1995:298-299).

The situational theory model indicates that leadership behaviour is the function of the subordinate's level of maturity. Once the leader determines the level of maturity of the subordinate, then the appropriate leadership style can be determined for a given situation.

### 2.4.3 The behavioural theory

Behavioural theorists focus on a combination of personal and situational variables or on interaction between the expectations and perceptions of the leader and followers with differing conditions in an organisation (Keith & Girling 1991:59). The behavioural theorists aim is to determine what leaders do and what leaders are. Behavioural research suggests that leader

effectiveness is a product of the leader's motivation, the character, the subordinate's responses and the circumstances of the leaders. Different managerial situations require different responses. This theoretical approach suggests that almost every manager in an organisation can perform effectively in a leadership role.

### *2.4.3.1 The three style model of Lewin, Lippit and White (1939)*

According to Allais (1995:290) and Gerber et al (1987:332), Lewin, Lippit and White defined leadership as the way in which the leader provides guidelines to his or her subordinates.

- The authoritarian leader determines policy and personally gives orders to his or her subordinates with no input from them.
- The democratic leader allows input from subordinates, discusses all activities and the leader plays the role of the facilitator.
- The laissez-faire leader rarely intervenes in the activities of the group with very little or no supervision of the group.

### *2.4.3.2 McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y*

According to Allais (1995:290) this theory holds that although subordinates and the management are interdependent, there is always a conflict between them. Subordinates depend on the management for satisfying their needs and achieving their goals, while management depends on subordinates for the achievement of goals.

There are two assumptions that inform this theory and which affects leadership behaviour. These are illustrated in the table below.

| THEORY X | THEORY Y |
|---|---|
| People are inherently lazy and will avoid work if possible. | Physical and mental effort with work is as natural as relaxation. |
| Most people must be forced to work, strictly controlled, and threatened with punishment in order to persuade them to pursue organisational goals. | People will exercise self-control to achieve organisational goals. Punishment is irrelevant. |
| People prefer to be controlled, avoid responsibility and have little ambition and rate security above any other need. | People are motivated by self-actualisation needs in particular, although security and physiological needs are still present. |
| Most people have limited creativity when solving organisational problems. | Creativity in the solving of problems is a general phenomenon. |

Figure 2.6 McGregor's model (Allais 1995:291)

According to Theory X there are basic assumptions about human motivation:

- The average person has an inherent dislike for work and will avoid it all costs. The leader has to stress productivity and incentive schemes.
- Because of the inherent dislike for work, people must be coerced to achieve organisational goals.
- The average worker prefers to be prescribed to and likes to receive instructions from the leader.

Theory Y, in contrast to Theory X, presents a dynamic view of people.

- The individual is viewed as having growth and development capacities. Since the person has potential, management must decide how to tap it.
- The average person learns, under proper conditions, not only to accept, but also to seek responsibility.

- The most important reward for the employee is the satisfaction of the individual's self-actualising in his or her efforts towards the attainment of organisational goals.
- Abilities such as creativity, originality and imagination are latent in many individuals and not a prerogative of a few people (Allais 1995:291; Van der Linde 1995:14-15; Van der Westhuizen 1991:291).

#### *2.4.3.3 The relationship-task-interaction theory*

The relationship-task-interaction theory attempts to explain leadership in terms of the interaction between interpersonal relationships and the leader's relationship to the task. Blake and Mouton's (1978) research on leadership is an example of this approach. They measured leadership on a scale of 0 to 10. The main characteristics of this managerial grid are explained below.

- The 9.1 management style shows an interest in tasks and little interest in people.
- The 1.9 management style shows an interest in people and little interest in tasks.
- The 1.1 management style shows little interest in people and in tasks.
- The 5.5 management style shows an average interest in both people and tasks.
- The 9.9 management style shows an intense interest in both people and tasks (Van der Westhuizen 1991:102).

The ideal leader in this model will be one who is 9.9, that is, one who scores high on both the task and the relations behaviour. According to Van der Westhuizen (1991:102), the ideal leader with a score of 9.9 is seldom found in practice. The illustrative representation of this model follows this discussion.

High

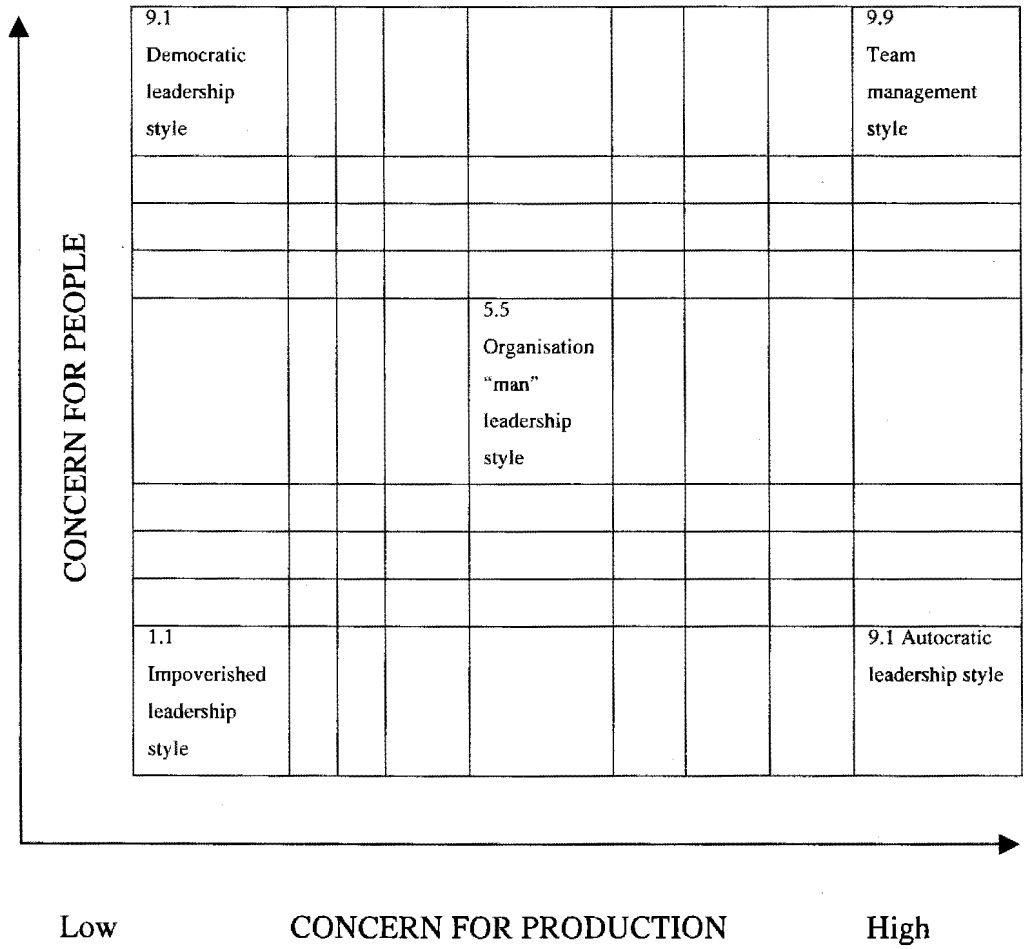



Figure 2.7 Managerial grid of Blake and Mouton (Allais 1995:292)

### 2.4.4 The group function theory

According to the group function theory, leadership is a function of the participation of the members of the group or any action promoting the attainment of the group's goals. Thus, this theory is based on the divisibility of the task and the role of the leader within the group.

### 2.4.5 The social system theory

In this approach there are two major dimensions to the relations between leaders and their followers:

- the nomethic (where the needs of the organisation, its task and its production structure are stressed); and
- the ideographic (where the personal needs and values of the members of the organisation are stressed) (Van der Linde 1995:13).

The following diagram is a model of the organisation as a social system.

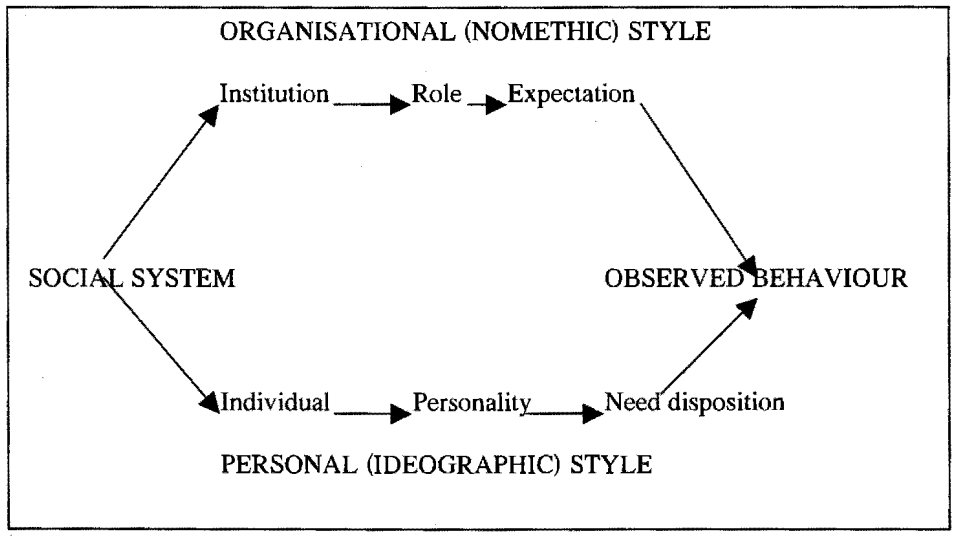



Figure 2.8 Model of the organisation as a social system (Beard 1988:49)

### 2.4.6 Critical theory

Critical theory is a form of social criticism that holds the institutionalised oppression of groups of people in a society - cultural, racial and ethnic and gender groups are often supported by oppressed groups themselves. This

theory is often applied to the analysis of the perceived oppression of non-dominant races, women, the poor and other social classes. This theory has also been applied to schools and the study of relationships between the principal and educators (Owens 1995:132). It has been found that some principals mandate that educators comply with the organisational goals or that they embrace particular notions of organisational culture, while others induce compliance through more subtle manipulation. By the mid 1980's recognition began to grow that participation by educators in schools was desirable but has been traditionally rare (Owens 1995:130). However, the recommendation in 1986 by the Carnegie Foundation on Education and Economy that educators be given a greater voice in the corporate life of the school, has provided educators more opportunities for empowerment. Albeit the Carnegie Foundation is an American organisation, in South Africa, the word empowerment has become a buzz-word in school circles. There are three things that should happen to empower educators:

- Educators must participate actively in the dynamic ongoing processes of leadership, thereby contributing their skills, knowledge and insights to the development of and the vision for the school.
- Educators must acquire greater personal ownership, and thus a greater sense of committment to the values for which the school stands.
- By the active participation of educators, and by being personally committed to the outcomes, educators are stimulated to grow in the awareness of the mission of the school and their contributions to the attainment of this mission (Owens 1995:132).

## 2.5 THE FEMINOCENTRIC CRITIQUE

This critique posits that men and women understand and experience the world in significantly different ways. One of the reasons given for this difference is

that women are more concerned with relationships and caring for others than are men (3.4.1.2; 5.8.2). Men are viewed as being concerned with territoriality and justice. Thus, schools are described as having two cultures: a male culture and a female culture. Moreover, these cultures overlap only partially (Owens 1995:316). Shakeshaft (1987:197-198) summarises five characteristics of the female world in educational organisations.

- Women spend more time with people, communicate more, care about individual differences and are more concerned about educators and marginalised learners than men. Consequently the staff of women principals rate women higher, as more productive and as having higher morale.
- Women principals exhibit greater knowledge of teaching techniques and are more likely to help novice educators.
- Women demonstrate a more democratic, participatory leadership style.
- Women principals are always on display and always vulnerable to attack in the male world of educational management.
- Women are more likely than men to behave the same way in public places as they do in private and this often results in behaviour, that men label as inappropriate.

Moreover, Shakeshaft (1987:148) argues that androcentrism takes the experiences of men as representative of all human experiences (3.6.1). Shakeshaft (1987:148) further contends that this excludes women as a particular group to be studied (3.6.1). Furthermore, Shmuck (1986:176) considering the relative lack of women in educational management, has classified theories of inequality as "individualised socialising processes, organisational constraints to women's mobility, and gender-based career socialisation." The next section hinges on a discussion of feminocentric scholarship.

### 2.5.1 Feminocentric scholarship

The central characteristic of this scholarship is that it addresses questions and issues of deep and personal concern to women and is outlined below:

- Studies of such things as the way in which, women fit into organisations, what motivates them, the ways in which they derive satisfaction from their work and move from teaching into management.
- Studies of attitudes towards women such as negative attitudes that they encounter as they seek to become managers and the general bias that they encounter in their management careers.
- Descriptions of women school managers at work, their effectiveness in management as women with that of their male counterparts (Owens 1995:320).

Moreover, the other characteristic of this scholarship is methodological. Feminist scholars find it better to conduct qualitative research in contrast to the impersonal questionnaires, characteristic of survey research (Owens 1995:320).

### 2.5.2 Feminocentric critique of existing research

Feminists have generally used two different ways to modify existing management research. They have examined existing research to explain that it is androcentric and therefore seriously flawed methodologically and have engaged in new research methods that are thought to be more appropriate in understanding the behaviour of both men and women in educational management (3.6.1; 6.2.1). The subsequent discussion hinges on a feminocentric critique of existing research.

Shakeshaft (1987:151-156) selected five well-known examples of scholarly work for critical examination:

- the social systems model of organisation
- the Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ)
- the Organisational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ)
- the contingency theory of leadership
- Maslow's theory of motivation.

### *2.5.2.1 The social systems model of organisations*

Shakeshaft (1987:151) makes a strong case that these theorists largely ignored women in their thinking. She points out that in describing social systems theory, Getzels and Guba (the creators of this model) ignored women and did not research the actual experience of role-conflict of educators. She further argues that the exclusion of women and the experiences of women in the conceptualisation of the model of social behaviour render it, inadequate and imbalanced.

### *2.5.2.2 The Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ)*

Although the LBDQ was originally used to study the leadership behaviour of girls in a New York residential institution, much of the development work of the research instrument was used in military, academic and corporate settings. These settings were predominantly male and ignore among other things the actions of women and the possible female conceptualising of leadership behaviour (Shakeshaft 1987:154) (6.2.1).

#### *2.5.2.3 The Organisational Climate Description Questionnaire (OCDQ)*

In the OCQD the theorists Halpin and Croft ignored the possibility that gender may play some part in the perceptions of principals by educators as a major factor in organisational climate (Shakeshaft 1987:154). Halpin and Croft developed a questionnaire in the early 1960's to describe organisational behaviour (Basson, Van der Westhuizen and Niemann 1990:615-682).

#### *2.5.2.4 The contingency theory of leadership*

In conducting extensive research to test the contingency theory of leadership, Fiedler not only ignored the gender of the leader (although he included women in his research sample) but also engaged in some speculation about the aspects of women's organisational behaviour that Shakeshaft describes as "masculist" and "uninformed". He failed to recognise sex-role and sex-characteristic stereotyping as elements affecting situational favourableness (Shakeshaft 1987:156).

#### *2.5.2.5 Maslow's theory of motivation*

Shakeshaft (1987:156) describes this approach to motivation as reflecting patronising views towards women by one who believes that the work of women does not require intelligence, talent or genius. She argues that Maslow devalues women's experiences (3.6.1; 6.2.1).

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the literature on leadership styles and behaviour has been revealed. This has generated a number of important questions and themes about leadership which need to be addressed in order to extend theory on

women in educational management. From the discussion above, it is concluded that leadership theories based solely on male lives do not automatically fit the female experience. Interest in leadership theory shown by feminist scholars has called for a fresh approach to understanding women's experiences.

The questions raised in this chapter will be further addressed in Chapter Three. Moreover, these questions provide guidelines as to the themes to be investigated during the interviews with women principals (Chapter Five). The next chapter continues with further considerations of literature with specific relevance to women's leadership styles and its appropriateness in educational management.

# CHAPTER 3

# WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Much work has been done on the barriers to women's progress to management positions, but very little research has been done on the performance of women as practising educational managers. Chapter Three examines women's styles of leadership in schools. However, to place the study in context, this chapter also examines the present status quo of women in educational management in South-African schools. It also examines the specific challenges that women educational management face. A brief review of the intrinsic and extrinsic barriers that these women face is also presented in this chapter.

Educational management is a male-dominated field (Shakeshaft 1989:324) (2.1). Men out number women at all levels of educational management: as principals, superintendents and even in the leadership of educator unions whose ranks comprise predominantly of women viewed monitoring as an important aspect of their role functions (Lemmer 1994:3-29). Amongst the reasons given to justify the prevailing situation is that men perform better than women as managers (*Daily News* 9 September 1997:2). However, evidence indicates that, women are not only every bit as capable as male managers, they are frequently better *(Daily News* 9 September 1997:2).

A consultancy firm based in Sydney, D.D.I. Asia Pacific, conducted a survey of 1 332 employees and managers among companies in Australia, the United States of America, Canada and New Zealand. The findings revealed that, "women were found to be more capable of soliciting new and better ways of

doing things and inspiring workers to achieve higher goals."

The results of the survey helped to discredit the myth that women are unsuitable as leaders and suggest that men might learn from women about empowering leadership (6.5). Against this background Chapter Three examines the leadership styles of women educational managers and the advantages of having women in educational leadership positions from an international as well as a South African perspective.

According to Erasmus (1997:35): "only one resource offers an enduring competitive edge, people." He further argues that organisations will have to make use of their best available people power to ensure their success and they will have to include women in ever increasing numbers. He further elucidates "besides South Africa having sufficient numbers of women to contribute to the managerial shortfall, women also have the capacity and potential to excel as managers" (Erasmus 1997:37).

Wolmarans (1997:26) concurs with Erasmus when he makes a case for women as successful leaders. He argues that women are more likely than men to use transformational leadership, thus motivating others by transforming their self-interest into the goals of the organisation. In South Africa this is an essential ingredient for success if one considers the radical political changes experienced in 1994 followed by significant steps by the Government to implement an affirmative action policy, equal opportunity and skills improvement. Strategies for change in the present status quo of women in educational management are crucial and may be enhanced by the adoption of empowering and transformational management.

To this end Wolmarans (1997:27) maintains that women use personal power, based on charisma and contacts, while men extensively use the power of

position and rewards and punishment. He notes that women who rely heavily on their predominantly female characteristics tend to enjoy more support than women who emulate the masculine style of leadership. Murray and Simmons (1994:71) make an argument for the shift in the practice of educational leadership:

> "A shift is occurring in the definition and practice of leadership for tomorrow's schools from hierarchical structures and bureaucratic leadership models to one of shared governance and site-based decision-making."

Murray and Simmons (1994:71) argue that this shift in leadership emphasis and practice will suit feminine leadership behaviour. Furthermore, Riley (1994:102) maintains that, women are able to draw on a repertoire of styles and are inclined to adapt those styles which are most effective to managing the change process.

Against this background the following pertinent questions are asked in this study:

- What are the perspectives on leadership styles?
- What are the gender paradigms?
- How do feminine leadership styles relate to effective schools?
- What is the role of the woman principal in an effective school?
- What are the advantages of having women as educational leaders?
- What are the challenges that women who aspire to leadership positions face in educational management?

Various perspectives on gender will now be discussed.

## 3.2 PERSPECTIVES ON GENDER

In this section I focus upon the various perspectives on gender and how they impact on the leadership styles of women principals and the challenges they face as women in school leadership.

### 3.2.1 Sexist perspective

According to De Witt (1991:519), in this approach the main emphasis is placed on the fundamental differences between men and women. De Witt asserts that the disadvantage of this approach lies in the overemphasis of differences. It becomes one-sided competition between the sexes and is contra-productive in a management context (5.9.1.1).

### 3.2.2 Feminist perspective

This approach implies that women's interests should be promoted at all costs. According to De Witt (1991:520) this approach, will not only be counter-productive to management in education, it will be harmful. According to (Blackmore 1998: 3) feminism is a social movement and makes women in leadership face a difficult path. She argues that the benchmark for leadership is heterosexual and male. Many of the women principals in this study concur with Blackmore's argument (5.9.1.1,5.9.1.2).

### 3.2.3 Gender perspective

De Witt (1991:520) maintains that this is a balanced approach. Proper cognisance of the enriching experiences of both men and women is taken. Various perspectives from a masculine and feminine point of view are recognised and are put to the best use to achieve effective educational

management. This approach accepts that a woman educational leader will deal with delegation and authority in a unique way. Her management style may differ markedly from her male counterpart, but will still be effective. He further argues: "the feminine perspective provides an enriching and unique component to management, which can be of inestimable value to our school." Furthermore, Gray (1993:107) adds to this approach when he contends:

> "As our understanding of gender issues has developed, we have moved from considering men and women as two great opposed sexual blocks to realising that differences within each sex are much greater than those between the sexes."

Gray (1993:115) further avers that, the ultimate question is not one of the nature of two monolithic sexes or genders but how well we understand the ways in which people can learn to be self-accepting and also tolerate the self-acceptance of others.

Lahiti and Johnson (1992:133) argue that if women bring something new and useful to the organisation by drawing upon the things associated with femaleness, then this could certainly mean hope for the organisation. The fact that women are generally under-represented in educational management positions has been the subject of much research, discussion and debate. Amongst the various reasons for this under-representation, two theoretical perspectives have dominated (Bond 1996:15). The first perspective is a person-centred view, in which women and men are seen as different, and while men have been socialised and educated for leadership, women have not. An alternative theoretical perspective emerged to explain the absence of women. The structured-centred perspective is that women are disadvantaged by the absence of other women, have few resources and little power. These constraints shape and define women's behaviour (Bond 1996:15). Despite the

initial optimism by their creators, neither perspective has been able to explain the continuing lack of significant progress of women. The inherent divisiveness of these views and the exclusivity of each view may well have generated separateness instead of dialogue (Bond 1996:15). An examination of gender paradigms is necessary to understand this phenomenon.

## 3.3 GENDER PARADIGMS

Gray (1993:111) identified two paradigms that can be used to examine gender issues in schools. The feminine or nurturing paradigm includes the following traits:

- creative
- caring
- intuitive
- aware of individual differences
- non-competitive
- tolerant
- subjective
- informal.

The masculine, defensive/aggressive paradigm is characterised as:

- highly regulated
- conformist
- normative
- competitive
- evaluative
- disciplined

- objective
- formal.

On the other hand, there is evidence that making assumptions that divide attributes into two contradictory and mutually exclusive categories distorts the reality that we are trying to understand (Bond 1996:15). This model of leadership is driven by competition, which magnifies differences, these differences cannot be shared, and being male is opposite to being female.

Thus, rather than enforcing any stereotypes, this study recognises that these qualities are not necessarily mutually exclusive; each person can recognise that they may have qualities from both lists. According to Coleman (1993:190), the tension between traditionally male roles of the secondary school principal and the recognition of the need for nurturing qualities that are traditionally feminine is relieved by research on effective schools and school improvement. According to Bond (1996:16), there is a complementary contribution, and although the experience and research indicate that they are at this point, identified as two "dominant" ways of thinking and practising leadership, they need not be exclusively the domains of women or men.

## 3.4 EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS AND FEMININE MANAGEMENT

Shakeshaft (1987:199) argues that a female world exists in schools and is reflected in the ways women work in schools (cf. 2.5). She further elucidates that this female world is conceptualised in the following ways:

- Relationships with others are central to all actions of women managers' (5.8.1).
- Teaching and learning is the major focus of women managers.
- Building community is an essential part of a woman manager's style

(Shakeshaft 1987:197).

According to Shakeshaft (1987:200) this female world is very familiar to the world of effective schools (cf. 6.2.1). She alludes to the fact that traditional female approaches to schooling look like the prescriptions for administrative behaviour in effective schools. Moreover, Shakeshaft (1987:199) comments on the results of studies conducted by Sweeney (1982) in the USA on effective leadership behaviour. She avers that six themes emerged as behaviours consistently associated with well-managed schools in which learner achievement was high. Principals of such schools were found to:

- Emphasise achievement and convey to educators their committment fostering academic success.
- Set instructional strategies and accept responsibility for facilitating their accomplishment.
- Provide an orderly atmosphere and ensure that the school climate is conducive to learning.
- Frequently evaluate learner progress in the light of their performance expectations.
- Support educators with regard to staff development.

In addition, Murray and Simmons (1994:74) quote the descriptors for the effective principal as supplied by *The Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the Department of Education:*

- a person with skills to foster a spirit of collegiality, cooperation and teamwork.
- someone who takes risks to seek creative solutions.
- someone who possesses broad visions that are performance-orientated.
- someone who shows personal commitment to learning.

- someone who values initiative and celebrates accomplishment.
- someone who recognises that no principal succeeds alone.

When comparing these two descriptions of effective leadership with the portrait of the female educational management world, both Murray and Simmons (1994:74) and Shakeshaft (1987:200) concur that the female world is significantly similar to the world of effective schools. Furthermore, Squelch and Lemmer (1994:13) note the following as essential leadership tasks to be performed in order to achieve the running of effective schools:

- emphasis on achievement;
- building a positive learning climate;
- ensuring safety and order in the school;
- monitoring learner's progress continuously; and
- collegiality.

These characteristics are closely linked to Shakeshaft's (1987) world of effective schools and feminine management as described above. Moreover, Funk (1993:35-42) concluded from interviews with female educational managers concerning effective female school leaders, that women's affective concerns for people over an emphasis on tasks is a characteristic of effective leaders.

Shakeshaft (1987:200) concludes that for a number of reasons, women possess characteristics that are conducive to good schooling:

- Women enter teaching with clear educational goals supported by a value system that stresses service, caring and relationships.
- Women are focussed upon instructional and educational issues and have demonstrated that, when in charge, they are likely to build a school

community that stresses achievement within a supportive atmosphere.

- Women's communication and decision-making styles stress cooperation and help to facilitate a translation of their educational visions into learner progress. Moreover, they manage more orderly schools.
- Women demonstrate the kinds of behaviour that promote achievement and learning as well as a high moral and committment.

### 3.4.1 The woman principal and her role as an effective principal

According to Squelch and Lemmer (1994:11) the following are the most important roles of the principal:

- educator
- manager
- communicator
- evaluator
- counselor.

These roles will be discussed in the light of the capacities of women principals.

#### *3.4.1.1 Educator*

Principals should be good educators so that they understand the educational needs of the learners in order to develop and manage school instructional programmes. Moreover, they should be in a position to advise educators on all educational matters regarding the learners.

Shakeshaft (1987:197) provides researched evidence when she states that: "teaching and learning are the major focus of women administrators" (cf. 3.4). Women educational managers are more instrumental in instructional learning

and exhibit greater knowledge of teaching methods and techniques. Academic achievement is higher in school districts in the USA where there are women managers (Shakeshaft 1987:197).

### *3.4.1.2 Manager*

A principal must be a good manager. Principals must have the ability to plan, organise, supervise and motivate staff (5.8.2). In a study conducted by Adler, Laney and Packer (1993:118), findings reveal that women managers show great concern for relationships and have good interpersonal skill (2.5). Adler et al (1993:118) argue: "management of both people and resources is familiar to women." The role of the mother at home is often that of the manager (5.7.2.5). "The style of managing a home and caring for individual children may for some women, be similar to the style of running a school" (Adler et al 1993:119). Furthermore, an interesting comment, was made by a senior manager in the above study:

> "The style that is most natural to many women is the one that is more suitable to modern management styles than the old, hierarchical, dictatorial style of management. This has been successful in the 1980's with new style companies; corporate devolved style of management. Words like love, family, atmosphere, feeling and reward now need to be used; these are things at the feminine end of the spectrum. They need to be incorporated into more successful management styles."

It must be noted that women can manage in the old traditional "masculine" style of management. However, they are more likely to be informal in style and tend to be more democratic in decision-making (Shakeshaft 1987:179-186).

### *3.4.1.3 Communicator*

Good communication with staff, parents, learners, the education department and the broader community is essential for any effective principal (5.3.1). Shakeshaft (1993:48), reports that in studies conducted in the USA, it was found that women spend more time with people, communicate more, care more about individual differences and are more concerned about failures and marginalised learners. The morale of staff of women educational managers were found to be higher and staff was more productive (cf. 3.4).

Furthermore, studies by Adler et al (1993:115) reveal that women open up alternative ways of communicating and getting things done. They listened before acting, were sympathetic, trustworthy and were prepared to apologise when things went wrong. Many of the women in the study regarded their management style as low-keyed or subtle and they tried to get things done by influence rather than direct control. In addition, Rosener (1990:119) in her study for *The International Women's Forum* found that women leaders use cooperation rather than the traditional command and control leadership styles of many larger organisations. Moreover, in a study of women managers in twenty-four British comprehensive schools, it is found that women employed their communication skills to good effect in jobs requiring cross-school liaison (Weightman 1989:119). Coleman (1993:191) argues: "for managers who seek to motivate and engage subordinates, female speech patterns may be more successful."

### *3.4.1.4 Evaluator*

The effective principal must possess skills for evaluating and maintaining school processes as well as staff appraisal and. monitoring learner progress. According to Shakeshaft (1987:197), female principals take part in

instructional decision-making and accept responsibility for decisions about methods, materials and evaluation processes (cf. 3.4) In a study by Whitaker and Hein (1991:40), findings reveal that principals rated women's management capabilities higher than men in their ability:

- to provide supervisory help to their subordinates
- to assume necessary responsibility
- to pursue knowledge and information willingly
- to work democratically with others.

### *3.4.1.5 Counselor*

Counseling involves recognising and understanding needs and problems, listening, giving advice, making recommendations and solving problems. Whitaker and Hein (1991:49) state that research findings reveal that principals rate women higher in the following capabilities as managers:

- Women tend to be forthright and honest (5.8.1).
- Women have emotional stability under stress.
- Women tend to be tactful.
- Women tend to possess foresight.
- Women respect confidential information.
- Most people can express themselves freely to women in authority.

### *3.4.1.6 Public relations officer*

Public relations and marketing are becoming important aspects of the principal's job. They must be able to communicate the school's policy and educational aims to the community. Jones (1987:71) contends:

"My own view is that more female than male heads show particular skill in motivating and managing their staff, including involving them in shared tasks and in relating the inside of the school with the world outside."

## 3.5 ADVANTAGES OF WOMEN AS EDUCATIONAL LEADERS

According to Davies (1992:83) research findings in a cross-country study of the perceptions and orientations of women and men teachers in Botswana, Gambia, Nigeria, Uganda, Zambia and Malaysia reveal that women's concerns were noticeably more towards cooperation and sharing. They wanted to work "hand in hand" with others. Moreover, they wanted to have joint decision-making; to adopt participative management; to have more interaction between staff and head and generally to have more involvement. They were successful in encouraging unity in the staff. Moreover, they sought to "treat students like human beings".

### 3.5.1 Advantages for learners

Findings in a study of elementary school in a Philadelphia school improvement programme by Pavan and Reid (1994:425) showed that all but one of the top five schools where learners' academic achievement was higher than expected had female principals. All the woman principals expressed their goals for their schools, which centred on learner achievement. In order to achieve these goals much of their time was spent supervising and evaluating instructional programmes. The learners were also recipients of much of the principals' time in both formal and informal activities. Adler et al (1993:114) concurs when they argue: "Women principals pay more attention to the social, emotional and academic development of the children in their schools." Furthermore, Manamela (1995:74) reports: "the high schools led by women are topping the circuit with standard 10 results despite their lack of resources."

### 3.5.2 Advantages for the community

It is becoming increasingly apparent that community involvement is a key feature in children's education and progress at schools. In South Africa, the introduction of the school governing body is an initiative of the government to ensure community involvement in schools. Professor Kader Asmal, Minister of Education in South Africa, is quoted in *Daily News* (10 October 1999:4) as saying:

> "When we say that schools must become centres of community involvement in the education of our children not only through the participation of governing bodies, but through ownership and participation that turns schools into the engine of community development."

According to Shakeshaft (1987:197), because of the collaborative strategies employed by women, they seem to have more positive interactions with community members.

### 3.5.3 Advantages for the educators and the school

Women are more likely than men are to help new teachers and to supervise all educators directly. Staffs of women educational managers are more productive and have a higher morale. They are also more aware of and committed to the goals of learning and have more shared professional goals. Educators receive a great deal support from their women managers (Shakeshaft 1987:197) (cf. 3.4).

In a study conducted by Shakeshaft, Nowell and Perry (1993:50), they found that woman were more likely than men:

- to encourage the empowerment of their educators;

- to be attentive to the feelings of their educators;
- to involve their educators in decision-making;
- to include more facts in the evaluation of their educators;
- to place emphasis on the technical skills of teaching;
- to provide information gathered from other sources; and
- to provide immediate feedback on performance and to emphasise curricular programmes.
-

### 3.5.4 Advantages for parents

Parental participation in education is essential for the development of the child. Parental involvement enhances the child's ability to perform both at school and at home. This link between the school and the home makes for effective teaching and learning, according to Culture of Teaching and Learning (COLTS) introduced by the Government. Furthermore, with the introduction of Outcomes Based Education (OBE) more parental involvement is required (6.2.4). According to Shakeshaft (1987:197), parents are more favourable towards schools and districts run by women and are thus more involved in school life (cf. 3.4).

## 3.6 CHALLENGES THAT WOMEN FACE AS SCHOOL MANAGERS

Women have always been managers. When a woman assumes the responsibility for the welfare of herself and the members of her family or the community, she does so without holding an office or an official position (Bond 1996:21). Her name may, or may not, be commonly known or spoken about and her service to the advancement of people has rarely been documented. Thus this lack of visibility of the accomplishment of women promotes the myth that leadership is primarily the domain of men (Bond 1996:21) (6.2.3.2). Moreover, research evidence shows that women are no less psychologically

qualified for positions in management than men (Marshall 1984:15).

Since there is no systematic evidence to prove that women are ineffective as educational leaders, the challenges that women face in their advancement up the promotional ladder are explained in the ensuing paragraphs.

### 3.6.1 Androcentrism

The development of knowledge in educational behaviour may be viewed as effectively the world as men have understood it, a description of the world as viewed through "a male prism" or "a male-lens" (Shakeshaft 1987:50). Critics describe organisational behaviour research as having been conducted largely by men who studied populations comprising mostly of men (Owens 1995:315) (2.6; 6.2.3.1). Women were virtually uninvolved in much of the research, either in conceptualising it or as subjects of the investigation (6.2.6). According to Shakeshaft (1987:148), the underlying assumption is that the experiences of males and females are the same, and thus research on males is appropriate for the generalisation to the female experience. In developing theories of administration, research did not look at the context in general and, therefore, was unable to document how the world was different for women. When female experience was different, it was ignored or diminished (2.5.2; 6.2.1).

Thus this dominance of the male-world view in research and knowledge is thought to have introduced bias into the study of organisational behaviour at schools, particularly since schools are predominantly female workplaces while efforts to understand these workplaces are essentially derived from male-based scholarship (Shakeshaft 1987:149) (6.2.1). This male image of management may pose a challenge to women who would not wish to become part of a culture, which they see as fostering "aggressive competitive behaviours, and

emphasis on control rather than negotiation and collaboration, and the pursuit of competition rather than shared problem solving" (Al-Khalifa 1992:100) (6.2.1).

Furthermore, women may not identify with management as they see it practised. According to Ozga (1993:3): "when women become managers they often have to take on definitions of management which exclude their experience and their understanding" (6.2.1). Al-Khalifa (1992:98) avers that when theories of management were first applied to schools, the application was seen as technical and logical. Therefore, those who practised management were expected to have male qualities of analytical detachment, strong task-direction and "hard-nosed toughness" (6.2.1; 6.2.3.1).

### 3.6.2 Devaluation of women

The most significant explanation of the resistance to women in positions of power in schools, is the devaluation of women (Shakeshaft 1993:50) The assignment of less value to women takes the form of attitudes that favour males over females for management positions. Particular challenges that women face, have been documented and include the following:

- word of mouth recruiting for management posts limited to males;
- not allowing outside candidates to apply;
- asking biased questions to women, particularly about family responsibility;
- offering lower salaries to women and refusing to negotiate salaries with women;
- separating applications by sex and interviewing men by quota and not qualifications(6.2.5) ;
- using criteria not related to performance, such as requiring certain number of years in a position, which eliminates women candidates;

- allowing men to skip steps on the career ladder but requiring that women have to complete all the steps;
- counting as leadership experience typically male activities such as military service, but not counting typical female activities like voluntary work or female work;
- interviewing men who do not have the minimum educational and job requirements, but requiring women to hold all the certification before they can be considered;
- having only men as interviewers (5.9.1); and
- asking women how their husbands felt about them becoming school managers (Shakeshaft 1993:50).

Thus, most of the challenges that women face in moving into educational management can be explained by understanding that women are not valued as much as men. This bias results in negative attitudes and practices toward women aspiring to be principals (Shakeshaft 1993:50).

### 3.6.3 Support systems and family responsibilities

Another challenge for women who aspire to leadership positions in school management is that they lack the support systems to help them find and secure jobs (6.2.7). Women are less likely than men to have formal and informal networks that let them know about jobs and help them secure interviews (Shakeshaft 1993:51) (6.2.3.2; 6.2.5; 6.2.7).

Furthermore, women may be less inclined to advance into management given the stress of role conflict that such a move might bring. For where women carry the main burden of dependants: the balancing of different roles and responsibilities is a considerable organisational achievement, but it is also experienced as a source of pressure, a move into management then comes to be

seen as compounding this problem (Al-Khalifa 1992:96) (6.2.5; 6.2.7).

### 3.6.4 Self-esteem and self-confidence

Studies indicate that women have lower self-confidence than men (Shakeshaft 1993:51). This lowered level of self-confidence may be a reason why women generally only apply for jobs that they are highly qualified for (6.2.7). Lack of self-esteem by women may also explain why women internalise failure and men externalise failure. Women are more likely to code their rejection as personal failure. Research evidence shows that it takes females at least four times as many interviews to secure their first positions. Thus, it is not surprising that many women stop looking for leadership positions. Women tend to be more self-critical in self-evaluation and therefore more critical and selective about career moves than many male educators (Al-Khalifa 1992:96) (6.2.7, 6.3.1).

### 3.6.5 Aspiration level

There is a common belief that women are not in leadership positions because they do not want to be. However, studies of female aspiration level do not support this and indicate that if women believe that it is possible for them to be hired as school managers, they are likely to aspire to those positions (6.2.8). According to Ruijs (1993:558), research evidence in the Netherlands indicates that although many women are reluctant to apply for management positions, they are just as interested in educational management as men (5.7.2.3; 6.2.6).

### 3.6.6 Visibility

Men tend to be more visible than women are. They coach sport are more likely to be in charge of the school orchestra. Moreover men are more likely than

women to be asked to chair committees or to represent the school. This visibility gives men the edge over women. Women have also been taught that womanly virtue is modesty, thus it is more likely that women will give credit to others for the work they have done (Shakeshaft 1993:52). Thus, this "invisibility" may pose a challenge to women seeking educational management positions (6.2.8).

## 3.7 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP IN SOUTH AFRICA

### 3.7.1 Historical and political background

On 24 May 1994, President Nelson Mandela, opening South Africa's first democratically elected parliament said:

> "It is vitally important that all structures of Government, including the President should understand fully that freedom cannot be achieved unless women have been emancipated from all forms of oppression."

Following this, in 1996 the Commission for Gender Equity was called for in the Constitution of South Africa. The aim of the Commission is to promote gender equality and to advise and make recommendations to parliament or any other legislature with regard to any laws or proposed legislation, which affects gender equality or the status of women (Section 119). On 17 March 1999, this researcher interviewed the Commissioner for Gender Equality, Pinkey Mbowane, on the progress of women in educational management in South Africa. Mbowane expounded that to this date women were still in the minority in terms of educational management. She further explained that task teams had been set up in each of the nine regions to investigate the status quo of women educators and only two of the regions have produced a gender policy (6.2.5). Mbowane further expounded that, all of the senior positions in education were

held by men. When Mbowane questioned the Director General as to why this situation prevails, she was told that the main reason was that women do not apply for these positions. However, Mbowane maintains that is not necessarily true. She believes that it is an issue of patriarchy, socialisation, stereotyping and culture, and also pointed out that the situation of gender imbalances varied from region to region because of various factors, which are expounded in the ensuing discussion.

### 3.7.2 Leadership and culture

Leadership occurs within a cultural context. According to Mbowane (1999), in the more traditional regions such as Mpumalanga, Northern Province and Eastern Cape men still dominate leadership positions in schools, at district and regional levels. In the Western Cape there is a slight difference with more women in Coloured and Indian schools. In Gauteng, there are seventeen school districts and only two of these districts have women district superintendents. According to Mbowane (1999), in terms of Black culture, men are still seen as leaders whilst women are led. She maintained that even when women are given leadership positions then there are very few support structures for these women (6.2.7; 6.2.8).

### 3.7.3 Leadership and patriarchy in South Africa

The term "patriarchy" has come to mean many different things and much confusion surrounds the term. It is used in this study to denote male dominance over women: a social term for a social condition. Mbowane (1999) explained that South Africa is bound by a patriarchal system. She believes that women are not promoted to leadership positions in schools because our society views men as "bosses" or leaders and women as followers (5.7.2.3; 6.2.2).

### 3.7.4 Women and stereotyping in South Africa

Traditional role stereotypes are still prevalent in South Africa. In a survey conducted by the Wits Business School in 1991, the overwhelming conclusion was that women are still not regarded as equals in the workplace *Natal Mercury* (21 May 1991:3). The majority of the respondents admitted that, male values and behaviour dominated most corporates and that there was still prejudice in promoting women (6.2.2). There is still the belief that women do not make good managers because they are too emotional, are weak and cannot handle discipline problems, are less competitive, and less ambitious than men. Thus, for reasons explained above it becomes clear that while the majority of the teaching staff is women, the number holding educational management positions are few. The following discussion and graphical illustrations entail the present status quo of South African women in education.

## 3.8 THE STATUS QUO OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN EDUCATORS

In 1996 The Central Statistics Service revealed that South African women were the least represented at management levels (*Daily New,* 5 December 1996:2). The article revealed that, "At management level, the gender difference is most prominent with almost fifty percent fewer women than men occupying managerial posts." This trend is also evident in education as will be indicated in the ensuing graphical representations.

**EDUCATORS ACCORDING TO GENDER IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

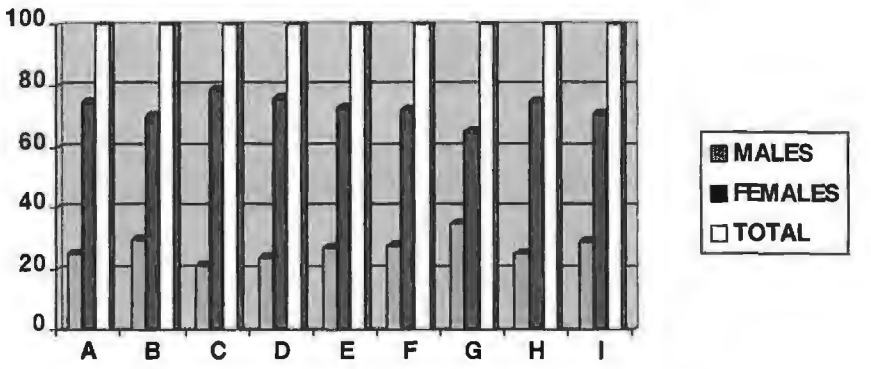



Table 3.1 Primary schools in South Africa: Educators according to gender (Department of National Education, Pretoria 1999)

**EDUCATORS ACCORDING TO GENDER IN SOUTH AFRICAN SECONDARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

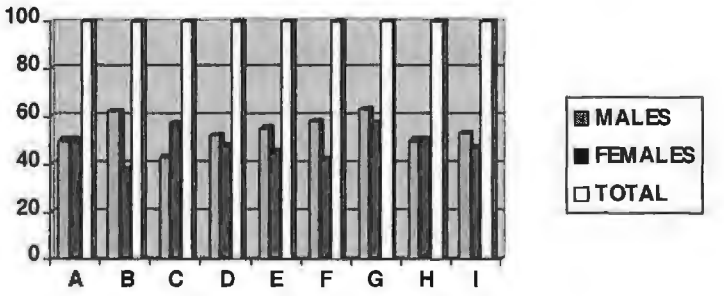



Table 3.2 Secondary schools in South Africa: Educators according to gender (Department of National Education, Pretoria 1999)

## PRINCIPALS IN SOUTH AFRICAN PRIMARY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

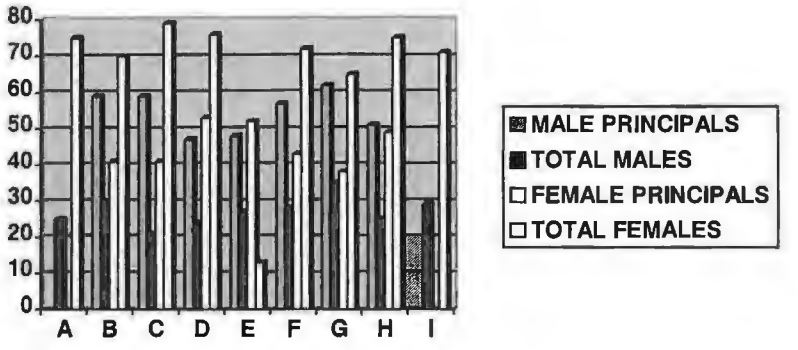



Table3.3 Primary schools in South Africa: Principals according to gender (Department of National Education, Pretoria 1999)

- Information for principals in the Eastern Cape and the Western Cape was not available.

## PRINCIPALS IN SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS

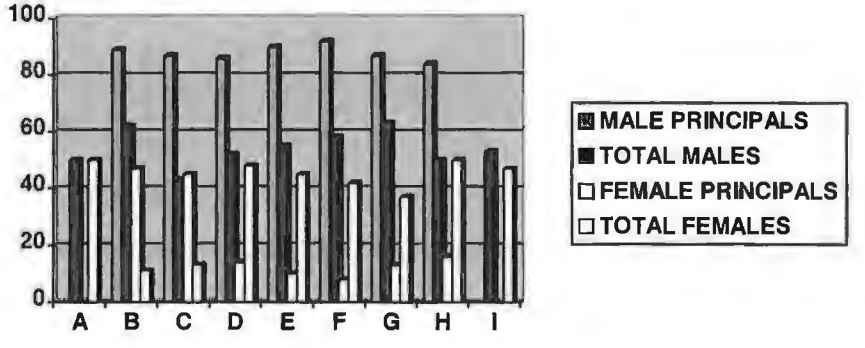



Table 3.4 Secondary schools in South Africa: Principals according to gender (Department of National Education, Pretoria 1999)

- Information for principals in Eastern Cape and the Western Cape was not available.

KEY

| KEY | REGION |
|---|---|
| A | Eastern Cape |
| B | Free State |
| C | Gauteng |
| D | KwaZulu Natal |
| E | Mpumalanga |
| F | Northern Cape |
| G | Northern Province |
| H | North West |
| I | Western Province |
| Pr | Principal |

As is apparent from the graphical representation, females make up 73.32 percent of the educator staff at primary schools and 46.26 percent at the secondary schools. However, in positions of principals they only make up 35.8 percent of the staff in the total teaching staff. The following graph represents the statistics for principals at state paid primary and secondary schools in South Africa as at September1999 (1.2.3.2).

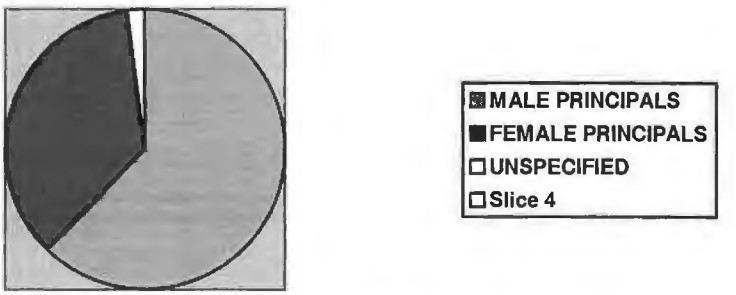



Table 3.5 Pie Graph indicating male and female principals in primary and secondary schools in South Africa (Department of National Education, Pretoria 1999)

- Unspecified indicates state paid combined schools.

For centuries women have been marginalised in the work place. According to Mbowane (1999), although there has been changes in the last decade in South Africa, these changes are not incisive.

## 3.9 CONCLUSION

In this Chapter an overview of women in educational management was presented. Due to sweeping social change over the last century in the industrialised world, more people have become aware of the worth of women in leadership positions. In spite of this there is still a lack of women in leadership. Current developments in women this area described in this chapter have stimulated a growing interest in leadership for the 21st century. Existing leadership theories based on male models are insufficient to describe the patterns of female leadership. New interests, shown from a feminist perspective, have called for a fresh look to women as leaders. The next chapter describes the methodology and research design used in this study.

# CHAPTER 4

# QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a detailed description of the methodology and design of the present study. Important aspects of the methodology that informs this study will be presented (Lofland & Lofland 1984:147-8). The chapter is divided into epistemology, data collection procedures, data processing as well as the analysis and interpretation of findings.

A conceptual analysis of the terms*: qualitative research and epistemology* is provided.

## 4.2 ANALYSIS OF METHODOLOGICAL CONCEPTS

The research approach in this investigation is qualitative. It focuses on the description of the researched phenomenon and is based on the principles of the qualitative paradigm, using the unstructured interview, observations and the collection and analysis of documents as a means of describing the investigated phenomenon.

### 4.2.1 Definition of qualitative research

Qualitative research has its roots in the phenomenological paradigm, which

uses a variety of interpretative research methodologies in naturalistic settings (Best & Kahn 1993:182; Bogdan & Biklen 1992:34; Patton 1990:40; Gay 1992:239). In the qualitative research approach, the researcher develops the perspective of the group being studied and must adopt the insider's point of view (Borg & Gall 1989:388). She is bent on understanding, in considerable detail, how people think, their behaviour from their own frame of reference and how they come to develop the perspectives they hold. In order for the researcher to achieve this level of understanding, she enters the natural settings of her subjects and is the key research instrument, both collecting and analysing data herself (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:2). However, while qualitative researchers tend to be phenomenological in their orientation, they are not radical idealists. Although they stress the subjective, they do not deny the existence of "reality" as it is (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:35).

In addition, the qualitative approach to research is context-sensitive because it is sensitive to the social, historical and temporal context in which data is collected (Patton 1990:40). It is primarily concerned with people, their actions, opinions and emotions. Moreover, qualitative researchers argue that human behaviour is always bound to the context in which it occurs and that social reality cannot be reduced to variables. What is most important to the qualitative researcher is the understanding of the meaning that is constructed by the subjects in a particular social setting (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh 1990:445).

Thus in order to do this, the qualitative researcher needs to employ certain research techniques in order to elicit meaning, experience and perceptions of the investigated subjects (Schurink 1997a:242). Such techniques include participant observation, intensive in-depth interviewing and the examination of human documents (Schurink 1997a:253). Moreover, the researcher seeks to use data analysis to give readers a feeling of "walking in the informant's

shoes" and seeing things from their point of view (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:124).

Furthermore, qualitative research aims at the development of theories (grounded theory) and understanding (Garbers 1996:283). The emphasis in qualitative research is generating theories rather than testing them. The data collected is termed "soft", rich in description of people, places, and conversations and research questions are not framed by operationalising variables; rather they are formulated to investigate topics in all their complexity (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:2). The researcher does not approach the research with specific questions to answer or hypothesis to test; she is concerned with understanding behaviour from the subject's frame of reference.

While the purpose of this study is not to build grounded theory, it focuses on the promotion of better self-understanding and an increased insight into the leadership skills and experience of women principals. The researcher tried to understand the ways in which different individuals make sense of their lives and to describe those meanings to the audience (Garbers 1996:283).

#### *4.2.1.1 The place of theory in research*

According to Patton (1990:66) much of the literature on qualitative methodology emphasises inductive strategies of theory development in contrast to theory generated by logical deduction from prioric assumptions. One of the strengths of the qualitative approach is the inductive naturalistic inquiry of approaching a setting without predetermined hypothesis. Theory emerges from fieldwork experiences and is grounded in the data (Patton 1990:85). Furthermore, in qualitative studies, the researcher follows a flexible research design, beginning her study with only vaguely formulated research questions (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:4).

This study was based on the inductive approach. It sought to add to the broader body of knowledge on the leadership styles, skills and the experiences of women principals and the specific challenges they face as women educational managers.

#### *4.2.1.2 The position of evidence in the research investigation*

A generative-verificative dimension of a study governs the position of evidence in a research investigation (LeCompte & Preissle1993:43). Verificative research works towards verifying or testing previously developed systems (Lincoln & Guba 1985:333; LeCompte & Priessle 1993:43) and is generally deductive in nature. On the other hand, generative research is often started with no presumed theoretical framework and attempts to discover constructs using the data as a point of departure (Lincoln & Guba 1985:333) and is inductive in its approach.

This research was of a generative nature as it set out to discover new concepts in educational management and more particularly, the leadership styles and skills of women principals in educational management in primary and secondary schools. Having discussed the position of evidence in the research investigation, various dimensions in qualitative investigations will now be discussed.

### 4.2.2 Various dimensions in qualitative investigations

There are various dimensions to a research investigation. According to Mouton and Marais (1990:7-16) these dimensions are:

- sociological dimension
- ontological dimension

- teleological dimension
- epistemological dimension
- methodological dimension.

An abbreviated discussion of these dimensions is necessary and will follow.

The ***sociological*** dimension refers to research as a joint or collaborative activity in which social reality is studied with the aim of gaining a valid understanding of it (Mouton & Marais 1990:7). From the sociological perspective, one is interested in highlighting the social nature of research as a typical human activity.

The ***ontological*** dimension maintains that social research is always directed at an aspect of social reality (Mouton & Marais 1990:8). Mouton and Marais (1990:11) define the term "ontology" as a "study of reality." The ontological dimension refers to the discussion of the different ways in which research domains may be defined. Qualitative researchers try to understand reality by discovering the meanings of people in a specific situation. They argue that that behaviour is intentional and creative; that it can be explained, but not predicted (Schurink 1997a:242).

The ***teleological*** dimension refers to the fact that qualitative research is always goal-driven. ***Telos*** is a Greek word for "goal" or aim (Mouton & Marais 1990:13). The qualitative research is mainly goal-driven. These goals may either be practical or theoretical (Mouton & Marais 1990:13). Theoretical goals comprise theory construction. Practical goals refer to providing the means to ensure a better quality of life.

The ***epistemological*** dimension refers to a quest for truth, empirical accuracy and gaining of wisdom. Findings should approximate reality as closely as

possible, the true state of affairs (Mouton & Marais 1990:15). The qualitative researcher sees herself or himself as part of the research, not detached from the subjects of the research. In the search for the truth, the researcher interacts with the subjects of investigation (Schurink 1997:242).

The ***methodological*** dimension refers to the "how" of social science research (Mouton & Marais 1990:15). According to Schurink (1997a:242), the qualitative research methodology is interpretative and dialectical. During interaction between the researcher and the subject, the subject's world is discovered and interpreted by qualitative methods (Schurink 1997a:242).

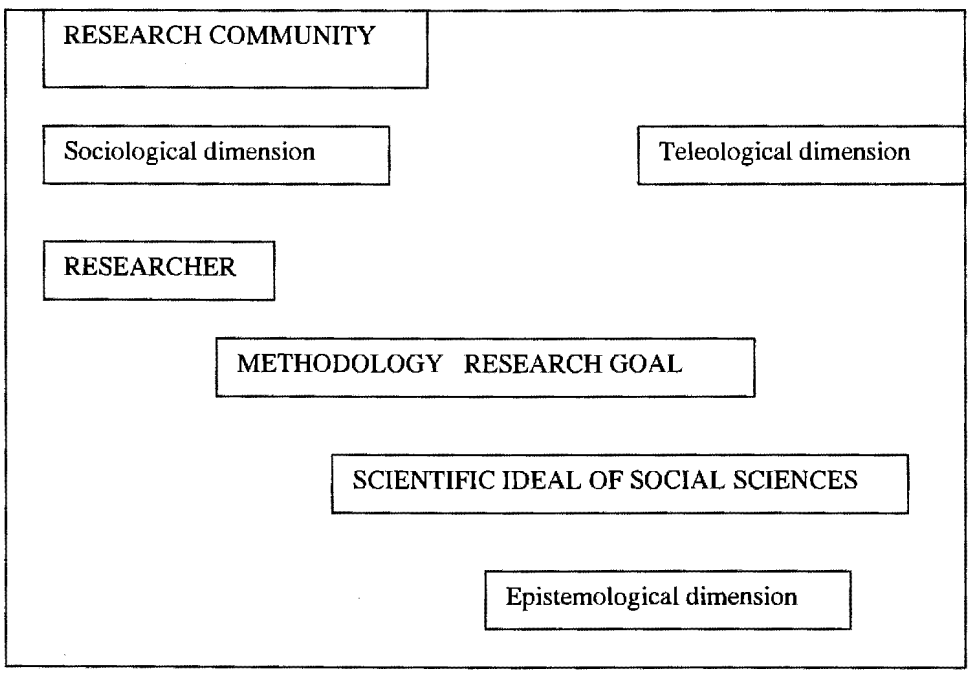



Figure 4.1 Dimensions of a qualitative study (Mouton & Marais 1990:7)

### 4.2.3 Epistemology

The study of human knowledge is known as epistemology. The epistemic ideal

ought rather to be the generation of research findings which approximate as closely as possible the true state of affairs (Mouton & Marais 1990:15). The qualitative researcher works from the premise that knowledge arises from observation and interpretation (Schurink 1997a:246).

### 4.2.4 The issue of subjectivity

The interactions of and selective presentation of selves influence the data collection phase by both subject and researcher (Denzin 1989:132). Qualitative researchers are sensitive to their effects on the people they study. Since the aim of the qualitative research is to understand the subjects from their own frame of reference, they interact with the subjects in a natural and unobtrusive manner (Taylor & Bogdan 1984:6). They empathise and interact with the subjects in order to see how they view the world. Blumer (1969:86) argues:

> "To catch the interpretive process by remaining aloof as a so-called "objective" observer and refusing to take the role of the acting unit is to risk the worst kind of subjectivism. The objective observer is likely to fill in the process of interpretation with his own surmises in place, catching the process as it occurs in the experience of the acting unit which uses it."

### 4.2.5 Researcher stance

According to Patton (1990:55) the stance of the researcher is a matter of great debate among methodologists and philosophers of science. The critics of qualitative inquiry have charged that the approach is too subjective, because the researcher is the instrument of both data collection and data interpretation. Furthermore, a qualitative approach includes having personal contact with, and getting close to the people and the situation being investigated (Patton

1990:54).

It is true that the qualitative researcher occupies an integral position in the research process. She immerses herself in the research with the goal of finding meaning of the investigated phenomenon. The researcher is required to seek a detailed understanding of other people's perspectives and hence qualitative research is experiencing reality as other people experience it (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:6). Bogdan and Taylor (1984:6) maintain that when we study people qualitatively, we get to know them personally and experience what they experience. In order to do this the researcher cannot remain aloof, but rather qualitative inquiry depends on, uses and enhances the researcher's direct experiences in the world and insights about those experiences.

However, this does not mean that the qualitative researcher is unconcerned about the accuracy of data or carries out his investigation haphazardly. Patton (1990:55) advocates that the researcher adopts a stance of neutrality with regard to the phenomenon. This means that the researcher does not set out to prove a particular perspective or manipulate the data to arrive at a predisposed truth. Instead, the researcher's committment is to understand the world as it is, to be true to complexities and multiple perspectives as they emerge, and to be balanced in reporting, both confirming and disconfirming evidence (Patton 1990:55). Patton further argues that the value of empathy, which is emphasised in '***Verstehen***' undergirds much qualitative research. '***Verstehen***' means an understanding and refers to the unique human capacity to make sense of the world (Patton 1990:56). While, it may seem that empathy and neutrality are contradictory, Patton (1990:56) refers to empathy as a stance toward the people and neutrality as a stance towards the findings.

The maintenance of a simultaneous involvement and detachment may seem erroneous, combining contradictory ideas. In an attempt to reconcile these

apparently contradictory ideas, Lofland and Lofland (1984:16) describe it as:

> "a tension which many researchers feel within themselves. To ask questions of, to make "problematic", to "bracket" social life requires distance. To understand, to answer questions, to make sense of social life require closeness. The sensitive investigator wishes not to be one or the other but to be both or either as the research demands."

Moreover, the attributes of empathy, neutrality and detachment should not be seen as mystical qualities, but rather as skills that the researcher can develop through practice and experience (Powney & Watts 1987:134).

### 4.2.6 Researcher effects on data

As previously alluded to, qualitative research demands that the researcher be the instrument of research as she collects and analyses data herself (cf. 4.2.6). Because of this it often calls for face-to face involvement with other persons (Eisner & Peshkin 1990:251), and it is therefore possible that the researcher will exercise some effect on the data being collected. In this section of the study, consideration is given to the effect that both the background characteristics of the researcher as well as the particular value system of the researcher may have on the research process.

#### *4.2.6.1 The researcher's background characteristics*

Qualitative research has been described as naturalistic (Patton 1990:54). That is, researchers interact with their informants in a natural and unobtrusive manner (Taylor & Bogdan 1984:6). In order to achieve this the researcher enters the natural setting and aims to study human behaviour and experiences (Ary et al 1990:447). The researcher studies real-world situations as they

unfold naturally, open to whatever emerges. In qualitative research, the researcher is the data gathering instrument and deals with data in the form of words rather than numbers as is in quantitative research (Ary et al 1990:448). It is true that the researcher's own background characteristics may constitute points of difference between the researcher and the researched and may present barriers to the acquisition of rich data (Lofland & Lofland 1984:16). Burgess (1988:74) asserts: "What the interviewer is, influences and maybe determines the kind of data he or she receives."

Many background characteristics of the researcher may influence data, of which age, gender and ethnicity are probably most significant (Lofland & Lofland 1984:16; Burgess 1988:74). According to Mouton and Marais (1990:81) some of the most important researcher effects associated with research characteristics, relate to the affiliation of the researcher, the image that the researcher has with the subjects and the differences between the researcher and the subjects. Mouton and Marais (1990:84) contend:

> "It is hardly surprising that when questions are posed that relate to sexual behaviour, and these questions are posed by male and female interviewers, gender effects will be observed. The same would apply if questions on race relations were to be asked by white or black interviewers."

However, while differences may present barriers in acquiring rich data and must be taken into account when preparing for research, they should not be over emphasised (Lofland & Lofland 1984:17).

#### *4.2.6.2 The researcher's values*

The qualitative approach to research proposes that inquiry is value-bound.

Qualitative researchers argue that qualitative inquiry is value-bound in the following ways:

- in the choice of a problem to investigate
- in the choice of the method
- in the choice of a way to interpret results or findings
- by values inherent in the context where the study takes place (Ary et al 1990:446).

Qualitative researchers argue that it is impossible to develop a meaningful understanding of human experience without taking into account the interplay of both the researcher and the respondent's values (Ary et al 1990:446). Lincoln and Guba (1984:161) assert that qualitative inquiry is value-bound, specifically that, it is influenced by the values of the inquirer. Lincoln and Guba (1984:174) further argue, that the personal values of the inquirer may be termed "weak" or have a trivial impact on the investigation. This also holds for the so-called "objective" inquirers. The personal values that may influence the investigator in selecting the problem, selecting the particular method of data collection and analysis and guiding the interpretations to be made from the investigation hold true for both the traditional and the naturalistic investigator (Lincoln & Guba 1984:174).

### 4.2.7 Data collecting techniques

Qualitative researchers deal with empirical data obtained from the environment and accessed via human senses. This data may be any kind of information that the researcher can identify and accumulate to facilitate answers to his queries (LeCompte & Priessle 1993:158). Various data collection strategies may be used in qualitative research, such as participant observation, intensive interviewing, document analysis and content analysis of human artefacts

(LeCompte & Priessle 1993:158; Schurink 1997a:253). These strategies allow the researcher to become involved in the life-world of the subject.
However, for purposes of this study, the data was gathered from unstructured interview, observation and documents and are discussed in the ensuing section.

#### *4.2.7.1 The unstructured interview*

Interviews are commonly used in both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Quantitative researchers administer interviews or questionnaires to random samples of the population known as survey research (Silverman 1993:10). Yes and no type of answers are preferred, because the answers produced lend themselves to simple tabulation. A central issue for quantitative researchers is reliability (Silverman 1993:10). In the case of qualitative research however, authenticity, rather than reliability is the issue. The aim of the researcher is to gather an "authentic" understanding of people's experiences, behaviour and perspectives (Silverman 1993:10).

Furthermore, an unstructured interview is a verbal interaction in which the interviewer attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions or beliefs from another person or persons (Denzin 1989:103). The interviewer generally has a general plan of inquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in particular words or in a specific order (Babbie 1998:290).

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992:96) in qualitative research, interviews may be used in two ways: "They may be the dominant strategy for data collection, or they may be employed in conjunction with participant observation, document analysis, or other techniques." In all these situations, the researcher gathers information so that she can develop insights on how the subjects interpret some piece of their world (Bogdan & Biklen 1992:96). Another important aspect of the unstructured interview is the ability of the

interviewer to probe. A probe is a technique used by the interviewer to elicit a more complete answer to a question and is usually non-directive such as "anything more?", "how is that?" (Babbie 1998:5).

Denzin (1989:102) draws attention to the difference between the complete naturalistic observer and the interviewer conducting an unstructured interview. The naturalistic observer usually seeks to record ongoing sequences of behaviour; however, the unstructured interview allows the interviewer to elicit behaviours from the respondent (Denzin 1989:102) and to probe various areas. Throughout the interview, the researcher has to probe for details of people's experiences and the meaning they attach to them. The researcher is interested in the respondent's day to day struggles and experiences (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:96).

Furthermore, there is also a difference between a totally unstructured (naturalistic) interview, which is not preceded by a literature study and the unstructured interview where the interviewer uses a loose schedule of questions, which are based on the preceding literature study, to guide the interview (Schurink 1997b:300).

Tape-recording is an important feature of the unstructured interview. It allows the interviewer to capture much more than she is capable of, if she relied solely on memory. In qualitative research, the interviewer's data consist almost solely of words (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:103). However, the researcher should not record interviews if the respondent is uneasy about it. The researcher should always inform the respondent that the conversation is being taped and seek the permission of the respondent to do so (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:103). The qualitative researcher also takes notes and expands on them as soon as possible while the information is still fresh in her mind (Best & Kahn 1993:203).

Furthermore, in qualitative research, the researcher must ensure that she establishes rapport with the subjects, since understanding is at the heart of the unstructured interview (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:367). In addition to the establishing rapport, the researcher must endeavour to cultivate a relationship of mutual trust between herself and the subject. "Such a relationship lies at the heart of the unstructured interview" (Schurink 1997b:302).

The qualitative researcher, using the unstructured interview as a research technique must adhere to the following basic principles in order to ensure the success of the project:

- respect and courtesy: The inherent dignity of the interviewee should not be injured
- acceptance and understanding of the interviewee
- confidentiality
- integrity (Schurink 1997b:305-307).

In summary, the following table is an illustration of the characteristics of four types of interviews that range from the totally informal to very formal. The interview guide approach, explained in the table below, was the approach applied in this research investigation.

| TYPES OF INTERVIEWS | CHARACTERISTICS |
|---|---|
| Informal conversational interviews | Questions are asked in the natural course with no predetermined questions. |
| Interview guide approach | Topics are specified in advance. The interviewer decides on sequence of questions during the interview. |
| Standardised open-ended interview | The exact wording and sequence of questions are predetermined. Questions are worded in a completely open-ended format. |
| Closed fixed response interview | Questions and response categories are determined in advance. Responses are fixed and respondents choose from among the fixed responses. |

Figure 4.2 Types of interviews (Patton 1990:288-289)

#### *4.2.7.2 Observation*

Observation may be defined as "the recording of a unit or units of interaction occurring in a concrete social situation" (Denzin 1989:73). The interaction may be elicited in an interview, or may be experimentally produced, or may occur naturally, as in participant-observation (Denzin 1989:73). According to Mouton and Marais (1990:162), observation is the process by means of which researchers establish a link between reality and their theoretical assumptions. Observations are prevalent in both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies. The essential difference between the ways in which qualitative and quantitative researchers conduct their observations is that the quantitative researcher "imposes" a system upon the phenomenon, whereas the qualitative researcher lets the phenomenon "speak for itself". Also, the qualitative

researcher becomes involved with the phenomenon, while the quantitative researcher assumes a distanced stance (Mouton & Marais 1990:162).

The following table represents a more explicit discussion on the differences between qualitative and quantitative observation.

| QUALITATIVE | QUANTITATIVE |
|---|---|
| Subjectifying | Objectifying |
| Researcher involved with events | Researcher remains aloof |
| Spontaneous examples | Pre-planned observation |
| Occurs in a non-structured manner | Observations may be scalable |
| Open to record unexpected events | Expected observations |
| The context is taken into account | Context is controlled as far as possible |
| Participant observation as example | Interaction process analysis as example |

Figure 4.3 Differences between qualitative and quantitative observation (Mouton & Marais 1990:162)

Furthermore, Rubin and Babbie (1993:364) distinguish between a complete participant; participant as observer; observer as participant; and complete observer. Each of these observers involves themselves in varying degrees and by different means of observations. The complete participant lets people see her as a participant and not as a researcher, whereas the participant as observer participates fully with the group while, making it clear, that she is undertaking research. The observer as participant is one who identifies herself as researcher and interacts with the participants in the social process but makes no pretence of actually being a participant, while the complete observer, observes a social process without becoming involved in it in any way.

Observational research, as alluded to in the preceding paragraph, can vary considerably in character among different practitioners through the various stages of research, its settings and depending on the relationship between the researcher and the subjects (Lincoln & Denzin 1994:379). In this investigation the researcher assumed the role of observer as participant. The observer as participant primarily observes her subjects for a short space of time. Patton (1990:265) argues that, resources, needs and interests of the researcher will determine the length of the observation. In this investigation observation of the principals took place over a period of eight days (4.4.3.5).

In conclusion, the observation of the principals in this study was used in conjunction with the unstructured interviews and documents. When combined, these data-collecting techniques produce great rigour (Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 382). Direct observation, when combined with other research methodologies, yields depth and breath, and enhances reliability and validity (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:382).

#### *4.2.7.3 Documents and records*

Documents and records are important sources of information (Lincoln & Guba 1985:276). Although the terms "document" and "record" are often used interchangeably, Lincoln and Guba (1985:276), draw a distinction between these terms. They refer to the term, "record" to mean any written or recorded statement prepared by or for an individual for the purpose of attesting to an event or providing an accounting. On the other hand, the term "document, is used to denote any written or recorded item other than a record that was not prepared specifically in response to an inquirer (such as tests). Examples of records are: airline schedules, audit records, tax forms, school grade files for pupils and minutes of meetings, whereas document examples are: letters, diaries, speeches, photographs, case studies and television scripts (Lincoln &

Guba 1984:277).

Although documents and records are unlike human informants, that is, non reactive, the reader should not fail to realise that what emanates from a documentary or records analysis still represents some kind of interaction, between the sources and the researcher that analyses it (Lincoln & Guba 1984:277).

### 4.2.8 Data analysis and presentation of findings

There is no precise moment when data collection ends and data analysis begins (Patton 1990:377). During data collection, ideas on data analysis will occur and they are not mutually exclusive. Data analysis is an on-going process in qualitative research. Throughout observation, in in-depth interviewing and other qualitative research, researchers keep track of emerging themes, and develop concepts and propositions to make sense out of their data (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:128; Ary et al 1990:444; Patton 1990:377).

#### *4.2.8.1 The process of data analysis*

The purpose of qualitative research is to produce findings. The concluding activities of qualitative investigations are analysis, interpretation and presentation of findings (Patton 1990:371). Analysis brings about order and structure to a research investigation. In qualitative research, the emphasis is on substance and not numbers; it is on analysis of worded data and eliciting meaning from this data (LeCompte & Priessle 1993:235) (5.1). To this end there are stages in analysis of qualitative research. Although qualitative researchers may not be bound to rigid steps in analysis, there are essential guidelines to follow in order to ascertain meaning and understanding of phenomenon. There is a challenge to make sense of the vast amount of

information, reduce the volume of data, identify significant patterns, and construct a framework for communicating the essence of what the data reveal (Patton 1990:371-2, Bogdan & Taylor 1984:153). A discussion of coding, patterning and clustering follows.

#### *4.2.8.2 Coding*

Coding is a systematic way of developing and refining interpretation of the data (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:136). The coding stage involves bringing together and analysing all the data bearing on themes, ideas, concepts, interpretations, and propositions. According to Babbie (1998:331) coding is a process of transforming raw data, either manifest or latent content into categories. The following may be identified in the coding procedure:

- Developing coding categories: During the initial analysis, every concept, theme, interpretation and typology that is identified should be listed.
- Some of the ideas may overlap and be vaguely formulated (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:137). Essentially, the researcher must develop major coding categories and collapse the overlapping ones in the initial stages. Different researchers use different systems to code the categories. Some may assign letters to a category, while others may assign a number. Whatever, the method of coding may be, it is essential that the researcher develop coding categories.
- All data must be coded, however one must remember that not all data will necessarily be used in the final analysis. The important thing is to use data that fit into the analytical scheme (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:138).

While the researcher is coding the data, she is looking for emerging patterns in the data (Patton 1990:411). The next stage is patterning.

#### *4.2.8.3 Patterning*

Patterning organises the codes into more coherent units of analysis. Patterns accentuate the important themes in the investigation. The researcher begins to see similarities and dissimilarities in the collected data, and patterns emerge (Babbie 1998:296). The researcher looks for those patterns of interactions and events that are generally common to what is being studied, and particularly in the sociological terms, one looks for norms of behaviours. The researcher asks the following question: "What behaviour patterns do all participants in a situation share?" (Babbie 1998:297).

#### *4.2.8.4 Clustering*

Miles and Huberman (1984:219) maintain that: "Clustering is a general name given to the process of using/and or forming categories, and the iterative sorting of things." Clustering generally relies on the aggregation and comparison of those units of analysis that belong together. It is the final stage of making meaning of the data in analysis.

#### *4.2.8.5 Drawing conclusions*

After the data has been organised and described, the researcher begins the most crucial exercise of the analytical process, that is, interpretation (Best & Kahn 1993:205). Patton (1990:375) argues: "Interpretation involves explaining the findings, answering "why" questions, attaching significance to particular results, and putting patterns into an analytic framework."

According to Best and Kahn (1993:205), interpretation of qualitative research

data is more dependent on the researcher's background, skills, biases, and knowledge than conclusions drawn from quantitative research, which are drawn from numerical analyses of data. It is for this reason that the reader of the research has access to the descriptive information upon which the researcher's interpretations are based (Best & Kahn 1993:205).

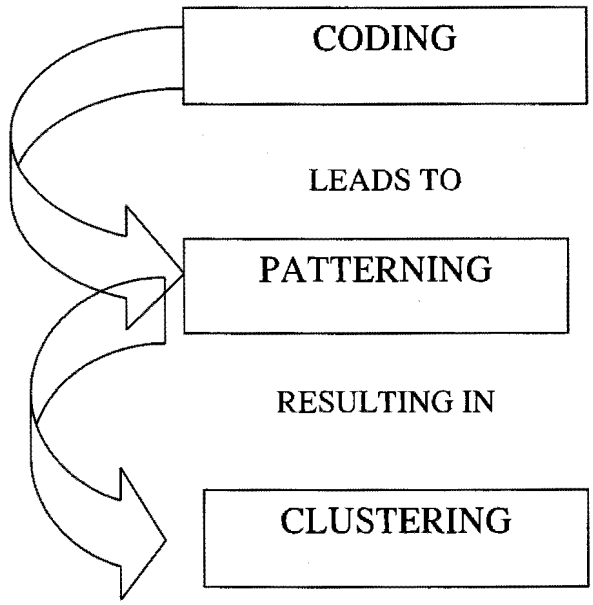



Figure 4.4 Data organisational activities

## 4.3 CHOICE OF METHODOLOGY OF PRESENT STUDY

"Method" refers to how we approach problems and find answers to them (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:1). To this end, the researcher faces some general considerations when deciding to use a particular approach to research.

### 4.3.1 Technical and epistemological considerations

Two major theoretical perspectives have dominated the social sciences. The first is positivism, which can be traced to the theorists of the 19th and 20th centuries, especially to August, Compte and Emile Durkheim (Bogdan &

Taylor 1984:2). On the other end of the continuum is phenomenology, which has a long history in philosophy and sociology. Since positivists and phenomenologists take on different types of problems and look for different kinds of answers, their research demands different methodologies (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:2). There has always existed a debate amongst different protagonists on the merits and demerits of positivistic enquiry and phenomenological inquiry. While, the phenomenologist seeks understanding through qualitative methods, the positivist searches for causes (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:2). This debate amongst the different proponents of the qualitative and quantitative approach reveals a tendency on either side to support either a technical or an epistemological position (Bryman 1984:75). According to Patton (1990:37): "philosophers of science and methodologists have been engaged in a long standing epistemological debate about how best to conduct research." This debate centres around the use of logical positivism, which uses quantitative and experimental methods to test hypothetical-deductive generalisations, versus phenomenological inquiry, using qualitative and naturalistic approaches to understand human experiences (Patton 1990:37).

Thus, some protagonists choose a pragmatic approach to the controversy, avoiding epistemological issues and advocating an eclectic approach to the choice of techniques. They argue that technical considerations are decisive when choosing research methods. They maintain that data-collection options and strategies for any research investigation depend on answers to the following questions:

- Who is the information for and who will use the findings?
- What kinds of information are required?
- How is the information to be used?
- When is the information needed?
- What resources are available to conduct the research?

Given answers to the previous questions, what methods are appropriate (Patton 1990:12). Answers to these questions will determine the type of methodology one chooses to investigate the research problem. Moreover, the choice of one methodology should not necessarily exclude another. Patton (1990:14) aptly concludes: "Because qualitative and quantitative methods involve differing strengths and weaknesses, they constitute alternative, but not mutually exclusive, strategies for research." Both quantitative and qualitative data can be collected in the same study (Patton 1990:14).

However, other protagonists maintain that the considerations underlying the choice of method is political and cannot be resolved without scrutinising methodological and epistemological considerations (Bryman 1984:83). In fact, Heron (1981:31) argues that that the process of scientific inquiry involves not only prepositional statements but also practical knowledge: the skills, proficiencies, or "knacks" of doing research, and experiential knowledge.

Finally, it must be said that while the overarching philosophical position of the researcher is at the heart of her choice of method, this does not mean that practical and technical considerations are negated. In this investigation both technical and epistemological considerations were taken into account in the researcher's choice of method, as will become evident in the ensuing sections. In the next paragraph the rationale for the choice of method will be discussed.

### 4.3.2 Rationale for the choice of method

This study used the qualitative approach for the investigation. The rationale for this choice is multifarious. Qualitative methodology is most suitable for a field that is less explored (Schurink 1997a: 243-244), such as women in educational management in South Africa. It is complementary to the existing quantitative

studies on the under-representation of women in educational management (Shurink 1997a: 244); and it is particularly suitable for the study of women's lives (Burgess 1985:71) (6.4)

#### *4.3.2.1 Usefulness of present study for women educational leaders*

In areas where there are gaps in knowledge, social scientists use the qualitative approach to describe phenomenon in an initial exploratory attempt (Shurink 1997a:243) (6.2.1; 6.4). Because qualitative research does not attempt to generate data with which to test on a priori hypothesis, but rather it allows for a hypothesis to emerge from the data which can be tested quantitatively at a later stage (Patton 1990:130), it is particularly useful to the present study. In the case of this study, to the researcher's knowledge, no research has been carried out on in South African schools on women as educational leaders (HSRC; University of Natal 1997). Moreover, according to Babbie (1998:283), one of the important advantages of qualitative research, is the comprehensiveness of perspective it gives the researcher of the phenomenon being investigated. The researcher is able to develop a fuller and deeper understanding and is able to recognise several nuances of attitude and behaviour that might escape the researcher doing quantitative research (Babbie 1998:283).

In the light of the above argument, the researcher chose the qualitative approach to investigate the phenomenon.

#### *4.3.2.2 Complementary role of the present qualitative study*

One of the purposes of qualitative research findings is to clarify and illustrate quantitative findings (Strauss & Corbin 1990:21). Researchers use the qualitative method to add depth and detail to completed studies that used quantitative data where the statistical results indicate global patterns (Patton

1990: 131). While quantitative data identify areas of focus, qualitative data give substance to those areas (Patton 1990:132). While there have been some interesting studies on the under-representation of women in educational leadership positions in South African schools (Blampied 1989; Nzimande 1994; Pahliney 1991), these findings have been based on homogenous groups using large samples through the survey method. While these studies have rendered valuable information and patterns and much of the information has formed the background framework of the present study, the qualitative in-depth study was deemed necessary to "fill out the meanings of these patterns" (Patton 1990:133).

#### *4.3.2.3 Qualitative methodology and women's lives*

There is a clear link between feminism and qualitative methodology (Burgess 1985:69). Qualitative research provides feminist scholars with the means to make sense of women's lives and experiences (Burgess 1985:71). Moreover, many feminists feel that quantitative methods "encourage an unhealthy separation between those who know and those who do not." This separation runs contrary to the principles and practice of feminism (Burgess 1985: 72). In addition to this, feminist researchers work from the premise that "women must not only be made visible but also heard" (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:182). Thus, an attempt is made to capture the experiences of women and let women's voices be recorded (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:182).

Another aspect of this argument is that men tend to talk about their lives in unproblematic and linear ways, which can be fitted into survey questions, whereas women want to make connections between areas of their lives (Burgess 1985:72). Furthermore, the emphasis upon letting women's voices be heard has led to the tendency to use research techniques such as unstructured interviews, rather than quantitative techniques. Qualitative research allows

women the opportunity to express their own concerns and will help women to understand their situation and effect change (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:182). These arguments constituted the main reason for the qualitative approach to this investigation. It was deemed fit that the qualitative research approach will help women principals to air their points of view through the unstructured interviews and will help improve the situation of female principals.

## 4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

### 4.4.1 Introduction

"Design" is used in research to refer to the researcher's plan of how to proceed (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:58, Mouton & Marais 1990:193). In light of this statement, the researcher pursued the qualitative approach using unstructured interviews with an interview guide, by means of which major themes and questions identified during the literature study were used to elicit data from eight respondents. Observations of eight female principals over eight days were also used in order to add rigour to the findings (cf. 4.2.8.2). The observations lasted a few hours per day. In addition, the researcher collected and analysed relevant educational documents. A detailed discussion on the research design follows.

### 4.4.2 Sampling

In all research, investigators are faced with the dilemma of deciding which items from a collection to study (LeCompte & Priessle 1993:57). Le Compte and Priessle (1993:57) maintain that selection and sampling are two ways of making that decision. There is a difference between selection and sampling. Selection requires that the researcher delineate precisely the relevant population or phenomenon for investigation, and may usually include people,

events, traits and responses of people, artefacts and other objects, time segments and settings (LeCompte & Priessle 1993:57). Once the population has been delineated, then the researcher may or may not decide to sample from that population. Hence, it may be gathered that selection is a general process of choosing what to study, while sampling is more specific.

#### *4.4.2.1 The selection of samples*

Qualitative researchers usually choose groups that are subsets of the larger population for study. Procedures for choosing the sample vary, however the researcher's initial task is to identify the population and the focus of the study (LeCompte & Priessle 1993:59) by establishing and defining boundaries. These boundaries may include the following:

- logistical considerations; and
- availability and accessibility to the researcher (LeCompte & Priessle 1993:59).

In this study, eight principals from urban primary and secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal were selected from the population group of female principals. The boundaries that were identified were:

- All the respondents were female principals in co-educational schools.
- All were principals holding post level four positions, that is, principals of schools where the learner population is eight hundred and above.
- All the respondents had at least three years of experience as principals.
- All the principals were within driving distance from the researcher's home.
- Principals were from a heterogeneous group with diverse cultural backgrounds, that is, two principals from each of the four major population groups in South Africa (5.7.1).

The researcher was interested in investigating principals from this group, because it portrays the demographics of the "new" "democratic" South Africa, and to the researcher's knowledge no other study of this nature was previously conducted in South Africa. According to LeCompte and Priessle (1993:59), groups that are subsets of larger populations are "rarely homogeneous or culturally discrete".

Furthermore, while there is no stipulation for sample size in qualitative research Patton (1990: 184) and Carey (1984:75) aver that after the intensive interviewing of eight respondents, saturation point in the data is reached. Thus, in the light of the above, the researcher chose the sample size.

#### *4.4.2.2 Locating the informants*

The principals who were interviewed for this investigation were selected through purposive sampling and not random sampling. Purposive sampling is based on the premise that "the power of purposive sampling lies in selecting information rich cases for study in-depth" (Patton 1990:169). However, random sampling is usually done for the purpose of permitting confident generalisation from the sample to the general population (Patton 1990:169). Since the researcher wished to study in-depth the perceptions and life experiences of the sample group, and no interest in generalising, purposive sampling was deemed appropriate (LeCompte & Priessle 1993:57).

In the case of this research two of the subjects were "gatekeepers" or "connections" (Lofland & Lofland 1984:25), who were interested in the investigation. Both of the informants were female principals who the researcher had previously worked with and enjoyed a trusting and co-operative relationship (Shurink 1997a:258). The "gatekeepers" located other informants

in their districts and recommended prospective informants. The other six informants were located by snowball or chain reference sampling (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:85; Shurink 1997a:254). Each of the principals referred the researcher to another principal who she thought would be interested in the study. Each potential informant was first telephoned and then faxed to explain the project and to negotiate access to the setting. The researcher explained how the research would be undertaken, the data collecting strategies and the recording of the data to the informant (Shurink 1997a:258). The researcher also afforded anonymity and confidentiality to the informants (Shurink 1997b:305-306). Consequently, interviews were set up at a time of convenience of the informants. All interviews took place in the natural setting of the schools and lasted approximately one hour. Although length of the interview varies considerably, the researcher was guided by the interviewees' behaviour and found that after one hour the interest of the informants was waning (Shurink 1997b:304).

### 4.4.3 Data collection

In social scientific research there is almost no limit to what or whom can be studied (Babbie 1998:92). The "whom" or 'what" forms the unit of analysis of the investigation. The unit of analysis determines the primary focus of data collection (Patton 1990:166). Patton (1990:168) mentions the following: "The key issue in selecting and making decisions about the appropriate unit of analysis is to decide what it is it you want to be able to say something about at the end of the study." Some of the important issues concerning the data collection strategies employed in this study will be discussed.

#### *4.4.3.1 Social artefacts*

Social artefacts constitute data indicating people's sensations, experiences, and

knowledge and which connote opinions, values and feelings (LeCompte & Priessle 1993:216). In educational research, some of the artefacts which provide data bases are:

- text-books
- teacher made games and teaching aids
- curriculum guides
- memos
- enrolment records
- minutes of meetings
- student classroom products
- student and teacher handbooks
- correspondence
- government documents
- diaries, logs, and recollections (LeCompte & Priessle1993:216).

#### *4.4.3.2 Locating the artefacts*

The more familiar the researcher is with the groups and settings the more, likely it will be for her to anticipate the artefacts to be found (LeCompte & Priessle 1993:218). Many of the artefacts are in fact located during the mapping phase of the research. Other artefacts may be discovered only after the researcher has actually entered the field. Apart from locating the artefacts, researchers may "solicit" the production of materials, summaries by school administrators of their central responsibilities and organisational charts from their management staff (LeCompte & Priessle 1993:218). I am familiar with school management, because I have spent twenty years in education and more specifically ten years in school management; eight years as head of department; and two years as deputy principal (cf.1.2.1). I have also interacted with school principals at principal forums, at meetings, and have friends and

colleagues who are school principals.

Thus, in the light of the above, I was able to anticipate and acquire the main organisational and managerial role functions of the respondents in the investigation.

#### *4.4.3.3 Identifying the artefacts*

Identification begins with the description of the material, and is formulated in concrete, sensory terms: colour, size, shape and use (LeCompte & Priessle 1993:219). Artefacts are then sorted according to class; category and attributes are compared. In this investigation, the researcher identified and collected the following artefacts:

- circulars and written messages to parents
- circulars and written messages to educators
- circulars and written messages to the learners.

Although it was not the express purpose of the researcher to compare notes between the principals for generalisation to the general population, these comparisons were necessary for the researcher to understand the work ethic and the experiences of these principals. The researcher wished to understand whether there were patterns in the experiences of women in educational management. In the next paragraph the unstructured interview will be discussed.

#### *4.4.3.4 The unstructured interview*

The interviews were conducted during the period August 1999 to March 2000 at the principals' offices at the various schools (5.2). As previously alluded to,

each interview lasted at least one hour. The interviewees' responses were tape recorded with the permission of the informant. Brief notes were made throughout the interview. Prior to the interview, the informant filled in a "face-sheet" with biographical data (Lofland & Lofland 1984:57) (See Appendix). This was necessary for the purposes of identification and general keeping track of the interviewees. In addition, after leaving the principal's office, a comment sheet was filled out by the interviewer. This information was not shared with the informant, but was rather information jotted down based on the observations of the researcher. This information included details such as: time, emotional tone, insights and reflections, any methodological problems experienced, and the researcher's feelings (Lofland & Lofland 1984:58).

Prior to the interview, the researcher carefully prepared for the interview by studying the relevant literature on the topic in order to form an interview guide, define concepts and assess data (Shurink 1997b:301). Most interviews began with a brief social contact and the project was briefly explained. Informants were assured anonymity. The purpose of the project was outlined and brief guidelines on the process were given (Lofland & Lofland 1984:58).

The unstructured interview was conducted using a flexible guide. The guide is not a tightly structured set of questions, but rather "it is a list of things to be sure to ask about when talking to persons to be interviewed" (Lofland & Lofland 1984:59). The interviewer focussed on, among others, the following: career history; educational history; work experiences; leadership styles; management skills; gender discrimination; specific challenges as women in educational management and personal educational vision and philosophy. The interviews were recorded on tape and the interviewer paid careful attention, and probed occasionally (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:96-97). Fresh guides were used for each interview, because of note taking (Lofland & Lofland 1984:61). Each tape recording was carefully labelled (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:103) and

listened to the next day. As key themes emerged from the data generated by the interview, the interviewer modified subsequent interviews to include emerging themes.

#### *4.4.3.5 Observations*

In this investigation, observations were done over a period of eight days. One day was spent at each of the schools. The purpose of the observations was to add rigour to the investigation when combined with the unstructured interviews and the artefacts (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:382) (cf. 4.2.8.2). The researcher observed the ethos amongst staff; the time of arrival of the principal, staff and learners; the general outlay of the principal's and secretary's office, the physical conditions of the buildings and the learners' discipline. These observations were deemed necessary for the researcher to get a "feel" of the principal's management style and skills. According to Denzin & Lincoln (1994:378): "observations thus consist of gathering impressions of the surrounding world through all relevant human faculties." I followed the flow of events that occurred in the naturalistic surrounds of the school, amongst the people who were naturally participating in interaction in their natural stream of everyday life. I gained entry to the schools via the "gatekeepers," that is, the principals. The researcher was able to pass freely through the school, because of the permission granted by the principals. All observations recorded were primarily descriptive in nature (Denzin & Lincoln 1994:381).

### 4.4.4 Data analysis

Analysis of data for this investigation began during data collection. In the case of the artefacts, analysis allowed the researcher to interpret and evaluate them. Initially the researcher made duplicated copies of all correspondence and circulars to learners, parents and staff. This collection was then organised in

retrievable files so that they were easily available for analysis (Le Compte & Priessle 1993: 218). Questions such as: these were considered:

- When were these artefacts produced?
- How many of them were there?
- How often did staff meet?
- How often were circulars sent to learners and staff?
- How are meetings conducted?
- How similar or different were the meetings and circulars at different schools?
- Are minutes read and signed by the staff?

The notes taken from the artefacts were then classified according to regularities or similarities and differences. Patterns that emerged were then transformed into categories into which items were sorted (Le Compte & Priessle 1993:237). Once the categories were established the researcher looked for patterns in the data and compared them for similarities and differences looking for the emergence of dominant themes emerged. This information was triangulated with observations and structured interviews to enhance reliability and validity of the investigation (5.3).

The analysis of data of the unstructured interviews began during interviews. The researcher kept track of analytical insights during data collection (Patton 1990:378). Throughout the interviews the researcher kept track of emerging themes and began to make sense of the data (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:128). When all the interviews were completed, they were transcribed and filed under the names of the respondents with the face sheets and the comment sheets. Each transcribed sheet was photocopied and one copy was kept for safekeeping. One copy was kept for writing on and another two were used for cutting and pasting (Patton 1990:381). Each copy was read, re-read and

reflected upon. As patterns emerged, they were cut and pasted on cards according to themes. They were then separated into files. Finally each person's responses were written onto cards together with the researcher's notes and filed according to themes. Each case was explored fully, and the respondent's response to a particular theme was compared to the other respondent's response until dominant themes emerged.

In the case of observation analysis, Bryman (1984:61- 66) provides a list of the characteristics of observational research in the following:

- Observation: seeing events, actions, norms and values from the perspective of the people being studied.
- Description: attending to mundane every day detail to help us understand what is going on in a particular context and to provide clues and pointers to other layers of reality.
- Contextualism: the basic message that qualitative researchers convey is that whatever the sphere in which the data are being collected, we can understand events only when they are situated in the wider social and historical context.
- Process: viewing social life as involving interlocking series of events.
- Flexible research design: qualitative researchers adhere to viewing social phenomena through the eyes of their subjects which lead to a wariness regarding the imposition of prior and possible inappropriate frames of reference on the people being studied.
- Avoiding imposing theories and concepts that may fit poorly with participant's perspectives.

In the case of this investigation, the observer began data analysis during the data collection phase (Bogdan & Taylor 1984:128). At the end of each day the researcher reflected on the observations, in order to clarify earlier impressions

and jot down any ideas (Hoberg 1999:113). After the observation was completed, the researcher photocopied the observed records. The researcher read and re-read all notes carefully and recorded important ideas that came to her while reading. Thereafter, the researcher looked for emerging themes and patterns, feelings and meanings. The researcher developed coding categories by listing all the themes. Each coding category was assigned a letter. Thereafter, the coded data was sorted into categories, cut up and placed into separate files. Finally, the data was re-read in order to understand it. Observations from each school were compared until dominant patterns emerged.

### 4.4.5 Issues of validity and reliability in the present study

Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research have been a major source for debate over the years. The ensuing section discusses validity and reliability as seen in qualitative research.

#### *4.4.5.1 Construct validity*

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of the qualitative approach is the fact that the researcher tries to understand people in terms of their own definitions of the world (Mouton & Marais 1990:70). In qualitative research, one of the major assignments of the researcher is to identify the "indigenous" concepts of the subjects being researched. It is only after the indigenous concepts have been identified that the researcher will attempt to integrate them within the framework of an existing social scientific theory or model.

Thus, this approach will then more accurately be classified as inductive, rather than deductive as in quantitative research. Mouton and Marais (1990:70) maintain that concepts that are generated in qualitative research are concrete

concepts, that is, concepts, which accurately reflect the world of the sample. As already alluded to, the qualitative researcher is often charged with the allegation that qualitative research is "undisciplined"; that she engages in "subjective" observations and is guilty of "sloppy' research (Lincoln & Guba 1985:289). Lincoln and Guba (1985:290) purport "truth-value" as one of the means of refuting these allegations. Truth-value is constructed by four constructs: credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability and are the naturalist's equivalents for the conventional terms "internal validity," "external validity," "reliability," and "objectivity" (Lincoln & Guba 1984:300). These constructs assist in obtaining construct-validity in an investigation and will be subsequently discussed.

#### *4.4.5.2 Credibility*

Credibility in qualitative research depends on three inquiry elements (Patton 1990:461):

- rigorous techniques and methods for data that is of high quality, and that is carefully analysed, with attention to validity, reliability and triangulation;
- the credibility of the researcher, which is dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and presentation of self; and
- philosophical belief in the phenomenological paradigm, that is, an appreciation for qualitative research, inductive analysis and holistic thinking.

Trustworthiness and credibility of the evaluator, is of essence to validity; it is a question of balance and fairness (Patton 1990:481).

#### *4.4.5.3 Transferability*

Transferability for the qualitative researcher holds a different meaning than for the traditionalist (Lincoln & Guba 1985:316). While, the traditional researcher is expected to make precise statements about external validity, the qualitative researcher can only set out working hypothesis together with the description of time and the context in which they were found to hold. Thus, the qualitative researcher can only provide "thick description" necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether transfer can be contemplated as a possibility. It can be inferred from the above argument, that it is not the qualitative researcher's task to provide an index of transferability; it is her responsibility to provide the data base to make transferability judgements possible to potential users (Lincoln & Guba 1985:316).

#### *4.4.5.4 Dependability and confirmability*

According to Lincoln and Guba (1984: 298-299), the conventional definition of reliability are those of stability, consistency and predictability. However, the qualitative researcher sees reliability as *dependability,* by seeking means of taking account of factors of instability and of phenomenal or design induced change. The term dependability then refers to the phenomenon when a study must account for changing conditions in the studied phenomenon and for possible changes in the research design. To this point Lincoln and Guba (1984:299) argue: "the naturalist view is broader than the conventional, since it accounts for everything that is normally included in the concept of reliability plus some additional factors."

In terms of confirmability, Lincoln and Guba (1984:300) stress that the naturalist's equivalent for objectivity is confirmability. The naturalist argues that the emphasis of objectivity is removed from the investigator and placed on the data itself. Are the data confirmable (Lincoln & Guba 1984:300)? The

major techniques for establishing confirmability are confirmability audits, triangulation and the keeping of a reflexive journal (Lincoln & Guba 1984:318-319). In this research, triangulation was a means of establishing confirmability.

### 4.4.6 Triangulation

Triangulation is the combination of methodologies in the study of the phenomenon (Danzin 1989:234). There are basically four kinds of triangulation that contribute to verification and validation of data analysis. They are:

- methods triangulation;
- triangulation of sources;
- analyst triangulation; and
- theory/perspective triangulation (Patton 1990:464).

Methods triangulation involves checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data collecting strategies (Patton 1990:464). Triangulation is the combination of methodologies in the study of the phenomenon (Denzin1989:234). In this investigation the researcher used the observations and artefacts in combination with the unstructured interviews (5.2). It must be remembered that the triangulated method is by no means problem-free. While, combining multiple methods and empirical material, the researcher hopes to overcome intrinsic biases, no two theories will ever yield completely compatible images of a phenomenon (Denzin 1989:247). Furthermore, every researcher sees different qualities, and every method reveals a different part of social reality. However, Denzin (1989:247) maintains: "Its use, when coupled with sophisticated rigor, will broaden, thicken and deepen the interpretative base of the study."

### 4.4.7 Limitations of the present study

As previously discussed, the researcher used a small sample, and therefore the findings cannot be generalised to a larger population. It was the researcher's aim, primarily to understand the life-world of female principals; their experiences, their perceptions and expectations. It was not to determine cause and effect or to be predictive.

The researcher also faced the problem of negotiating access to many of the schools, due to the crisis in schools caused by the redeployment and rationalising process as determined by the Department of Education and Culture. Many principals were extremely busy and could not find the time for an interview. It was also very difficult to locate female principals of with at least three years experience in the post of principals of co-educational schools. Many of the female principals were new appointees with only a year's experience. Those female principals with three years and more experience were primarily in single-sex schools. However, by gaining some understanding of the way in which women principals led their school, it is hoped that the gap that exists in this field will be narrowed to some extent.

## 4.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher described the rationale for the choice of a qualitative design for the study of women in educational management, as well as a clear explanation of the tenets of qualitative methodology, and observations, artefacts and unstructured interviews as a means of collecting data. Moreover, the actual research methods used in this investigation were described. These included the selection and locating of informants and the data gathering by means of unstructured interviews, observations and artefacts. Furthermore, the analysis process was explained. In the next chapter, (Chapter Five) the data generated using the research methodology will

be explained.

# CHAPTER 5

# DATA PRESENTATION

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Five focuses on the description of the data of this study. The data will be described in detail following the course from collection via consolidation and analysis to a final statement of findings. Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:95) maintain that, analysis involves discovering and maintaining patterns in the data, looking for general orientations in the data and trying to sort out what the data are about. The statement of findings will focus on words eliciting meaning from the data (cf. 4.2.9.1).

Thus, the description focuses on the substance of the words with making sense of the data (Hitchcock & Hughes 1995:299). The data is presented in two sections. Section A consists of data collected during observations and from artefacts. Section B contains data collected during interviews with eight principals: four from primary schools and four from secondary schools. Section B presents significant themes that emerged from the interviews. Themes are constituted by identifiable units in the informant's accounts grouped according to larger units or major experiences and presented in detail by means of narrative, descriptive material. Where the words of the informants are quoted, no attempt has been made to correct language usage.

## 5.2 Data collection

Data collection took place over a period of eight months from August 1999 to March 2000 and is presented as contributions to the findings and also as

triangulatory devices (cf. 4.4.3.4; 4.4.6). The various types of data are analysed in terms of content and discourse. The various interviewees in the study are afforded equal opportunity to present, via data presentation, their ideas and experiences of the management of schools in such a way that it will be triangulated with data from observations and artefacts. The data presented will consist mainly of data collected via interviews, artefacts collected at the schools and observations (cf. 4.4.6).

## 5.3 Data analysis

The section on data analysis consists of a detailed description of data collected at the interviews. These descriptions will be combined with the data from artefacts and observations made by the interviewer. Each component will be discussed in data categories and sub themes as established by the process of patterning and clustering (cf. 4.4.4).

Table 5.1 provides an overview of the various data sources utilised in this study.

| **Item description** | |
|---|---|
| Correspondence | This includes notices to learners, educators and parents |
| Circulars | These include<br>• Circulars<br>• Notices<br>• General information leaflets<br>• Reminders<br>• Announcements<br>• Newsletters |
| Minutes of meetings | These include<br>• Agendas and minutes of staff meetings<br>• Agendas and minutes of parents meetings<br>• Agendas and minutes of school governing body meetings |
| Timetables and year plans | This includes<br>• School tests and examinations<br>• Year plans |
| Interviews | Interviews were done with<br>• Four secondary school principals<br>• Four primary school principals |
| Forms | These include<br>• Learners' registration forms |
| Academic documents | These include<br>• Learners' report cards |

Table 5.1 Raw data categories

Cohen and Manion (1980:208) define triangulation: "as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour."

This method of triangulation heightened the researcher's confidence in checking biases and taking care of the validity and the credibility of the study. Furthermore, these data sources were also used to create the main categories of data with a view to discussing the leadership styles of women educational leaders and the challenges that these women face.

The raw data categories on the previous page were reduced to four workable categories with reference to the original categories. The categories in this section deal with information collected during observations and from artifacts and are summarised in the table below:

| Communication | Monitoring | Scheduling | Planning |
|---|---|---|---|
| • Correspondence to educators<br>• To learners<br>• To parents<br>• To school governing bodies<br>• Minutes of meetings<br>• Circulars<br>• Notices<br>• Announcements | • Learner welfare<br>• Learners' academic progress<br>• Educators' preparation for the task of teaching<br>• School governing body's progress | • School year plans<br>• School timetables<br>• Meetings | • Physical working environment<br>• Co-curricular and extra-curricular programme |

Table 5.2 Main categories of data in section A

The categories above are with a view to illuminate the leadership styles of women principals in South African primary and secondary schools. They will be triangulated with the data collected from the interviews (Section B).

### 5.3.1 Communication

Communicating messages effectively and efficiently was a priority for each of the principals (cf. 3.4.1.3). Usually messages were transmitted orally to the learners and via newsletters, circulars and flyers to parents. These were usually given to the learners to deliver by hand to the relevant recipients. Occasionally telephone calls were made to School Governing Body members informing them of a meeting. These were usually followed by written correspondence to the members. The primary school in the township did not have a duplicating machine nor a photocopier. This made typed notification very difficult. The principal sometimes sent the notices to the neighbouring school to be duplicated. In the secondary school in the township, there was no secretary. The principal struggled to get notices typed. In these two schools, notices were given mostly orally to the learners. The principals placed emphasis on communication indicating their committment to maintaining open channels of communication between the various stakeholders and the school (Blackmore 1999:63-83).

The sub themes consist of:

- correspondence distributed to learners;
- correspondence circulated to educators;
- correspondence with parents;
- minutes of meetings;
- circulars; and
- announcements.

Each of these sub themes will be discussed subsequently.

#### *5.3.1.1 Correspondence distributed to learners*

Correspondence distributed to learners consisted mainly of announcements of

parent meetings; school fees balances; school's code of conduct; newsletters and any new occurrences. Notices were distributed on a regular basis depending on the need. Six of the eight schools distributed written notices to the learners at least twice a term. Sometimes these notices were more frequent. All the principals indicated that it was essential for the parents to be informed about the important news concerning school policy and activities.

#### *5.3.1.2 Correspondence circulated to educators*

All correspondence indicating invitations to workshops and competitions was circulated to the relevant educators. The educators had to sign the correspondence on receipt of notification. A special book, indicating these notices, was kept by the secretary. The principals also circulated all departmental circulars to educators. These circulars are usually discussed at the staff meetings. Correspondence received from the educator unions was distributed to members of staff belonging to these unions. The women principals interviewed indicated that it was essential that the educators are well informed and that correspondence is circulated on a regular basis. They were keen to have the staff participate in discussions around the circulars.

#### *5.3.1.3 Correspondence with the School Governing Body (SGB)*

All correspondence to the School Governing Body was usually delivered by hand to members via their children. A copy of the correspondence was kept at the school. This correspondence usually comprised notices of meetings and special invitations. The principals acknowledged that the school governing body was an integral part of the school. It was important that they were kept abreast of all relevant issues concerning the school. All the principals indicated that circulating correspondence to the School Governing Body was essential. They were keen to point out that liasing with the School Governing Body was

important for effective school governance.

#### *5.3.1.4 Minutes of meetings*

Each principal had a staff minutes book, a management minutes book and minutes books of various sub-committees. Minutes of each meeting were circulated and duly signed by the educators. All these books were kept at the office and were available for scrutiny by the educators. The women principals indicated that it was important for the educators to have access to the minutes for reference. They ensured that the minutes were written timeously and efficiently.

#### *5.3.1.5 Circulars*

Circulars were distributed to educators, parents and learners. Departmental circulars were circulated to educators. All educators had to sign upon receipt of the circulars. Furthermore, these circulars were discussed at staff meetings. The school secretary had an inventory of all circulars received and distributed. In one of the township schools there was no secretary. In this school the HOD maintained an inventory of the circulars. The principals indicated that distribution and discussion of circulars were important and that circulars informed staff.

#### *5.3.1.6 Announcements*

Each principal had an announcement book or file in which assembly announcements were recorded. The educator on assembly duty recorded the notices in this book. The book was kept in the office. Examples of matters announced at assembly were learner-discipline; school fees payment; correct uniforms and notices of events taking place at the school.

From the observations above, it was evident that the women principals interviewed were keen on participatory management. Each of the principals worked on the premise that open channels of communication were essential for the efficient operation of a school. According to Ozga (1993:11) women run closely-knit schools and communicate better with teachers.

## 5.4 MONITORING

All informants emphasised the importance of monitoring the work and the activities of the school (cf. 3.4.1.4). The following were closely monitored:

- learners' welfare;
- academic progress of the learners;
- educators' preparation for the task of teaching and
- School Governing Body's (SGB) progress.

### 5.4.1 Learners' welfare

The principals were very concerned with the welfare of their learners in terms of nutrition, Aids awareness and drug abuse awareness. The secondary school principals were particularly keen to involve their learner representative councils in awareness programmes. Two of the secondary schools were affiliated to TADA (Teenagers Against Drug Abuse). The principals were also concerned about the learners' academic progress (cf. 3.4.1.5).

### 5.4.2 Learners' academic progress

The principals of the secondary schools had a detailed analysis of the matriculants' academic results for the previous years. These results were made

available to the researcher. The heads of departments kept an analysis of these results. Even in the primary schools, diagnostic and statistical analyses of tests and examinations were done. After an analysis was done, educators carried out remedial programmes. The principals called parent meetings to discuss learners' academic progress. They also contacted parents on an individual basis if particular learners were not performing at their potential (cf. 3.4.1.1).

### 5.4.3 Educators' preparation for the task of teaching

All principals ensured that the educators prepared for the lessons. Educators kept a mark book/ profile in which they reflected learners' marks, journals in which schemes of work were recorded and a programme book/file in which lesson preparation was done. Over and above this, record keeping varied in terms of preparation of tests and general learner progress. Monitoring of these records was done by the heads of departments and overseen by the deputy principal and principal. Areas of concern were discussed at the management meetings and the staff meetings (cf. 3.4).

### 5.4.4 School Governing Body's (SGB) progress

All the informants' schools had SGBs. This is a relevantly new concept in South African schools. Previously the different education departments had different types of parental participation in schools. Some departments had Parent Teacher Associations, others had School Councils and still others had School Boards. School Governing Bodies were introduced in 1997. They comprise of educator representatives; parent representatives; the principal as an ex-officio member; learner representatives in secondary schools and co-opted stakeholders. Their role functions are set out in a document received from the Department of Education and Culture, KwaZulu Natal. The principals were keen to maintain cordial relationships with members of the SGB for the sake of

progress. A written report of the functions and activities of the SGB was kept at the school.

From the evidence gleaned above, it may be deduced that the principals viewed monitoring as an important aspect of their role functions. They were keen to share information and to be fully aware of the processes at school.

## 5.5 SCHEDULING

Each principal had a schedule of the planned activities for the year. The following were amongst the scheduled activities:

- school year plans;
- timetables; and
- meetings.

### 5.5.1 School year plans

Schools scheduled a year plan at the beginning of each year. These plans contained information of relevant dates and school activities. Examples of scheduled events on the year plan are: the June and November examinations; dates of cycle and term tests; sporting activities; tournaments; parents' meetings school fund raising activities. Some schools organised more activities than other schools because of a built in infrastructure and the availability of finance. The ex-model C schools had a very detailed and comprehensive programme of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. On the other hand, one of the schools in the township was sharing the premises with another school. This made it very difficult for the principal and staff to conduct extra-curricular activities. However, the school participated in a major cultural show every year. The researcher observed certificates of participation displayed on

the walls of the office.

### 5.5.2 School timetables

Each of the observed schools had a timetable of the subjects and times or periods that these subjects were taken. These timetables were followed on a daily basis. The four secondary schools offered more subjects than the primary schools. The ex-Model C school offered a number of subject choices. Due to financial constraints the other schools were not able to offer many of the subjects. However, all the schools offered the core subjects of languages, mathematics, science, history and geography. The secondary school in the township offered agriculture. At the time of the interview the researcher observed a group of learners and an educator digging a patch to plant mealies. A composite timetable was displayed on the walls of each of the principal's offices.

### 5.5.3 Meetings

Meetings were scheduled on a regular basis. Meetings were held with the parents, educators, management members, SGB members and learner bodies. These meetings were scheduled at different times of the year and day. Usually parent meetings were held in the evenings or during the weekends. Staff meetings were held early in the morning or after teaching time. While the meetings were generally scheduled, there were instances when principals had to call up emergency meetings.

The process of monitoring and scheduling at the observed schools is indicative of the commitment of the principals to a vision and to sharing the commitment with staff members. All staff members were involved in the planning of the schedules. The principals were keen to utilise staff expertise when drawing up

the schedules.

## 5.6 PLANNING

Planning involves "seeking all available information, defining group task, purpose or goal" (Cawood & Gibbon 1981:54). According to all the informants it was essential that all tasks were planned so that effective teaching and learning could take place. The principals planned the:

- physical working environment;
- curricular programmes; and
- co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.

### 5.6.1 Physical working environment

Six of the eight principals had the school's mission statement displayed on the walls of their offices. During the interviews the researcher observed the physical planning of the offices. All the interviews were conducted in the offices of the principals. One primary school principal had a private section where she consulted with the staff. All the offices had filing cabinets and a work desk. One principal of a secondary school had a computer in her office. The common feature in all the offices was a notice board on which circulars were pinned. One of the principals shared her office with the secretary. The principals pointed out that they planned the way that their offices were set out. They had to be comfortable in their offices. Two of the principals had initiated major renovations to the reception areas and offices. The principals took pride in their surroundings and indicated that the environment must be conducive to teaching and learning.

### 5.6.2 Curricular programmes

The Education Department supplied the curriculum. However, the schools decided on the subject choices depending on the availability of staff expertise. The heads of departments and grade leaders sat with the respective teams and planned the curriculum and subject matter for the year. The principals made inputs and ensured that the curriculum was in keeping with departmental syllabi and norms.

### 5.6.3 Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities

There was a vast difference in the co-curricular and extra-curricular activities offered at the schools. These differences were dependent on the financial state and the space available. Two schools had very small grounds and were relatively poor. They serviced communities that were poor.

All the principals indicated that they wanted to be actively involved in the planning procedures at school. However they were keen to point out that their staff, the parents, the learners and the school governing body were important decision-makers.

## SECTION B

## 5.7 PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF KEY THEMES PRESENTED AT THE INTERVIEWS

This section discusses in detail key thematic areas identified in the course of the unstructured interviews with the eight women principals. The data collected is organised into categories so as to offer greater clarity. The themes

are as follows:

- age and family background at the time of the interview;
- career developments;
- leadership style; and
- challenges faced by women in educational leadership positions.

The characteristics and background data obtained during the interviews are tabled and outlined, followed by the presentation of significant themes that emerged during the interviews. Moreover, the informants were interviewed at their offices. Interviewing in these natural settings contributed to the validity of the overall investigation.

### 5.7.1 Age and family background

Table 5.3 summarises data gathered on the informants' responses to personal backgrounds at the time of interviews (1999-2000). The eight women ranged in population groups, ages, marital status and the number of children that they had. Six of the women were married and two were divorced at the time of the interview. The eight women ranged in age group 45-60. The informants were from the four population groups in South Africa: two Coloured; two White; two Indian and two Black (cf.1.5, 4.4.2.1). It was evidenced from the interviews that the two principals who were divorced found that they had more time to devote to their schools. All of the women were over forty indicating that they were mature women and were established in their careers. The interviewed principals' ages and family background had a bearing on their career choices. Seven principals had independent children who did not need constant supervision and domestic responsibility. This allowed them the time to devote to their schools (Blackmore 1999: 78).

| INFORMANT | AGE | MARITAL STATUS | NO. OF CHILDREN | POPULATION |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MARY | 50 | MARRIED | TWO | INDIAN |
| DEBBIE | 52 | DIVORCED | TWO | WHITE |
| DEVI | 47 | MARRIED | FOUR | COLOURED |
| THOKO | 60 | DIVORCED | SIX | BLACK |
| MAJORIE | 49 | MARRIED | FOUR | BLACK |
| VALERIE | 45 | MARRIED | TWO | COLOURED |
| SHANTIE | 45 | MARRIED | TWO | INDIAN |
| ROZ | 51 | MARRIED | TWO | WHITE |

Table 5.3 Personal background of informants at the time of interviews

### 5.7.2 Career development

The informants' comments on career development fell into the following thematic categories:

- educational preparation;
- work experience;
- aspirations;
- committment to work; and
- work ethic and ethos.

#### *5.7.2.1 Educational preparation*

Seven of the principals had teaching diplomas and degrees. One of the principals had a matriculation certificate plus a three-year teaching diploma. Seven informants began their careers with teaching diplomas but felt the need to further their qualifications. As Mary says:

"I think it was me. I lost my father when I was ten years old and my mother was a teacher. She got married and she just did sewing at home and we made a living that way. That is why I only stayed at college for two years although my mother asked me to stay on and do the third year. But it was always my desire to do a degree. It was not for monetary gain, but I just wanted to do the degree because I felt had I had the opportunity. I would have gone to a university in the first instance. I mean all along the way I studied. I completed my degree, my diploma and then a second diploma before I actually got promoted."

Likewise, Thoko's desire to further her educational qualifications is reflected in her comments:

"I just had to do my degree. Then in the 80's I went to the university in Umlazi to do my BA. I got it. Then I saw the university world. It was as if I never went to school. Then I went to the University of Natal to do my Higher Diploma in Education. I got it in one year, doing it full time. I am now studying towards my master's degree at the University of Natal."

While six of the principals felt that they had to have formal academic preparation for the post, two principals did not consider academic preparation as an essential ingredient. Debbie talked with enthusiasm about her involvement in education and her desire to be a principal:

"I have an M+3 (matric plus three years of teacher training). I have written books, delivered lectures, addressed circuit meetings, delivered seminars and held workshops. I just wanted to be a principal and I had to work very hard to get here. One does not have to have a degree to be good principal. One has to know in one's heart if one wants the job."

Although, Devi, had a degree, she felt that this was not preparation for the post of principal:

> "So academically I wouldn't say I was prepared for it. When I taught as a teacher, I used to take on extra-mural activities. I used to train the drum majorettes, but then when I do something, I used to want to be a success. I used to drive the process. I would never take something on if I know it is going to fail. And then there was a time when I used to produce plays. I am that type of person. If I am producing a play, I had to be the best. I feel I must do something and I must make a success of it. This is why I drive myself. I don't want to fail. I completed the degree years ago."

Roz on the other hand, believed that she was academically prepared for the post. She completed her teaching diploma and then went on to get her BA degree. Thereafter, she studied for the BEd degree because it was a natural progression. She maintains, "it was difficult to study at the time but I am glad that I did it."

Table 5.4 below summarises the qualifications of the women principals in this study.

| INFORMANT | QUALIFICATIONS |
|---|---|
| DEBBIE | MATRIC + 3 YEAR DIPLOMA |
| DEVI | BA DEGREE + 3 YEAR DIPLOMA |
| MAJORIE | BA DEGREE + 3 YEAR DIPLOMA |
| MARY | BA DEGREE + 3 YEAR DIPLOMA |
| THOKO | BA DEGREE + HDE + BEd DEGREE |
| VALERIE | BA DEGREE + 3 YEAR DIPLOMA |
| SHANTIE | BA DEGREE + 3 YEAR DIPLOMA |
| ROZ | BA DEGREE + 3 YEAR DIPLOMA + BEd |

Table 5.4 Table of the educational qualifications of women principals at the time of the interview

### *5.7.2.2 Work experience*

Table 5.4 summarises the work experience of the principals at the time of interviews. The work experience of the eight women ranged from twenty-three years to thirty-seven years of teaching. All the informants moved up the ranks from being educators, heads of departments or senior assistants, deputy principals and then principals. Four of the informants acted as principals for a while. Their experience as principals ranged from three years to twelve years.

| INFORMANT | YEARS OF EXPERIENCE IN EDUCATION | INSTITUTION TAUGHT AT | NO. OF YEARS AS PRINCIPAL | PRESENT SCHOOL |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MARY | 30 years | Primary and Secondary schools | 3 years | Primary school |
| VALERIE | 23 years | Primary school | 3 years | Primary school |
| THOKO | 37 years | Primary and Secondary school | 12 years | Secondary school |
| MAJORIE | 29 years | Primary and Secondary school and Teacher training college | 6 years | Primary school |
| DEBBIE | 30 years | Primary school | 3 years | Primary school |
| DEVI | 24 years | Primary and Secondary school | 3 years | Primary school |
| SHANTIE | 25 years | Secondary school | 3 years | Secondary school |
| ROZ | 27 years | Secondary school | 7 years | Secondary school |

Table 5.5 Table of work experience of women principals at the time of the interview

All the informants had over twenty years of experience in education. Seven of the eight principals began their careers as educators. Thoko began her career as a nurse. However, she always wanted to be an educator. She left nursing and started the higher primary teaching certificate and said: "I did very well and got a first class pass." She had thirty-seven years of teaching experience

altogether and taught from primary school right up to senior certificate level. At the beginning of 2000 she was promoted to Senior Educational Manager (SEM) in the Kwa Mashu district.

Devi qualified as a mathematics and science educator and had twenty-four years teaching experience. She says: "I taught maths and science until they gave out a severance package. Then the history head of department post became available." She applied for this post as she had history as a major in her BA degree and she had completed the degree fifteen years ago at Unisa. She was successful and practised as HOD for three years and later acted as deputy principal at the same school. Later on she was promoted to principal at the same school.

Mary trained as a primary school educator and majored in Afrikaans. She taught from grade one up to matric at different stages in her life. She says: "I got my first promotion after seventeen years and two merit notches." She acted as deputy principal and was then promoted to the position of principal at the same school.

Valerie has twenty-three years of teaching experience. She began her career as a junior primary educator. She applied for the head of department post and was successful in her application. Later, she acted as deputy principal and when the principal took a severance package she was promoted to principal at the same school.

Majorie had twenty-nine years teaching experience. She started teaching as a junior primary educator and then moved up to the senior primary phase and later to a secondary school. She then went on to lecture in home economics at a college of education. She later applied for the position of principal and was successful.

Three of the informants had long work experience at the same schools that they were now principals of. They felt that working at the school initially as educators paved the way for their promotion to principals.

Mary explains:

> "I came here as HOD in 1985. I acted as deputy principal for various stints and eventually acted as principal and I was later promoted to this position. I was again very fortunate, because I had been in this school. I know the community, the children and the educators. I've taught some of the educators and even their parents. They know me, and where I come from."

Likewise Valerie says:

> "I started at this school in 1981. I was almost a founder member because this school opened in1980. I said to myself that I would apply for the HOD position when it became available. I got it, and later on I acted as deputy principal and my principal took a severance package. I then acted as principal and when this post became available, I wanted it. I had the backing of the majority of the staff and my School Governing Body. I knew the children and the staff and it was what I wanted."

Debbie was initially promoted to senior assistant at her present school and later to deputy principal and finally became the principal:

> "When the position of principal became available I applied for it. It was not easy because the SGB was looking for a certain image. I was eventually selected because the SGB knew that I was committed to the school."

Shantie acted as principal for two years and when the position was advertised at her school she applied and was successful. She was in the teaching profession for twenty-five years and had taught at various different secondary schools.

Roz was in the teaching profession for twenty-seven years. She was a senior assistant and then deputy principal. She applied for the position of principal and on her third attempt she was successful. She was a principal for seven years.

It became evident from the interviews that these women principals had served many years in the teaching profession. They indicated that the experiences gained from the various positions that they held had assisted them in their position as principals.

### *5.7.2.3 Aspirations*

Six of the informants began their careers not knowing that they wanted to be principals (cf. 3.6.5) Valerie maintains, "I was very content just to teach, but as I grew older, I realised that this is not what I wanted. I was getting restless in the classroom." On the other hand Debbie says, "I just knew that I wanted my own school."

Devi was not interested in being a principal. Shakeshaft (1987:86) suggests that women aspire, but the traditional definition of aspiration fails to fit female experience. She further avers that aspiration has been defined as moving up the hierarchy and this definition may not be accurate for describing women's participation in the work-force. Devi's sentiments regarding promotion is consistent with Shakeshaft's (1987:86) suggestion:

"I never felt at any stage that I was going to be a principal. I never aspired to be one. I didn't want to be one. I didn't have that ambition. I didn't want to be a HOD or a DP or anything like that. I was quite satisfied as an educator. I aspired to be the best at my job. But I saw in this school there was a need and it was out of this need that I applied for the post. You see, when I became the acting deputy principal, you know, when the principal's post became available, I saw what a poor state this school was in and I had no option, because the people from outside, the parents were asking me to please become the principal. It was a dilemma. I felt that I didn't need the pressure. I was comfortable at home. My husband was doing well. There is no need for me to take on a high profile job."

Although Thoko believed that she was very capable of being a principal of a secondary school, she was cajoled into applying for this position by the Superintendent of Education (5.7.2.5). She says, "you see the inspectors knew that I was very good and they asked me to apply." Majorie lectured to students at a training college. She explains, "I was very good with the students. I did demonstration lessons and when the inspectors saw how good I was, they asked me to apply."

Mary, however, knew that she wanted to be a principal:

"I have been applying ever since I was a HOD, but I was not successful. I know I was capable but every time a male beat me to the position. People still have the perception that a man is a leader" (3.7.3).

Shantie was explicit in explaining her career aspirations:

"I never dreamed of being a principal. I was content as an educator. But as the years went by I wanted more. I knew that I had the ability to lead a

school. It did take some time though. Now that I am finally here, it is a difficult job. I am so busy because I am not only involved in the curricular affairs of the school but I am also heavily involved in sports."

#### *5.7.2.4 Committment to work*

All the informants stressed the need to be one hundred percent committed to their work. They sometimes found it very difficult to juggle their work-load with family commitments (cf. 3.6.3). As Debbie says, "you have to be dedicated. There are no real holidays. Everyday is stressful."

Likewise, Mary states:

"This is not an easy job. You have to look past all the problems and forge ahead. You have to be committed to the task at hand. You have to feel for the learners, the community and the educators. This area has many socio-economic problems. There is the problem of drug abuse and poverty. I have to counsel these children and have one hundred percent committment, otherwise I will fail."

Valerie too, emphasised the need for committment:

"Everyday I am begging for sponsorships. This community is not very rich. I have to work very hard. Even when I am at home I am thinking of the school. I have to make many sacrifices. Sometimes it means sacrificing my sleep for the school. I do this for the learners. They are most important to me."

Thoko described her long and illustrious career to me. She had many personal

tragedies along the way. She was divorced; tragically lost a son; had a mentally challenged child; and had educators rebel against her. She talks about her commitment:

> "I am actually born of teachers and they were also principals of schools and we are also Roman Catholic orientated. So, we have the belief, both by my parents and the school that duty comes first. In whatever you do, you must remember that God sends you. You are just not doing it for yourself or for your glory but you are doing everything for the glory of God. So, at the end of it all you have to account to God. I am totally committed to my job."

Majorie also explained that her career development was a long and difficult one. She was a mother with four adult children. Her work had taken much of her time. She had taught in the rural areas as a junior primary educator and then went to a senior primary school. She later lectured at a college of education and moved to a secondary school. She explains:

> "Because I moved all around I had to be very committed to be competitive. I had to work hard and make sure that I was noticed. Even now as principal, there are so many challenges. I have to stay focussed and committed. My day does not end with the school bell. I am always thinking of the next day. You see being a principal is not easy. It requires dedication and committment."

Roz also describes her committment to the school:

> I spend long hours at school. I am often at school during the week-ends. Sometimes I even come to work during the holidays. This job requires dedication.

### *5.7.2.5 Work ethic and ethos*

All eight informants contributed to a work ethic of caring and nurturing. The evidence borne out in the interviews depicts "motherhood". They likened the school community to a "family" (cf. 3.4.1.2).
Valerie explains:

> "I have the focus of the child. That is where my focus is, as well as my educators. I think that as a mother you are aware, other instincts come out. Even at home you see to your child first. You always see to your child first, you see to yourself last. You put yourself last. You would rather sacrifice. You rather not buy yourself a pair of shoes and make sure that your child has the best. You invest in your children and that is what I do for the learners at school. I actually think that it is the way we are made. We bear children. God gave you that and you take care, even if you are not doing it consciously."

Likewise, Debbie talks about her job-satisfaction:

> "My greatest satisfaction comes from knowing that my school is running well. My school includes the parents, the children and the staff. I put in the effort and the committment because I believe in people. The day I cannot commit to this vision, I will leave."

Devi illustrates her ethic of care:

> "Now this is something that is important and it will sum up how I feel about my learners. I use my assembly. I have assembly once a week, sometimes twice a week. I take assembly every week. I get hold of my learners in my assembly. My vision for the school is outlined during these

assemblies. If I didn't have these assemblies I would be lost. The only time I come into contact with the learners is during the assemblies. All through the week the ideas come to me and I prepare for these assemblies. And even the educators are at these assemblies. I speak to the learners about my role and my expectations."

Thoko maintained throughout the interview that she loved children She says, "I don't want to move out of a school because I care for these children." The Superintendent of Education had approached Thoko to apply for the position of Superintendent of Education (cf. 5.7.2.3). She was wary of this change because she felt that the learners still needed her at her school. A move to the circuit office would mean that the contact with the learners would be severed.

Both Shantie and Roz maintained that this was a full time job. There were no half measures. Shantie says, "if you don't care then it is time to leave. Likewise Roz maintains, "you have to care to survive."

Thus, all the women expressed a committment to care explicitly and showed that they derived satisfaction from their jobs. Moreover, all the women maintained that being principal required committment. Erwee (1985:15) found that women were more interested in contributing to the welfare of people in general than in obtaining recognition from persons in the workplace. In this connection, Thoko exemplified this attitude. She was more interested in the welfare of her learners rather than in her own promotion.

Having discussed female principals' committment to work, in the next section the leadership styles of the informants will be focussed on.

## 5.8 LEADERSHIP STYLES

This section constitutes a detailed discussion of the leadership styles of the informants. In Chapter Two and Three of this study, the researcher presented a theoretical background to leadership in education. The ensuing discussion entails the practical presentation of leadership in education, from the perspective of the women principals in this study. For the sake of clarity, the discussion on leadership styles was categorised into larger themes and further broken up into sub themes. The themes are as follows:

- informants' understanding of leadership style;
- interaction with staff;
- interaction with learners;
- interaction with parents;
- attitude towards School Governing Bodies; and
- decision-making strategies.

### 5.8.1 Informants' understanding of leadership styles

Seven of the informants said that their leadership style was democratic (cf. 3.4.1.2). Devi could not explain her leadership style:

> "I don't know what leadership style I have. I don't know how you are going to classify it. I might be giving you a perspective, but if you interview a staff member you might get a different position. I don't have a particular leadership style. I change to suit the situation."

However, she maintained that she was honest and straight when leading her staff (cf. 3.4.1.5). She maintains, "if there is a problem, I throw it into the open. I will not hide it."

On the other hand, Debbie was sure that she operated democratically:

> "I have a democratic leadership style. I involve my staff in the corporate planning of the school activities. I encourage new ideas and meet with the staff every Tuesday for a short meeting of approximately fifteen minutes. It is here that we discuss matters of importance."

Likewise, Valerie says:

> "I have an open door policy. Everything must be transparent. I involve all the educators and make them believe in what we are doing. If I make a mistake I am first to say that I am sorry. I want them to feel free to talk to me. If they are not free to discuss their problems then I have got problems."

Mary too, echoed similar sentiments in terms of her leadership style:

> "People appreciate open doors and my staff are free to discuss anything and that's the kind of policy I have. You see, there is nothing to hide and nothing to be secretive about and that is why I do not have major problems. You know, I always tell my staff that if there is something that they are unhappy about, they must discuss it with me. They feel free to discuss issues with me and I appreciate that" (3.4).

Similarly, Majorie explained that she involved all staff members in discussions:

> "I am democratic. All the educators have a chance to share their ideas. We plan together. I have always involved people because I believe that your staff must feel this involvement. I know that my staff likes me for this. They say that I am kind and understanding."

Women also feel the need to be of service to others. They involve themselves with the learners and create an environment more conducive to learning, one that is more orderly and safer. As pointed out by Shakeshaft (1987:294), Thoko exemplifies this attitude:

> "I usually feel as a slave. I feel that I have got to serve my school. We don't have a cleaner to clean the yard. The township schools don't have cleaners. You see when you are a leader, you must not be a big somebody. You must be at the bottom on the floor and then you will work with the people. When I work with the learners I pick up the papers. I believe when I go the classrooms I supervise the cleanliness."

Shantie was sure that she demonstrated a democratic leadership style. She maintained that she ensured that all the educators on her staff were involved in the activities of the school.

Thus, the women principals' perceptions of their leadership styles were consistent with the findings of Charters and Jovick (1981:316) that women principals demonstrated participatory leadership and collegial decision-making styles. Consequently, the women in this study derived much satisfaction from their interaction with their staff members.

### 5.8.2 Interaction with staff

All the informants placed much emphasis on a positive relationship and interaction with their staff (cf. 2.5; 3.4.1.2). As Pitner (1981:288) suggests, women superintendents used their time to visit classrooms and educators, Debbie walks around the school at least once a day so that she would meet the staff and learners everyday. Devi uses her daily notices to educators so that she

kept in touch. Her school has a large staff and she meets with them frequently for informal and formal discussions. Majorie makes sure that she is early everyday so that she could greet all the educators when they arrive. Mary, too, meets frequently with the whole staff for discussions (cf. 3.5.4). She visits the classrooms and frequently speaks with the educators on an informal basis. Thoko visits the staff room whenever possible and interacts with the educators. She also walks around the school so that "everyone feels my presence".

All the women cited that their staff respected them. They believed that this respect was due to their endeavours to be role models for their staff. One of the principals, Devi, felt that maybe the educators feared her position as principal. However, she was not quite sure:

> "I think sometimes they (the staff) are afraid of me. You see, I am straight-forward. You know for a fact that people don't like straight-forward people, whether you are a man or a woman. I confront problems. This becomes problematic, because people don't want to face problems. People dress up their problems and maybe I am too forthright."

She explained that her formal meetings with her staff were based on needs:

> "My meetings are based on need, but the contact where I am going to give them information, it will be twice a week at least. Every morning I pin up a notice on the notice board. This is my communication for the day. Everyday they have a notice. They read and sign the notice. They have to go the staff room every morning."

The women explained that they earned this respect because they were fair and honest. They often spoke about problems and shared information. Mary says:

"I have a very transparent policy. I am very focussed. You know, when we had male principals previously, that door that leads to the HOD's office was always locked. There was a cupboard against the door and you could not get access to the principal's office. If you wanted to get access to the principal's office, there was only one entrance. The reason for that was that whatever happened in the office remained behind closed doors. The first thing that I did when I became a principal was to move that cupboard aside and to open up the other door. The educators were much more comfortable and I discuss everything with my doors open. The only times those doors close are at the request of the educator for matters that are personal and confidential. The educators really respect me for that."

Both Valerie and Thoko expressed their Christian committment as extended to their workplace. For Thoko, her job was a "divine duty." She had a mission in life and that was to see teaching as the "Lord's work". The Christian spirit of giving and sharing directs her interactions with the educators. She was not doing her own work, but rather the work of God.

The researcher observed during a visit to Thoko's school that there was a warm and friendly relationship between the educators and her. One of the educators commented: "She is like a mother to us."

Valerie is a born again Christian. She too expresses her Christian committment:

"I can't divorce my spiritual background from my work. You know, if this is what the Lord wants from me, then this is what I want (speaking about her job). As I grew spiritually so did my promotion. My job is a calling from God. I am a born again Christian. I am doing God's work when I

teach."

While waiting for the interview to begin at Devi's school, the researcher heard laughter coming from the staff room. A few minutes later Devi emerged from the staff room. During the interview she informed me that she was telling them a joke. She sums up her interaction with the educators:

> "My one good attribute is that I am humourous. My deputy principal always says that he is amazed at my ability to see the funny side of things. You, see you cannot interact with your staff if you sat in your office all the time. You have to be on the ground to see what's happening."

### 5.8.3 Interaction with learners

The informants likened themselves to mothers. They cared for and nurtured the learners (cf. 5.7.2.5). The learners were the focus of their work At the time of the interview, Thoko informed me she was going to an interview for the position of Senior Educational Manager (SEM) in the afternoon (cf. 5.7.2.5). She reflects:

> "I really don't want to be a SEM. The people are forcing me to apply because they can see how good the discipline and the Matric results are at my school. I love to be an educator. I like to be with the learners. You see I have turned down the interview on three occasions, but now I have agreed. The learners, they call me gogo (granny). You see, I work with these learners and they support me."

Valerie kept likening her learners to her own children. She says, "my learners are my own children. I focus on them." She explained that the learners were from a poor Coloured community. There were many socio-economic problems

and many of the learners were unable to pay the fees. She described her concern for the learners in this way:

> "I go into their homes. Sometimes there is no water and electricity. Their parents are unemployed. Some people say that I must hand over these parents to the debt collectors. But how can I take these parents to court? How can I chase the learners out of school if their fees are not paid? You see, I am a mother. I feel for the learners. I am not cruel. You know that they sell drugs outside my school. I have contacted the police. The drugs have not come into the school as yet. But, everyday I am praying for these learners."

During the interview Devi spoke about an incident that involved hooliganism and the protection of her learners. She said that the learners at the school were so important to her that she was prepared to risk all. Gilligan (1982:100) suggests that women managers are more often guided by "an injunction to care". Devi illustrates her concern for the learners with an anecdote from her school:

> "There was a group of youngsters from outside the school that entered the school premises and attempted to break into the cars. I ran outside and chased these youngsters by myself trying to apprehend them. They ran outside the school. Do you know that I chased them up the street? By that time the male educators arrived. You see I was not scared. I had to protect the learners at my school from hooligans."

Majorie also exemplifies a strong committment to a concern for the learners:

> "My main concern is the learners (cf.3.4.1.3). I am concerned about their progress and their behaviour. I am always interacting with them. I visit the

learners in their classes and talk to them. During the assembly I speak to them about their behaviour, their uniforms and their work."

Debbie describes the joy she gets from the junior primary learners and the way in which they interact with her:

"Everyday I visit the classrooms. The children bring in their good pieces of work for an office award. You might have seen some of their work displayed in the foyer. They run up to me and hug me. They are aware of my presence. I maintain a high level of visibility" (cf. 3.5.1).

Mary, like Valerie also regards herself as a mother to the learners:

"As a mother you have certain role functions that are important. I mean look at it, the children that you are giving your attention to, are also going to come into the system and if they do not get that care and attention, they are going to come into the schools and become delinquents. So it has a bearing on everything. You cannot separate these roles; you cannot ignore them. You have to treat the learners like you treat your own children."

Thus, the women principals were unanimous in their perception that the learners were the focus of their attention. Their committment to an ethic of care for the learners is consistent with the findings of Gilligan's (1982:112) study. Gilligan avers that by emphasising the tie between human relationships, and moral responsibility, women are committed to an ethic of care.

### 5.8.4 Interaction with parents

All the informants explained that they were in favour of parental involvement in education. They had regular parent meetings and sent out circulars; notices;

leaflets; and verbal messages to parents. Besides general meetings, parents were often called on an individual basis to school. Four of the principals said that it was difficult to establish parental involvement in their communities. Many parents worked and some were not even interested. Some parents were so poor they did not even consider their children's education as a priority. In spite of the difficulties, all the principals maintained that they strived to enhance positive relationships with their parents (cf. 3.5.4).

Debbie reports that she has a good relationship with her parents:

> "I have a strong relationship with the parents. The parents are supportive. We maintain good communication via newsletters, flyers and meetings. We discuss academic problems that their children are experiencing; strategies to deal with behavioural problems and other issues. Initially, I found that a certain sector of the parents were petty. I have had to set down parameters and now my parents know the boundaries. Otherwise I would be inundated with petty problems."

Mary reflected that while it was difficult to get all her parents involved in attending meetings, she kept them abreast with school matters via circulars. Thoko also had difficulties in getting her parents to attend meetings, however, she regularly interviewed the parents of those children with problems. Majorie concurred: "Many of my parents do not attend meetings."

### 5.8.5 Attitude towards School Governing Body (SGB)

As previously discussed, the SGB is a new introduction in schools (cf. 5.4.4) Six of the eight informants were satisfied with the way in which their SGBs performed their duties. All the principals agreed that the SGB was an integral

part of the education system. Valerie pointed out: "I call in my SGB if there are problems." Devi explained that her SGB supported her. She said: "I always look smart for my meetings with the SGB. I need them to run the school efficiently." However, Mary believed that the SGB was restrictive:

> "You see with our Governing Bodies now we are restricted. They are males and they have their own ideas. They are competitive and they will want to make our school the best, but they are not doing everything to help promote that image. I feel that SGBs have not given all because they are still getting used to their role functions. However, we did have one female on the SGB and she helped to achieve so much for that year. I mean it was just her initiative that got things going. I think these men are waking up to a certain extent, but I still feel they have to learn more."

Likewise Thoko reported: "The SGB has not been told its role. The department must tell them how far they must go, their limits and boundaries." However, Thoko added:

> "When I come across problems, I consult my SGB which at the beginning was the school committee. You know when the SGB came into being I was already implementing it. I was using it. So there is nothing new."

### 5.8.6 Decision-making strategies

All eight informants reported that they usually involved all members of staff when they made decisions (cf. 3.5.3). However, they all added that they were able to make quick decisions on their own and sometimes they were not able to consult with the staff members. Sometimes they consulted with the staff members but at the end they had to make the decision on their own even if it was an unpleasant one.

Shakeshaft's (1987:188) suggestion that women think about and evaluate their decisions more often than men do, is consistent with Devi's approach to her decision-making strategies:

> "Sometimes when important decisions have to be made, I talk to the educators and then I sit and think about it and in the end I say to myself, that I am going to take the fall for this. If I don't buy into what they are telling me, I go it alone and sometimes I have been alone in a decision, even the deputy principal has been against it. But I say to myself, that I am accountable. I will have to answer for it. Now there are some things that I feel strongly about and there are other things that I don't feel strongly about. I can go along with them with democracy, but if there is a thing that I feel strongly about I will stick to the decision."

Debbie explained that she usually discussed ideas with the management committee and then this discussion was taken to the staff. Educators at her school hold a trouble shooting meeting monthly. At these meetings educators discuss any problems that they are experiencing. If they are unhappy about an issue they bring it to her attention. Moreover, as pointed out by Shakeshaft (1987:206), the team concept incorporates the notion of community, as is the case for Debbie:

> "I want my staff to be involved in all things. I am a team player. I work for the good of all. I try to take into account the contributions of all. We make decisions together. Thirty heads are better than one (cf. 2.5). Let me give you an example. We needed a detention policy. We had a workshop and everyone contributed."

Likewise, Mary reflects:

"People appreciate my open door policy and my staff is free to walk into my office and discuss anything and that's the kind of policy because there is nothing to hide and nothing to be secretive about. I tell my staff if there is anything that they don't like or accept, tell me about it. I don't know, because in my mind I am right. Do you know that my educators have done that? They have come to me and said that they don't think that I have looked at the issue from all angles. You see I involve all my educators in the decision-making processes at school."

Majorie explained that it is absolutely important to involve all stakeholders in decisions. She asked me to verify her decision-making style with her secretary:

"You can ask Premie how I operate. I always call my staff together for their ideas. I want them to make contributions. Sometimes it is hard to get them to talk. So I give them a chance to prepare a section of the meeting. They have to discuss some of the issues. This is how I get them involved."

Thoko had spent thirty-seven years in the teaching profession and had seen many changes in the education system. She explains her decision-making strategies:

"I don't feel any difficulty because we discuss everything. But if there is a problem I deal with it. I am not a coward. If an educator is not abiding by the rules I will call him or her in and question them. You must not be a coward you must face your challenges. Sometimes you will be alone in your decisions. But, I have adopted corporate decision-making. When I think of something, I call my management and we discuss it but you know it is still very difficult to get the staff to contribute because they are used to the old style. But then I am putting them into it each time."

Valerie too, maintained that the decisions she makes are always in consultation with her staff and in prayer. She involved her staff in major decisions, but is also able to make decisions on her own.

Thus, the data suggests that all the informants employ a collaborative approach to decision-making. While this collaborative approach to decision-making that shares power, may cause women to be initially evaluated as weak, research offers evidence that women's collaborate style is instrumental in women being rated as effective leaders (Shakeshaft 1987:207).

## 5.9 CHALLENGES

All the women maintained that there were numerous challenges that they faced as principals. Although these challenges were not insurmountable barriers to their advancement, they referred to the following as being some of the challenges that they face:

- discrimination experienced during interviews for the role of principal;
- challenges posed by the educators;
- challenges posed by the learners;
- challenges posed by the community; and
- challenges posed by dual role functions.

### 5.9.1 Discrimination experienced during interviews for the role of principal

Six of the women felt that there was some sort of gender bias during their interviews. Two women mentioned that they did not feel that they were discriminated against. However, all the women commented that the interview panels were primarily made up of males (3.6.2).

#### *5.9.1.1 Constitution of interview panels*

Research indicates that the constitution of interview panels influences the selection process. The women in this study concurred with these findings. Debbie describes the interview panel:

> "The interview panel was made up only of males. They did not like females. They made me feel uncomfortable with my image.

Devi's interview panel comprised of two females and three males. Mary pointed out that her interview panel was made up of predominantly males with just one female (6.4). Likewise, Majorie reported that there were no females on her interview panel. Four males and one female interviewed Thoko. All the women felt that they would have liked a balance of women and men in the panels. They felt that women would be more understanding of other women.

#### *5.9.1.2 Questions posed at the interviews*

Although the women could not remember all of the questions posed at the interview, they were able to point out those that they found as discriminatory or unfair (6.4). Debbie was particularly upset with the way in which her interview had proceeded. She was interviewed twice for the same position. After the first interview she found that she was unsuccessful. Subsequently, she lodged a dispute and was re-interviewed. The second interview took place on a Sunday evening. She remarks:

> "My interview panel was made up of only males. They were male chauvinists. They wanted a certain image. They were looking for an up-market type of person. Do you know I had to buy an entire new wardrobe and dress up for them? I even changed my hairstyle. I was so down hearted

that I had to change who I am. They asked me questions on crisis management, multi-cultural education, what my priorities were, what were my strengths and how would I deal with problems. It was a difficult time for me. I sensed that they were looking for a male."

On the other hand Devi believed that she was very good at interview situations and was therefore at an advantage. She also indicated that possibly race played a part in her selection:

"They were looking for someone that would bail the school out. This school was in a lot of trouble. Anybody that showed signs that they had the answers would be successful. It could have been anyone. This panel was looking for someone to save the school. What I find is I'm very good in an interview. The questions they asked me were fair. I think they saw me as the last hope for the Coloured community. You see all the applicants were Indians. I was the only Coloured. This school has predominantly Coloured learners."

Majorie was promoted to principal eight years ago and could not remember specific questions. However, she recalls that it was a trying time for her:

"When I applied for the principal's position, I was away in Pretoria marking matric papers. I phoned the circuit inspector to see if my application was received. The inspector said no and that he was not responsible for this. The inspectors had their own agenda. Eventually my application was received and I was called to the interview. It was tough. They asked me all sorts of questions. I can't really remember them. It was a long time ago, but it was tough."

Mary too could not recall all the questions, but she remembers one particular

question that she thought was unfair:

> "They were supposed to ask me five questions but they asked me seven and there was one question that I was irritated with and felt that there was no need for that. Although none of the questions were gender directed, there was one question that I was not happy with. It was a question about my affiliation to my church. They asked me if I had a matter to attend to at my church and a matter to attend to at school, which one would I attend to. I thought that was unfair because when I do something I give it my all. I mean it would depend on the seriousness of the matter. If my school was burning down, I would be there. You see I prioritise. This was an extra question. There weren't any questions that questioned my ability as a woman. They were careful about that, maybe because there was a woman on the panel."

Although Thoko recalled that the questions asked at her interview as not being discriminatory, she mentioned that the Superintendents saw her as a man:

> "It was a panel of inspectors. I didn't get promoted on my first application. I got promoted the second time around. I wouldn't say that I was discriminated against because I am a woman. You see the people who were interviewing me knew me. They knew my work and so they will never discriminate against me. At some stage the inspector said to me that they knew that I was running the school even though I was not the principal. You see when I applied the inspectors were at a board meeting. Then I went to Inanda to drop off another application. When I left one of the inspectors came out of the board meeting. He asked, 'where is this lady? This lady is a man.' So they looked for me and I was not there anymore. I went back there just to follow up my application. They said, 'ja where were you? We were looking for you everywhere, you were not anywhere to be

found. You were taken on the very day that you dropped your application.' You see I was famous for my good results and nobody could discriminate against me. I never experience any discrimination."

The next section focusses on a discussion pertaining to the challenges posed by the educators.

### 5.9.2 Challenges posed by the educators

All the eight principals experienced specific challenges posed by the educators. Although these challenges varied from school to school, the underlying factors were dealing with:

- excess educators;
- unionisation of educators; and
- educator motivation and staff morale.

#### *5.9.2.1 Excess educators*

The challenge of re-deploying excess educators was evident in six of the eight schools. Although two of the six schools did not have excess educators presently, these principals were concerned that they may be affected in 2000.

Excess educators had to be identified by the principal and staff using the criteria of curricular needs and the LIFO principle (Last In, First Out). The number of required educators per school was worked out in terms of the number of learners enrolled at the school. Once the educator was identified he or she had to be declared excess. This entire process was very stressful. Mary looked strained as she explained:

"You know the educators' morale is so low. There are six educators here who are in excess. They have all not been placed and I admire them for the way they are still going on. I find this a challenge. How do I motivate them? How do I encourage them? How do I talk to them, so that they do not lose hope? It makes it so difficult because we have that sector of the staff who sympathise with them. It is so difficult to introduce new programmes. We are supposed to start with the Developmental Appraisal System, but we have not. How can I force the process when the educators are so demotivated? You have to be sensitive to the needs of your staff."

Likewise, Shantie also felt the strain of declaring educators in excess:

"This staff was always happy and secure together, but now there is much tension. This entire process is the job of the Department. It is so unfair that the principal is made out to be the 'bad' person. I am only carrying out an instruction. The educators feel that I have a personal agenda. I suppose that it will take some time before we accept this."

Majorie too reported that there were four excess educators at her school. The pupil enrolment had dropped and the departmental norms for enrolment translated to forty pupils per educator. She says:

"This new departmental requirement is making it very bad for us. The teachers are so worried as to where they will be re-deployed. None of the schools around here need more teachers. My teachers cannot leave their families and go into the rural areas."

Thoko is a principal of a large secondary school with a pupil enrolment of over one thousand pupils and a staff complement of thirty-eight. However, she was going to lose staff because of the new rationalisation policy of the

Government. She said, "this is the toughest challenge I have had. I have to make do with fewer educators and still perform and produce the good results."

Having concentrated on the challenges posed by excess educators, the following section focusses on the challenges posed by educator unionisaton.

### *5.9.2.2 Unionisation of staff*

Six of the principals had problems with educator unions. Although these principals agreed that it was the educator's right to join a union, they were unhappy with educators embarking on strike action and using instructional time to attend union meetings.

Two of the principals said that while the educators at their school belonged to educator unions they did not embark on strike action. At no time did they have to close down the schools because of strike action.

When asked about the challenge of dealing with educators embarking on strike action, Mary was not hesitant to reply:

> "I cannot accept that educators will take up their learners' time to make demands. You cannot hold the child at ransom. This has been very difficult for me to understand. There have been times when none of the educators have turned up to school. I have had to dismiss the learners."

Likewise, Devi was also committed to her learners not losing time because of educators being away on strike:

> "These teachers know how I feel about this. I will not close my school on account of any strike action. I call on the parents to assist. We double the

classes and then we keep the school open. We have a duty to these learners. Oh yes the unions have posed a challenge. Let me tell you this school here used to go on strikes. I say to them, 'at the end of the day do you want the learners to go on strike when they have a problem?" We are learning form you that when there is a problem we will strike. They will bring us to our knees these children, they will bring us to our knees."

During the interview Majorie came over as a motherly and warm person. She constantly spoke about her love for the learners and the educators. However, when asked her about the challenges of educator unionisation, she became visibly angry:

"This thing about educators leaving school early to go to a union meeting or on strike, this is not a nice thing. These children need us. The unions must think of other ways to get answers. Our educators need to know that their bread and butter comes from their job."

Val is a committed Christian who feels duty and honour bound to teaching and closing school on account of strike action was a real challenge. She reported that the educators at her school were actively involved in union activities. There was a large sector of the staff who knew everything that was happening at union level and they informed the other members of staff. She says:

"Sometimes they know about the departmental circulars even before I know about them. They will challenge you about these circulars. You have to know what is happening. When these educators heed the call of the union to strike then I cannot keep the school open. There is no staff to look after one thousand children. This really hurts me. I feel as if we have robbed the children."

### *5.9.2.3 Staff morale and motivation*

All eight principals were unanimous in their perception that positive staff morale was essential (6.4). They also believed that the staff must be motivated to work. Those principals who were faced with the challenge of excess educators said that the morale of the staff was at an all time low. Mary explains, "they feel so down now. It is difficult to pick them up." Shantie also says, "this is a major challenge because you have to understand that when the human spirit is broken it is hard to motivate the person."

Nevertheless, both Shantie and Mary maintained that they were constantly working on motivating their staff. Mary's concern for collegial relationships is reflected:

> "Over the years I have learnt that you have to keep human beings motivated to run your department or your school. If people are not happy to be at work then they will not perform at their optimum. I am constantly cutting out sayings like 'Are you a winner?' and distributing it to the staff."

Throughout the interview with Debbie the researcher was conscious of an energy that emanated from her. She was animated and full of ideas on how to run a school efficiently. She spoke about motivation:

> "I show my appreciation for my educators. I publicly praise them for a job well done. They are aware that I am a hands on person. I am present at all school functions. I make myself available for the concerts, and the rugby and the soccer. I am always excited about the activities at school. Right now we are busy with a drama production that involves over one hundred junior primary children. It is running for four nights and I am here every night. That is how I motivate the educators."

Likewise, Roz concurred:

> "You have to be motivated to motivate your educators. You must show appreciation for their work. If you have energy then you inject that energy into your staff. I make sure that I am available for all staff functions and that I show interest in what my educators are doing."

Thus, data indicates that the women principals in this study were concerned about the morale of their staff members. They were all eager to ensure that the educators motivated and they led by example.

The foregoing discussion was based on the challenges posed by educators. The next section focusses on the challenges posed by learners.

## 5.10 Challenges posed by learners

All the informants felt that the children posed certain challenges but these challenges were not insurmountable to their performance as principals (6.4). Mary explained, "when you are the head of an institution then you will face certain problems." Debbie said, "children will always try something, but you must know how to deal with them. Thoko concurred, "these children are always up to something."

The principals were concerned about

- poor discipline;
- underachievement of their learners; and
- the challenges of multi-culturalism and language barriers.

### 5.10.1 Poor discipline

All the principals had different strategies for dealing with discipline problems. Some of them felt that due to the socio-economic background of the learners, many of them had problems. Mary reflects:

> "These children are exposed to rape, alcohol, drugs and violence from an early age. In each class there are at least four children who have these problems. I have worked with a social worker. I have even introduced programmes for their parents. But I still find this very frustrating."

Val too, experienced these challenges of disadvantaged socio-economic background. The learners that came to her school were from a very poor community:

> "These children know all about rape and drugs and alcohol. Many of their parents are alcoholics and drug addicts. Right outside my school they are selling drugs. I have reported to the police but nothing seems to get done."

Devi related an incident of a learner who was taking drugs at her school. She was very upset with this:

> "You know I talk to these children all the time about drug abuse. This child in grade eleven has been using drugs. I said to the parents that I have to report this to the police. The parents wanted me to hush it up. I cannot do this. I have to protect the other learners."

Roz and Shantie were also concerned about their learners being involved with drugs and alcohol. Shantie maintained:

"These learners are teenagers and very often many of the discipline problems arise from peer pressure and an identity crisis. Sometimes it angers me when there is no parental support. As you know we do not have any counselors anymore so these learners are left to deal with their problems. In this area the learners are exposed to drugs. We are affiliated to an anti-drug association that runs programmes for the learners. We do the best that we can, but many of them are lost."

Roz said, "we have a strict code of conduct and disciplinary measures in place for drug and alcohol abuse. However, we can't monitor them all the time."

### 5.10.2 Underachievement

An interesting fact that emerged was that all the women were keen to ensure one hundred percent pass rates at their schools. The four principals of the secondary schools all had over ninety percent pass rates in the matriculation results of 1999. They were fiercely proud of this achievement. The primary school principals were just as proud to point out that their schools produced excellent academic results.

However, all of them agreed that the children who underachieved posed a huge problem for them. Mary says, "I feel very sad when a child underachieves." Majorie maintains:

"Many of these learners don't achieve to their potential. This is my personal challenge. Sometimes they may not be excellent academic learners, but they have talents in other places. My job is to find these talents."

Before the interview with Thoko began the researcher had to wait for two hours because of a long queue of parents waiting to see the principal. When the interview began, Thoko apologised saying:

> "It is like this everyday. I have to call the parents because of the learners. All those who are having problems in the classrooms, I call for their parents. I explain everything to them. They must know that their children are failing. Together we can make a difference."

### 5.11 Multi-culturalism and language barriers

Six of the eight principals expressed their concern about language and cultural barriers to fully understanding the children that they served. The two schools in the townships had only Black children and Black staff. The other six schools had children of the different race groups at their school. The principals explained that sometimes there were problems because the children did not understand the language of instruction (in all six schools it was English).

Mary says, "It is so sad that these children are perceived to be stupid. It is just that they do not understand English." Both Devi and Val had a large percent of Black children at their schools. Devi was adamant that the school considers these children as a vital composition of its roll:

> "Last year we needed to send four students to a leadership course sponsored by the Rotary club. So we needed names and we had to choose from the grade eleven classes. I said we have got to choose at least two Black children because we have a large percentage of Black students at the school. This meeting lasted two hours. The staff said no, if the Black students are not up to it, how can you send them. I was adamant and that is one time that I lost my cool. I forced the issue and I appointed two Blacks.

Because I said that if there was a problem in the school the Black children need a leader that they can communicate with."

It becomes evident from the above discussions that the changes in terms of the new school admission policy principals are faced with great stress. Since all of the schools did not have racially mixed staff in proportion to the learner population principals were having difficulties with dealing with staff. Devi was prepared to defend her position and ensured that disadvantaged children were allowed equal opportunities. It may be gleaned from the above interview that racism is a problem at this school. Devi's decision to send the Black learners on the leadership course despite opposition from the staff indicates her strong leadership qualities.

Debbie is principal at an ex-model C school and has many Black and Indian children at her school. Although her staff is predominantly White, she maintains:

"I have a mixed school with a vast richness. We had a food festival where we shared the different cultural foods. We use our plays as a means to explore all cultures. I am very interested in developing culture at my school. That is why we have an orchestra and a brass band. We have art exhibitions to promote all cultures."

In the above discussion, the challenges posed by learners were explained. The next section financial challenges are discussed.

### 5.12 Financial challenges

All the principals were affected by the financial cut backs from the Department of Education. Valerie explains:

"I am so sad because my community is so poor. Many of the Coloured children do not pay their fees. This school is actually running because of the Black children. Their parents are professional. They are educators and ministers. But the Coloured children just can't pay. This is my biggest problem."

Majorie concurred:

"The school fee is twenty-five rand per year and the learners still don't pay. We have to be begging for money. The parents can't pay. You see I don't have a computer or a typewriter. We can't afford all that. We have to just write the notices. It is very hard."

Thoko's school had no cleaners. She says, "we cannot afford this luxury. I clean the school with the learners." Mary also found the financial strain of running a school. Her learners were also very poor and could not afford to pay fees.

Having explained financial challenges, the following section covers a discussion on challenges posed by the community.

### 5.13 Challenges posed by the community

All the women were eager to maintain good community relations. They understood that the community had a role to play in the upliftment of their schools (6.2.8).

Roz says:

"I am fortunate that my community is supportive of the activities of the

school. However, I would like to see more involvement of more people."

Shantie also concurred that parental involvement was a challenge for her. She explains, "I have tried many strategies to get this community involved, but it remains a challenge."

A discussion on the challenge of dual role functions follows in the next paragraph.

### 5.14 The challenge of dual role functions

A major challenge faced by all the women is how to balance the role of principal with other roles such as wife and mother (3.6.3; 6.2.3.2; 6.4). According to Wilson and Byrne (1987:136) the lack of time and energy are the outcome of the working women's efforts to balance work with home responsibilities (6.2.3.2). Mary explains her inner conflict:

> "I am a principal but I am also a mother. Even though my children are grown up, there are still demands that they make on me. I am also busy at my church and this takes up much of my time. So you see my work never ends. Sometimes I feel guilty that I cannot spend more time with my children."

Debbie comments:

> "This job is easier for men. With women there is the question of double shift. When you leave school there is another job waiting for you at home. I am divorced and this makes things easier. If I had a husband I don't think that I would have managed because there would be too many demands."

Debbie explained that she had been diagnosed with stress and cancer. She has survived these illnesses because of her strong will to succeed at anything she tried.

Devi explained that there was always the burden of going home to another job. Her husband is a very successful businessman and had no time to help out:

> "I have a little baby at home and she takes up my time. I love her to bits and she is my stress relief. I try to forget school when I am at home, but this is impossible. There are always meetings to prepare for and to attend and then there are the dishes to do. You cannot rest. I wish that I were a principal when I was younger. Now I just don't seem to have the energy to do all the things I want to."

Majorie said that all her children were grown up and independent. However, her husband still made demands on her:

> "Although the children are now independent, I still have my husband to see to when I go home. He does not go into the kitchen so the cooking is my job. I want to have a rest now. I think maybe, next year when I turn fifty, I will retire. I don't know, we must wait and see."

Thoko is a devout Roman Catholic who has had the assistance of the priest from her church. Thoko said that her children were never a barrier to her career development, because her priest helped her with her problems and difficulties in raising the children. She also had the support of family.

Although Roz had a helpful husband she still struggled:

> "My husband is helpful, but I still feel the strain of being a mother and a

working woman."

Val concurred with Roz, "the role of being a mother is time consuming and drains you of your energy. This combined with the role of principal is very tough."

## 5.15 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented basic data on the informants as revealed during observation, from artifacts and during the interviews. Moreover, key thematic areas identified by eight women principals during in-depth interviews have been presented and discussed. The last chapter will conclude with an overview of the study, and recommendations for further research.

# CHAPTER 6

# OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY, GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL PROVISION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The historical and present participation of women in mutually dependent professions of teaching and managing in education confirms that a marked degree of gender imbalance occurs in the profession of educational management, with women extremely under represented (Greyvenstein 1992:271).

## 6.1 INTRODUCTION

This study has aimed at investigating women in educational management, their leadership styles and the specific challenges that they face with a view to developing guidelines for developing women in positions of principals at schools. These guidelines are aimed at promoting the progression of women in educational management, both before becoming principals and while they are in this position.

### 6.1.1 Overview of the investigation

In this section, an overview of the foregoing study is presented in the light of the research problem set forth in 1.3. While women constitute a large percentage of the teaching corps in education, they make up the minority in positions of leadership (1.1). Moreover, there has been a lack of recognition of women's experiences in educational management and an absence of these experiences in publications of educational management (2.1).

Contemporary developments in educational leadership must be understood in terms of the role played by women educational leaders (2.2). Certain historical trends in leadership are still evident today: women are still considered to be nurturers and caregivers and are confined to teaching, while men progress up the promotional ladder. Consequently, women still lag behind in the educational hierarchy. Moreover, much of the research on leadership carried out by behavioural theorists has been limited mainly to the male (2.5). A serious drawback of such findings exclusively based on the male model is that when extrapolated to the lives of women, they fail to explain the experiences of women leaders. Consequently there has been a call for further research on the lives of women which will help generate a more adequate theory of human behaviour and will contribute particularly to the understanding of leadership from a woman's perspective (Chapter 3).

Furthermore, while there has been a growing interest in the study of the under-representation of women, little research has focussed solely on the leadership styles of women in educational management. Therefore, a diverse range of literature concerning women's leadership styles was examined in Chapters 2 and 3. It was clear that women are capable of being effective school leaders (Chapter 3). With regard to the roles of the principal, the literature study evidenced a clear relationship between women's leadership styles and effective school management (3.4). Furthermore, the literature evidenced the advantages of having women in positions of educational leadership (3.5). However, women are faced with specific challenges that they have to face (3.6).

The literature study as embodied in Chapters 2 and 3 served both as an overview of research as well as a means of highlighting areas in which there was little research or theoretical writing on the educational and work experiences of women educational leaders. Therefore, a phenomenological, qualitative approach (4.2.1) was decided upon to conduct an exploratory study

into the life-world of women principals who have been given little attention in the literature. This study was designed to obtain greater insight into the work experiences of women principals to provide a basis upon which guidelines for addressing specific challenges could be compiled. Thus eight women principals were located by means of purposive sampling (4.4.2.2) and unstructured interviews were conducted with them (4.4.3.4). Furthermore, artefacts were studied (4.4.4.3) and observations were made over a period of eight days (4.4.3.5) in order to add rigour to the interviews. Moreover, narrative data gathered during the interviews was subjected to qualitative analysis and organised according to certain key themes (5.7) relating broadly to career development (5.7.2), leadership styles (5.8) and challenges experienced (5.9).

The potential bias in the reporting technique was clearly acknowledged by the researcher. As in all qualitative research, the validity of the findings depended on the researcher's ability to use the techniques chosen; in this case the unstructured interview; observations and the collection of artifacts. In such research, demands are made on the researcher's own skills in interviewing and establishing rapport with the informants (4.2.7). However, here the researcher was able to draw on her own experience as an educational manager to establish a relationship with the informants (4.4.3.2). Further potential for bias was present in as much as the researcher herself constituted the research instrument. Issues concerning reliability and validity were presented (4.4.5) to counteract possible bias.

Furthermore, informants constituted a small sample of eight women and the techniques used were qualitative with no intention of comparative study (4.4.7). In this respect the limitations of the study were discussed.

### 6.1.2 Organisation of the material

In 6.2 suggested guidelines for educational provision that would support and enhance the career development of women educational managers are presented. Finally, the chapter concludes with recommendations for future research (6.3).

## 6.2 GUIDELINES FOR EDUCATIONAL PROVISION

In this section attention is drawn to the range of implications for educational provision that have suggested themselves on the basis of this exploratory study. It is proposed that these policy guidelines have the potential of contributing to the more effective development and utilisation of the knowledge and skills of women (cf. 3) both those who are already principals, and the vast number of women who aspire to become principals.

These proposals are discussed under the following subheadings:

### 6.2.1 Research

Where little work or research has been done on the performances and experiences of women in educational management in South Africa, (3.1; 4.3.2.1) it is recommended that:

- Needs analyses of women in educational management be undertaken so as to design educational polices which would best meet their requirements (3.6.1).
- Large scale surveys and longitudinal studies of women educators be undertaken to establish the demographic and attitudinal trends revealed by women in education (3.6.1).

- Extensive research concerning the educational needs of women educators as well as the most appropriate training methods for women educators who aspire to leadership positions (2.5.2.2).
- Research be carried out on the experiences of women principals that can be used to challenge existing theories of leadership (2.6; 3.6.1).
- Research that challenges traditional stereotypes of what constitutes appropriate management behaviour and process (2.6; 3.6.1).
- Research which will seek to redress the equity balance by examining a solely female view of the school world and by providing biographies of women principals so that more is known of the individual lives of women who occupy these positions (2.6; 3.6.1).
- Extensive research on the impact of gender on effective school management. This issue is important given the gender structuring of schools, which largely results in organisations in which men supervise women (3.4).

### 6.2.2 Legislation

It is contended that legal provision for gender equity in employment is a prerequisite of and contributing factor to gender equity in educational management (Ortiz & Marshall 1987:18-25). For this reason the following recommendations are made:

- Legislation that ensures parity for women in educational institutions to be promulgated.
- Statutory provision for and promotion of gender equity at government level that allows for gender equity policies within educational departments and bodies to be implemented and promoted (3.7.3).
- An official mechanism for planned and controlled affirmative action,

designed specifically to reduce and remove gender inequalities, with emphasis on the promotion of women (3.7.4).

- A gender equity unit to be established in government to look at the specifics of gender inequalities and to address the problems that emanate from the inequalities (1.2.3.2).
- Official gender equity government policy to be established at schools (1.2.2).

### 6.2.3 Equity guidance at schools

The main aim of equity guidance is to promote the advancement of women in educational management positions. Therefore, the following recommendations as regards various aspects of equity guidance are proposed:

#### *6.2.3.1 Training of equity guidance educators*

- Adequate training of guidance educators which includes a theoretical understanding of the unique nature of gender impact. They should be aware of the limitations of the male model of leadership as well as gender-bias inherent in theory and aptitude measurement. They should be trained in counseling skills which focuses on the particular challenges that women face in aspiring for leadership positions (3.6.1).
- The provision of guidance clinics and staff and resource centres to provide women with counseling services. In this way, women would be given access to existing counseling facilities when making decisions on their present and future careers in educational leadership (3.6.1).

#### *6.2.3.2 Gender equity guidance in the school*

In this respect the following recommendations are made:

- The creation of awareness programmes on educational management equity related issues among learners (3.6.3).
- Curricular changes to ensure a more equitable access to and participation in leadership programmes for female learners.
- Learners to be informed of discriminatory practices in certain professions. They must be made aware of careers that offer little scope for promotion into management positions.
- Guidance based on the female experience to be offered to both male and female learners to prepare them for present and future challenges and dual careers (5.14).
- Learners of both sexes to be exposed to female role models. This can be done by identifying women in the community who have successfully become leaders and by inviting them to address the learners (3.6).
- Career information centres be established in schools where learners have access to information regarding their careers and scope.
- Curricular changes that ensure that female learners are schooled in the traditionally male subjects such as mathematics, science, woodwork, mechanics and industrial subjects.

### 6.2.4 Parental involvement

Parents are primary educators who exercise a considerable influence upon the career decisions of girls (Lemmer 1989:317). It is therefore recommended that:

- Schools provide conferences, seminars and workshops so that, parents are equipped with the knowledge of opportunities available to their children.

Parents must be made aware of the need for the provision of female role-models. Parents should encourage female children to aspire to leadership positions (3.5.4).

### 6.2.5 Equity provision in the department of education

It is recommended that:

- Overt and covert evidence of gender disparities in education departments be removed (3.6.2).
- There is specification of criteria for training and development programmes to meet the requirements of educational managers (3.6.3).
- There is a special affirmative action policy for advancement of women into educational management positions (3.7.1).
- Compulsory training for existing principals in the field of gender equity be provided. Principals must serve as mentors to women aspiring for promotion to leadership positions.
- Childcare facilities are made available to educators. These facilities could be subsidised by the state and may service schools in the area (3.6.3).

### 6.2.6 Equity training at universities and educator training institutions

It is recommended that:

- Provisions are made for extensive research on women in educational management (3.6.1).
- Women are recruited as faculty heads, creating a balance and providing in the need for same-sex role models and mentors and reducing marginality for women educational leaders (3.6.3).
- Women are actively recruited for educational management courses (3.6.5).

- Theoretical and practical aspects of educational management be included in educator training courses. This will facilitate higher career aspiration levels among women educators (3.6.5).
- There be organising of informal clubs for women educators. Women principals may serve as role models and mentors to the educators. In such clubs collegial relationships can be formed and women can discuss such topics as time and stress management and management skills. Such informal clubs can provide important support networks (Lemmer 1989:323) (3.6.3).

### 6.2.7 Provision in educator unions

- The establishment of groups for women to create networking facilities (3.7.2).
- Motivation of women to play an active role in the organisation (3.6.3).
- Active recruitment of women to fill leadership positions.
- Extensive training of women so that they can take their place in leadership positions (3.6.4).
- Inclusion of gender related subject matter in activities and programmes (3.6.3).
- Setting up of a gender forum to deal with gender discrimination in schools.
- Implementation of a gender equity policy.
- Training facility for women aspiring to leadership positions in schools. This would include workshops, seminars and conferences so that women will be trained in assertiveness, interview skills and how to write a curriculum vitae (3.6.4).
- Childcare facilities are made available for educators. These facilities are important since it encourages women to attend meetings and workshops in the knowledge that their children are safe (3.6.3).

### 6.2.8 Provisions made in the community

In regard to community provisions the following are recommended:

- Community centres where women could network and serve as mentors for each other. Both men and women who are successful leaders may address women and motivate them to aspire for promotion (3.6.5; 3.7.2; 5.13).
- A resource centre is set up in the local community library whereby women may have access to gender equity materials both in print and electronic media. This centre could also provide a directory of all vacancies in respect of promotion posts in the local schools (6.2.8; 5.13).
- A woman's forum is established where female educators could meet on a quarterly basis to discuss issues that are problematic. In this way they will be able to share ideas and learn from each other. They may also invite special guests to address them on gender related issues (6.2.8; 5.13).

## 6.3 EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

The central aim of this programme is to train and develop women for participation in educational management. These programmes could be divided into single-sex and dual-sex sessions (3.6.4).

### 6.3.1 Single-sex programmes

These programmes aim to train women for participation in the conventional dual-sex training programme. The emphasis is to reduce intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to women's progress and encourage self-development and the development of positive self-esteem of women (Greyvenstein 1992:274).

### 6.3.2 Dual-sex management development programme

The aim of the dual-sex training programme is the academic and professional management development of principals. The following is the design of the programme

(a) Academic preparation

Training in the academic theory-orientated curriculum is proposed in order to assist in the conceptual development of the participants. An assessment centre is proposed at universities for the identification of management potential. Validated assessment results could be made available for selection purposes and incorporated in academic qualifications (Greyvenstein 1992:274).

(b) Professional formation

This entails continuous educational management professional formation opportunities, characterised by practical training for effective functioning as principals. The provision of various professional formation opportunities should be the combined efforts of the universities, education departments, schools, professional organisations and educator unions (Greyvenstein 1992:274).

(c) Professional training opportunities

The following are examples of professional training opportunities:

- Beginner principal training: Special attention must be paid to the development of women and the specific needs and obstacles for women. These courses should be the responsibility of education departments (5.14).

- In-service training institutions: These should be provided at regular intervals. Special attention must be paid to managerial skills and gender sensitivity. Expertise may be drawn from both male and female presenters
- Management development centres: These centres should be established at a local or district level. Women should be encouraged to participate fully.
- Educational management meetings and conferences: These should be held at regular intervals. Aspects concerning women should form part of the agenda. Women should be actively encouraged to participate.
- Training provision at school: Staff development programmes should include topics that concern women. The identification of potential managers and mentor training relationships could be beneficial to women (Greyvenstein 1992:275).

## 6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The findings of this study on women in educational management suggest the following priority areas in the search for further knowledge.

It is recommended that the potential use of qualitative research methodology in investigating issues related to women's lives (4.3.2) should be further explored. Qualitative research is an under utilised research methodology that can add the necessary depth and colour to more conventional quantitative research methodology (Lemmer 1989:328). More extensive use of qualitative methodology can assist in the discovery of more unexplored themes of women's experiences in educational management (4.3.2.1).

Further research should be conducted across a wider range of women informants, including those who are not as yet principals. In addition, research on the perspective of women educators on the effectiveness of women principals is needed. Attention should be given to the constitution of an

interview panel (5.9.1.1), the types of questions asked at interviews (5.9.1.2), staff development and educator morale in schools that are headed by women principals (5.9.2.3). Research on learner behaviour and development in schools of women principals should be conducted (5.10). Further research on women and financial management in schools should be undertaken (5.12).

Further research should be conducted into the effect, which the fulfilment of the multiple roles such as that of mother, wife, principal and sometimes student exercise upon the well-being of women principals (3.6.3; 5.14). Attention should be given to the role of mentor programmes in the development of women principals. Moreover, the role for single-sex and dual-sex management development programmes should be further investigated (6.3.2).

## 6.5 CONCLUSION

While women continue to enter the teaching profession, many of them will not reach the status of principals. This is a consequence of the many challenges they face in aspiring for this position. These challenges constitute both intrinsic and extrinsic barriers to their development. However, it is necessary for our society to realise that that women managers are not only as capable as male managers, they are frequently better (3). In the light of this, this study calls for the removal of barriers that lead to the under-utilisation of the skills and talents of women educators. It also calls for the provision of support from all stakeholders in the development of women. Furthermore, it calls for management development programmes for women so that they can realise their potential and make a significant contribution to school leadership.

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