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EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN EDUCATORS IN LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AT SEKWAI HIGH SCHOOL (ENHLANZENI REGION)

Nandi Shongwe

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management at the University of Witwatersrand, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Management (in the field of Public and Development Management).

October 2011

ABSTRACT

The main focus of this report is to draw attention to the experiences of women educators in leadership positions in the high schools of Ehlanzeni Region. The aim of the study is to understand why there is less representation of women educators in the high schools of Ehlanzeni Region who are in the leadership positions. Following qualitative research three women educators who are in leadership positions were interviewed so as to get answers though getting insight into their experiences. The secondary data that was collected shows evidence of gender imbalances in leadership positions in the region, the total number of women leaders in the region, 305 women against 556 men in positions of leadership.

The study shows that women in high school leadership of Ehlanzeni are still experiencing challenges of resistance mainly from men, stereotype practices and they strongly feel that they are not given a fair chance to prove themselves as leaders because most of the top structures that take decisions are still dominated by men. The study also reveals that women in leadership enjoy their roles and responsibilities because they believe they are doing a great job as leaders and as women.

The study recommends that Ehlanzeni region should have gender-balanced decision making structures and establish mentorship programmes that will empower and mentor women educators. These programmes are believed to make women feel encouraged and have interest to participate in leadership positions and also to get the necessary support they might need as leaders.

DECLARATION

I, Nandi Olgah Shongwe, declare that this report is my own unaided work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Management (in the field of Public and Development Management) in the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University.

_____ _____

DEDICATIONS

This research report is dedicated to my late father Solomon Shongwe who was very passionate about education, who went an extra mile to make sure that we received the best education.

My son Mpilenhle Nkambule, who is the reason I did this programme in order to better our lives.

To all the women who are still aspiring to be in leadership and those in leadership positions.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

All the Glory goes to the Almighty God, who made it possible for me to start and complete this programme.

Special thanks go to my supervisor Dr. Hora'cio Zandamela, thank you for your time, patience, advices and critiques.

Special thanks go to the three ladies who participated in this study: Ruth, Gladys and Charlotte.

My elder sister Nokukhanya Shongwe, and friend Kieron Crawley thank you guys for welcoming me into your lives and the support you gave me is much appreciated, stay blessed.

Lideck Mthunywa, thank you for making me aware of this programme, your support and courageous spirit is much appreciated.

To my family, thank you for your understanding and your support. Sylvia my sister, thank you for your undivided support, you have been there for me in every step of the way**,** the Almighty will greatly reward you.

To my friends: Patience, Thandi, Nontobeko, Magdaline, Mdu (Nomsa), Madala, Kesentseng, Amber, Patience Mkhonto, Martin, Shirley and sis Nelly.

ABBREVIATION LIST

DoE = Department of Education

SMT = School Management Team

HoD = Head of Department

SCMT = Sabie Circuit Management Team

CGEA = Commission on Gender Equity Act

EEA = Employment Equity Act

GEE = Gender Equality in Education

GETT = Gender Equity Task Team

SASA = South African Schools Act

HEDCOM = Heads of Education Departmental Committee

GEE = Gender Equity in Education

GEU = Gender Equity Unit

GDP = Growth Domestic Product

SCSC = Sabie Circuit Short-listing Committee

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

Despite the world's outcry for gender equality, women are still under-represented in leadership positions and subjected to various forms of discrimination at work, Shakeshaft (1989). Various studies have been conducted in the past on why women are under-represented in various leadership positions. The relevant literature to this study has also shown these few women in leadership positions work through these challenges, obtained the leadership positions, perceive themselves and how they are perceived by others.

There has been a lot of controversy as to whether female leaders use the same style of management or they use different management styles from men. Shakeshaft (1989), Restine (1993) and Alder (1993), argue that female managers have a common style of management characterized by qualities such as: collaboration, sensitivity, politeness, participative decision making, which reflects female character traits. On the other hand, other researchers such as Genovese (1993), Koziara, Moscow and Tanner (1987), argue that there is no difference in terms of management style between men and women.

As a researcher, I would agree with the scholars that argue that: there is a difference in terms of management styles between men and women. Women are not homogeneous instead they are individuals who have been exposed to different influences through the type of education they received, the manner in which they were raised and the kind of environment they were exposed to in their societies. These influences have shaped their characters and their way of perceiving the world in various ways, therefore they are more likely to approach management differently to the way in which men approach management.

1.2. Background to the study

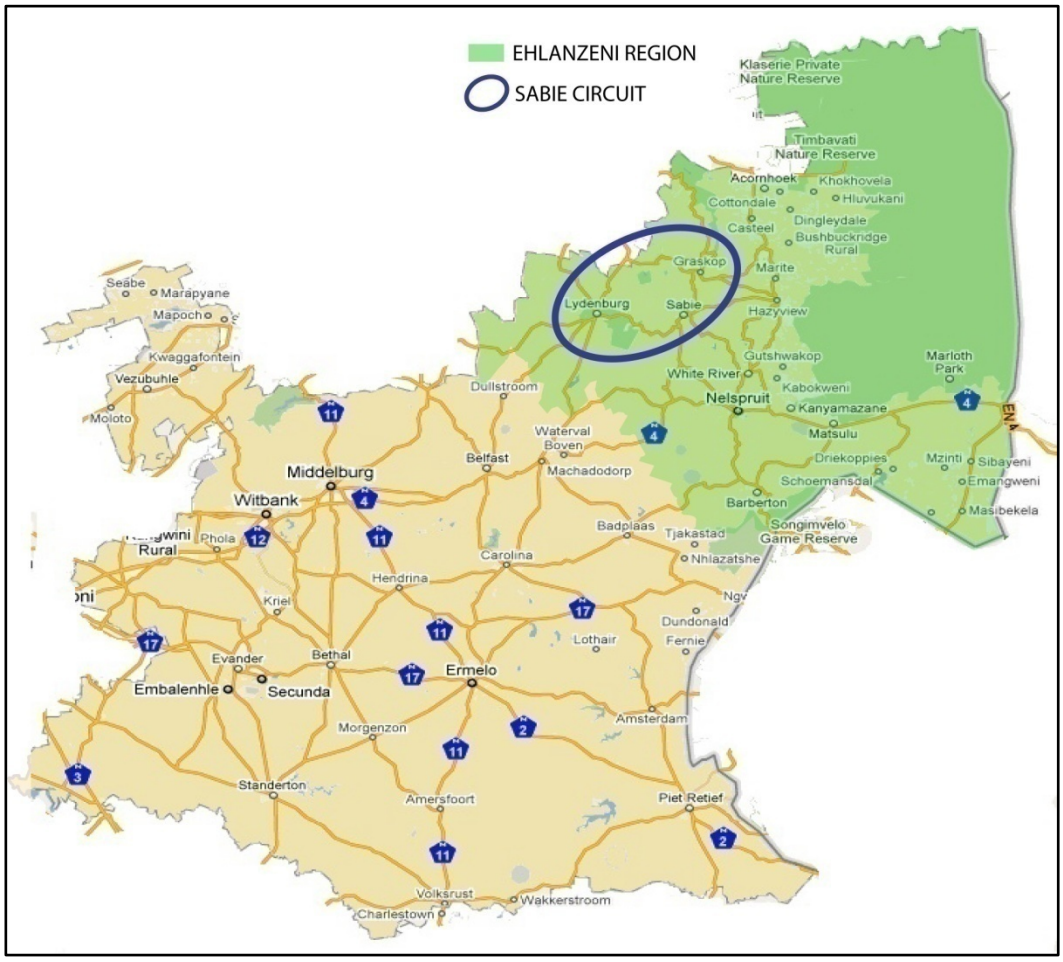
The focus of this study is within the Department of Education (DoE) in Ehlanzeni Region, which is one of the regions found in Mpumalanga Province. The study's area of focus is about the experiences of women educators in leadership positions at the 'public' high schools of the region. Ehlanzeni Region is still experiencing low participation of female educators in leadership positions and this study is an attempt to establish the experiences of female educators who are in leadership positions or in the School Management Team (SMT).

The study has focused in one of the schools called Sekwai High School, and the researcher, through the experiences shared by the three women who were interviewed has established why there is low participation of females in leadership positions in the high schools of the region. In the study interviews were used as a technique to collect the necessary data from the female educators who are in leadership positions. Secondary data that was gathered from Ehlanzeni regional office and Sabie circuit office gave more insight to the background of this study. The leadership positions this study focused on are: the female principals, female deputy principals and the Heads of Department (HoDs).

1.3. Background on Ehlanzeni Region

Ehlanzeni region is one of the four regions found in the Lowveld of Mpumalanga Province (see map1). The four regions of the province are: Bohlabela region, Ehlanzeni region, Nkangala region and Gert Sibande Region. Since the establishment of regions in 1994 at the birth of democracy, Ehlanzeni Region had been led by males. The majority of the people found in the region are mainly Swazi speaking people and there are quite a number of Nguni speaking people in Ehlanzeni region.

MAP1: EHLANZENI REGION



Source: image retrieved and modified from http://www.maps.google.co.za (retrieved, 28 March 2011)

Ehlanzeni Region is made up of 15 circuits (see table 1, p. 33); females are leading only four. The total number of public schools in the region is 407 for both primary and secondary schools. From the 407 schools, only 151 are high schools and 28 of them have women as principals, (see table 1, p. 33). The gender distribution for the SMT members in the high schools of Ehlanzeni region is shown in (table 1, p. 33) which clearly illustrates that more males still occupy most of the leadership positions in the high schools of the region. In summary, Ehlanzeni region as a whole has only 305 women and 556 men who are in leadership positions at the high schools of the region, (Jacky, telephone interview, 20 August 2010).

1.4. Background on Sabie Circuit

Sabie circuit is one of the 15 circuits of Ehlanzeni Region which has its offices located in a small town called Graskop that lies is 90km from Nelspruit, the capital city of Mpumalanga Province. The circuit has a history of only males as circuit managers since the day of its inception. There are only 9 high schools and 22 primary schools in the circuit. From the 9 high schools found in the circuit, only 3 of them have women principals, and with no female deputy. It is interesting to note from Table 2 and Table 3 on page 34, which clearly shows that Sabie circuit does not have any woman as a deputy principal, (Shirley, telephone communication, 21 August 2010).

Table 3 (p. 34), illustrates the total number of the Sabie Circuit Management Team (SCMT) of the nine high schools found in the circuit and it summarizes the figures in Table 2 and these figures in Table 3 bear testimony that there is under-presentation of women in leadership positions in the circuit. The data in Table 3 on page 34 shows that only 11 women are in the SCMT and 23 men.

1.5. Gender related Policies

In the preamble of the Commission on Gender Equity Act (CGEA), 1996 it is stated that “the Constitution provides that the objective of the CGEA, 1996 shall be to promote, advice and to make recommendations to Parliament and to any other legislature with regards to laws and proposed legislation that affect gender equality and the status of women”. The Employment Equity Act (EEA), 1998 states that its purpose is “to achieve equity in the workplace by: a) promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discriminations. b) Implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated group, in order to ensure their equitable representation to all occupational categories and levels in the workforce”.

From personal observations as a South African citizen, before 1994 the women in South African were unfairly treated in the employment world. They experienced many barriers when trying to develop themselves and step into leadership positions in the work place. In 1994, South Africa experienced transformation with regards to the type of government which became a democratic government. The shift from the then 'Apartheid Government' to the 'Democratic Government' directed the democratic government to formulate a number of legislations which were meant to correct the status of women in the workplace, this came about in order to deal with matters related to gender inequality.

1.5.1. Gender Equality in Education

The Democratic Government of South Africa recognized women have been subordinated throughout their lives and there is a need to take appropriate measures to ensure gender equality. The DoE's report on Gender Equality in Education (GEE) of 1998 reports that in 1996, the Gender Equity Task Team (GETT) was appointed and the term of reference of the GETT is "to investigate and advise the Department of Education of the establishment of the permanent Gender Equity Unit in the Department in cooperation with the Provincial Departments of Education, through the Heads of the Education Departmental Committee (HEDCOM)".

The Gender Equity Unit (GEU), advises the Director General on all aspects of gender equity in the education system, and two of these aspects are to: a) identify means of correcting gender imbalances, b) propose affirmative action strategies for increasing the representation of women in professional leadership and management positions and increasing the influence of women leaders.

The Gender Equity Unit in Education has a mission that covers three major concerns which are a) "to mainstream gender in all educational functions, b) to build capacity among stakeholders to implement gender

equity policy and programmes, c) to reduce the incidence of sex based and gender based violence and harassment in the education system as a whole". One of the major priorities of the Gender Equity Directorate is "to facilitate the establishment of appropriate structures at national and provincial level to mainstream gender in all educational functions. Mainstreaming gender means that everybody should take the responsibility for ensuring that there is gender equity in all policy, programs, practices and procedures in each directorate", GEE (1998).

In 1994, South Africa experienced transformation with regards to the type of government which became a democratic government. The shift from the then 'Apartheid government' to the 'Democratic government' directed the democratic government to formulate a number of legislations which were meant to correct the status of women in the workplace, this came about in order to deal with matters related to gender inequality.

Despite the world's outcry for gender equality, women are still under-represented in leadership positions and subjected to various forms of discrimination at work, Shakeshaft (1998). This study aims to establish why there is still under-representation of women in leadership positions in the high schools of Ehlanzeni Region.

1.6. Problem Statement

Few women in leadership positions (principals, deputy principals and Heads of Departments (HoD's) represent high schools of Ehlanzeni region. In the whole Ehlanzeni Region, there are only 305 women and 556 men who are in leadership positions of high schools (see table 1, p. 33); these figures show evidence of gender imbalance in the leadership positions with regards to the female representation in the high schools of the region, (Jacky, telephonic Interview, 20 August 2010).

Much research has been conducted with regards to experiences of women in leadership positions and Parsadh (2001) is one of the researchers who conducted a study that is closely related to this study's topic, however little

is known as to why there is still low participation of women educators in leadership positions in Ehlanzeni Region. Therefore, there is a great need for research in order to establish why there is still low women participation in leadership positions in the region for the last two years (2009 to 2010).

1.7. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to establish the experiences of female educators in leadership positions and the researcher believes that through having an insight of their experiences, there will be an understanding of why there are still fewer women participants in leadership position in the high schools of Ehlanzeni region.

This study aims to gain a better understanding of why there is still low participation of women in leadership positions in high schools of Ehlanzeni region. Based on the responses from the interviewees, the study further aims to come up with recommendations that will help to remedy the situation of low female participation in leadership positions in the high schools of Ehlanzeni Region.

The level of this research that has been chosen for this study **is** descriptive, the primary purpose of descriptive research is to use words to portray a picture and to present a profile of something or a step by step way of asking questions like: who, when, where and how as Neuman (2003) states.

1.8. Research Questions

According to Badenhorst (2007, p. 25), “research questions unpack the research problem and also give the reader some idea of the scope of the project and indicate the size of the project and the area it will cover”.

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following research questions have been used to guide the study.

a) What are the cultural norms and practices that affect women's ability to participate in leadership positions?

b) What are the "dual roles" (mother and career woman) and responsibilities that affect women's ability to participate as leaders?

c) How the stereotypes in the community affect the perceptions of women participating in leadership positions?

d) How the different forms of resistance experienced by women in leadership affect their leadership roles?

1.9. Significance of the Study

The study **has been of** great significance in filling the knowledge gap and aimed to further give more insight as to why there is low participation of female educators in leadership positions in the high schools of Ehlanzeni Region. With this study it was hoped that it would further enhance the interest of academic researchers to conduct similar studies in the region with the future hope of seeing an increase of women educators participating in leadership positions and changing community's beliefs about women as leaders of institutions.

1.10. Outline of Chapters

Chapter One: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND, this chapter deals with the introduction to the research report, a background to the study, background of Ehlanzeni region, background of Sabie Circuit, the problem and purpose statement, research questions and the significance of the study.

Chapter Two: LITERATURE REVIEW. This chapter consists of definition of concepts, international perspective, barriers to women participating in leadership positions.

Chapter Three: RESEARCH METHODS. This chapter covers research methods, research approach, research design, data collection, sampling, ethical considerations and limitations.

Chapter Four: DATA PRESENTATION. This chapter consists of the presentation of the data that was collected for the study through interviews.

Chapter Five: DATA ANALYSIS. The chapter reflects on the interpretation of data which bring in the data from the respondents, the literature and the voice of the researcher.

Chapter Six: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS. This is the last chapter of the research report which presents the conclusion of the study based on the findings and the recommendations

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the issues that have been identified as experiences affecting women educators as leaders of schools. It argues that women educators are still experiencing some kind barriers when it comes to their participation in leadership positions. These types of barriers: cultural norms and practices, gender as a social construct, stereotypes and the dual roles and responsibilities somehow contributes to the low participation of women in leadership positions. The aim of literature review is to provide a theoretical background to the study.

The first section of this chapter discusses the key concepts and their definitions, as these concepts are relevant to the study. These concepts are being used in the debates and different meanings are attached to them as it is important to understand the meaning of the concept used in the study. The second section of the chapter discusses the international perspective with regards to gender inequalities. The last section discusses the barriers to women participation in leadership positions.

2.2. Definition of concepts

a) Participation

Ozga (1993) defines “participation” as the will and motivation to take part in any activity and he further says the will and the motivation should first be felt from within or internally and when the two have been realized then one may act or take part.

b) Leadership

Kotter (2002, p. 64) defines leadership as “the process of directing the behaviour of others towards the accomplishment of certain objectives which further involves taking the lead in bridging the gap between formulating plans and reaching objectives in other words translating plans

into reality". He further adds that "it involves elements such as influencing people, giving orders, motivating people, managing conflict and communicating with subordinates". In this instance the principal ship position is referred to as a "leadership position".

c) Gender

Gender is understood as "a way in which women and men are socially constructed from birth throughout their lives by the institutions of family, civil society and state to adopt female and male identities" Wolpe, Quinlan and Martinez, (1997, p. 269). Wolpe, *et.al*., (1997, p. 270) further say that "gender equity is concerned with the promotion and equal opportunity and fair treatment for men and women in the personal, social, cultural, political and economic arenas".

This entails meeting the needs of both men and women in order for them to: a) Compete in a formal and informal labour market. b) Participate fully in civil society. c) Fulfil the familial roles adequately without being discriminated against because of their gender, Wolpe, *et. al., (1997).* With regards to what Wolpe, et al., (1997) say and looking at the situation at Ehlanzeni regions' gender distribution in the leadership positions of high schools (see table 2), this shows that there is still a greater need for more female educators to participate in such positions. The most interesting issue with this study is to establish why there is still under-representation of women in leadership positions.

d) Public schools

According to the South African Schools Act (SASA), 1996 "a public school may be an ordinary public school or public school for learners with special education needs".

e) Principal

SASA, 1996 states that a principal is "an educator appointed or acting as the head of a school".

f) Head of Department

According to SASA, 1996 an HOD is “the head of the education department”.

g) Educator

The Employers Employment Act, 1994 states that an educator is “any person, who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who provides professional education services”.

2.3. International Perspective

Research shows that despite the world’s outcry for gender equality, women are still under-represented in senior leadership or management positions (Shakeshaft, 1989). This state of affair has been attributed to both internal and external barriers of women Shakeshaft, (1989). Women are believed to posses internal barriers that prevent them from advancing. Socialization and sex stereotyping are viewed as a guiding force behind all their behaviour Restine, (1993); Shakeshaft, (1989) and Cameroon, (1988). This perspective originates from a social paradigm which “blames the victim for her lack of achievement” Restine, (1993, p. 17). She further maintains that women’s under-representation is the result of their external barriers, that is an organizational structure which shapes the behaviour of its members, so the “psychological makeup of individuals lies not in the structure and operation of individuals” Restine, (1993, p. 17). But some researchers argue that internal barriers as an explanation for women’s perceived lack of motivation are inadequate.

Shakeshaft, (1989, p. 10) stresses that “it is not the woman’s psyche that is at fault that needs changing, but the social structure of society which is the root cause of inequality”. Restine, (1993, p. 20), supports Shakeshaft’s point and she emphasizes that internal barriers are only a camouflage for deeper societal roadblocks to women’s advancement”.

She further explains that by accepting the fact that inequalities towards women occur because of some lack of ability or action so we are forced

not to look anywhere for explanation or to question the concepts that conclude that the victim is at fault.

One does not share the view that women posses internal barriers or weaknesses such as low self-esteem, lack of confidence, lack of motivation and inadequacy which prevent them from being promoted as these weaknesses are not biological but derive from the way women have been socialized in their communities and in their work places. One will not agree with the perspective that originates from the psychological paradigm which "blames the victim for her lack of achievement", Restine, (1993, p. 17). One agrees with researchers who argue that it is the social structures of societies that are the root cause of inequality and need to be redesigned but not the women's psyche which is at fault and needs to be changed.

2.4. Barriers to women participating in leadership positions

Considering the work of different scholars, there are a lot of identified barriers that are believed to be preventing women from advancing to leadership positions. Some of the work from different scholars shows that at times when women have advanced into high posts, they still experience some difficulties. Some of the barriers the study deals with in this report are: cultural norms and practices, gender as a social construct, stereotypes and dual-roles.

2.4.1. Cultural norms and practices

According to Dines (1993, p. 21) "women who have gained academic or professional position, frequently seem to face cultural barriers in the form of their own internalized view of their roles and the expectations others have of them". Dines (1993, p. 21) further maintains that "these cultural barriers are mainly attributed to their dual responsibilities as wives, mothers and their professional status and responsibilities". He further refers to what is perceived as 'covert' and 'cloning' practices in promotion procedures to education management position.

Dines *(*1993*,* p. 21*)* maintains that *"*although some women in education institutions may have higher qualifications and more experience than some of the men, these women may be 'covertly' removed from consideration from promotion because they are women". It is also perceived by some professional women who apply for management posts, those men that are part of the interviewing and selection panels, often prefer to appoint a man, rather than any of the women applicants, who may have higher qualifications or more experience than the male applicants.

One fully agrees with Dines (1993) when he maintains that *"*although some women in education institutions may have higher qualifications and more experience than some of the men, these women may be 'covertly' removed from consideration from promotion because they are women".

2.4.2. Gender as a social construct

According to Neveill and Pitner (in Ozga, 1993, p. 11) men as the dominant group in their higher structures and top positions within our complex society also have evolved their own ethos and practices within the work environment. Their conceptual frame of reference towards the authoritative and aggressive stance to leadership has become a norm in schools and is generally cosseted by the broader community.

Shakeshaft (1989, pp. 9-11) maintains that after an interview for promotion to a leadership position most women are informed that the competent candidate was appointed, and in most instances a man is the competent candidate. According to Shakeshaft (1989, pp. 9-11) this implies that women candidates are not competent, and this perspective results in the devaluation of women's leadership styles in the work environment. Shakeshaft (1989, p. 95) in his research found that *'*Androcentricism', which means *"*a male-centred view and shaping of the world in which a hierarchy of male status exists*"*, is the core barrier to the promotion of women to leadership positions in the workplace. He further says that transforming the mindset of global societies and cultures from past

misconceptions of gender related perspectives, and to what actually constitutes leadership and task performance in the work environment, therefore constitutes a conceptual challenge for the third millennium.

It is evident in Ehlanzeni region with the distribution of gender in the promotional posts that males are still dominating as leaders in high schools. Gray 1987 (in Bennet, *et al.,* 1992, p. 34) maintains that for schools to become institutions of effective and efficient teaching and learning environments, for both educators and learners, the candidates promoted to principal posts are pivotal to achieving the educational goals of schools. Gray, 1987 (in Bennet, et al., 1992, p.34) adds that the issue of gender as socially constructed and what constitutes effective leadership in schools has no sound intellectual argument for or against men or women. Gray, 1987 (in Bennet, *et al.*, 1992, pp.34) supports the idea of a 'fully androgynous duality' in the management of schools, that is the celebration of the leadership characteristics of both men and women.

According to Mangena (1996), African societies historically developed separate but complementary male and female spheres, however, with urbanization and modernization, the separation deepened, women were marginalized further and their control over recourses and other activities was eroded. He further argues that in many Southern African countries, women lose their individual rights upon marriage and widows are deprived of matrimonial property. He further calls on to what he refers to as "An Empowerment Approach to Development in Southern Africa" which aims at: recognizing that all developmental efforts must include women as equal partners. It is believed that a paradigm shift away from a more gender-related perspective to leadership in the school environment, to an equity-related perspective based on qualifications, experience and leadership skills training of both men and women educators is the way forward.

2.4.3. Stereotypes

Murphy and Hallinger (in Bennet, *et al*., 1992, p. 43) maintains that some men believe that women lack self-confidence in performing managerial

tasks in the work environment, primarily because women in general prefer to adopt a more democratic and collegial leadership stance, rather than the assertive and aggressive leadership norm adopted by men in leadership positions in the workplace. Women are largely perceived by the greater society in a number of stereotyped ways. Ozga (1993) highlights that styles of dress and hairstyles often causes unnecessary comments from both men and women. He further says that these comments at times cause some embarrassment, often leading to additional stress to the women.

Malan and Smit (2001) believe that the philosophical educational base from the family is very key to any child's life and if it is not done properly it may lead to stereotypes. Malan and Smit (2001, p. 74), maintain that "as a child a human being is initially exposed to attitudes and values offered by her or his parents as part of family life. What the family has to offer is not an once-off exercise, but the process of internalizing knowledge, beliefs, assumptions, and feelings etc. over many years". They further argue that the kind of values the family provides, as well as the success with which these values are transferred from parents to child is largely the result of the quality of the relationship between them. Malan and Smit (2001), further assert that parents should always teach sound values which are free from stereotypes and the child's acceptance and eventual internalization of such values are determined by parents ability to practice what they preach to their children and to serve as credible role models and to manage the child's emotional development with sensitivity and care.

Malan and Smit (2001), further say that the quality of parent-child relationship is important in the child's early stages as the parents lay the foundations of the child's knowledge. "The adequacy and competency of this base is not only determined by the parents, but is also affected by the child's exposure to other influences in the home, particularly from the electrical media, TV programmes, etc., this acquired knowledge then

forms the child's frame of reference which allows him/her to understand and interpret his/her outer world and this will play a vital role how the child would think and behave", Malan and Smit (2001, p. 67).

2.4.4. The dual roles and responsibilities

The personal life of women in leadership, which is to some extent sanctioned and regulated by public opinion, has an inextricable effect on their work. In many or in all societies women are expected to be good home makers and model teachers. It is crucial to look at the effect of change in schools on the lives of women leaders; how they regard their competitive role in their working environment and how they find balance between their family duties and their professional ambitions. It would be helpful for this study to gain an understanding of their roles and responsibilities as working wives and mothers, single parents and working mothers and the ways of adapting and coping realistically with the complexities of their roles. The public self and the private self of a woman in leadership are often interconnected and can never be separated. The connection between the individual's life inside and outside of school influences behaviour, attitude and the level of commitment and the energy that is directed to the one or the other.

Evetts (1987), in his research about the career strategies of married women who became primary school principals in England, found that their family responsibilities were always of fundamental importance to them and determined to a great extent their career decisions. The accounts of married women head teachers participating in that study largely confirmed these findings. Even when they became head teachers they had to meet family and work commitments and always had to strike a balance on both for the rest of their working lives. One believes it is difficult to imagine unless one has experienced it, the endless improvising, creative and intellectual holding back that for some women accompany the attempt to combine the emotional and physical demands of parenthood and the challenges at work.

One of the studies was conducted by Nagan (1999), and these were some of the different findings from different women who participated in the study: Some of them felt that the increased demands of the contemporary school leadership eroded the time available to be with their families and they expressed feeling of guilt in response to balancing the pressure of balancing home and school life. Others expressed the concept that having a supportive partner who assisted with home responsibilities eased but did not diminished such feelings of guilt. For the women head teachers who commented on this issue there was a sharper "sense of the conflict between the personal and professional and the sense that a double or cumulative sense of responsibilities existed which was becoming impossible to sustain" Grace (1995, p. 185). "There was an assumption that it was somehow possible to achieve successful work performance, successful academic career, successful marriage and motherhood and yet the reality was that each one of them from time to time was tested and each has its own demands", Ozga (1993, p. 77).

Another view that came from Nagan's (1999) study was that some head teachers who were single, widowed or divorced indicated that they are able to cope with school pressures because family responsibilities did not place demands on them. To support this, one respondent in the study conducted by Nagan (1999) said that she was widowed in 1998 and had no children and that made life much easier for her to be a dedicated career woman without any family responsibilities putting pressure on her profession. Nagan (1999, p. 63), said "balancing home and school is problematic for some single parents, for some women leaders the emotion and feeling which are central to human interactions are left unacknowledged and in some cases even denied. The complexity of life in schools and the competing demands of their professional and personal life give rise to variety of emotions". He further says that "some women leader's private agony and pain could not be seen within the school grounds. This private dimension was not something that was talked about

or even acknowledged publicly, it was a case of never show that you couldn't cope".

"When women are heavily involved in their careers then strain in their partnership can result, unless realization of the discrepancy and the acknowledge of the double standard as it relates to career dedication enable couples to resolve such conflicts, a balancing strategy enables couples to resolve such conflicts", Evans (1994, p. 66). Nagan (1999), argues that balancing may also require important elements of career postponement and modification by one or both partners if such a strategy is to succeed, it is more often that the female would postpone or modify behaviour rather than the male and a balancing strategy might be easy when partners are in different careers. He further says that it is common that a wife would be the one to support their husband's careers and it is very rare that the husband to support the wife's career unless the husband is unemployed.

Davies (2003, p. 69) states that "we should look carefully at the old concepts of 'dual roles' for women, while not denying the tension and guilt associated with simultaneously managing a home and a paid job, the dual roles for women has become a form of 'victim analysis' and the solution to family commitments is not to see them as 'interference', but to begin to view them as positive attributes in terms of learning management skills".

The literature review is important in helping the researcher to understand the context of the study and it has provided more insight about the issues that contribute to the low participation of women in leadership positions. It is clear from the literature that issues like: cultural norms and practices, gender as social construct and stereotypes just to mention a few are impacting negatively on women's participation in leadership positions

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the method that was used during the process of data collection. It presents the research approach and describes the design of the study. It further discusses the two main types of data that was collected being the secondary and primary data, how it has been collected and how sampling has been made. This chapter concludes by discussing the validity, reliability, limitations and ethical considerations.

3.2. Research Approach

The study has used the qualitative approach because in-depth and rich information is expected from the informants. The study followed the descriptive research dimension and semi-structured interviews with open ended questions have been used. Primary and secondary data have been used to collect information for the study.

3.2.1. Qualitative Research

Merriam (1998, p.37) defines a qualitative research approach as a "research that uses verbal or gustatory data and descriptive narratives such as: field notes transcriptions, audio or video recordings, artefacts and other written recordings". She further argues that "qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed that is how they make sense of their world and their experiences they have in the world". Mouton (2002, p32) argues that "qualitative research is an approach that produces social explanations to intellectual puzzle at the end or during the research process". Creswell (2003), states that qualitative research uses multiples that are interactive and humanistic. Leedy and Ormrod, (2005) define qualitative methodology as a methodology which allows the researcher to 'get close to the data' thereby developing the analytical, conceptual and categorical components and explanation from the data itself.

The reason for choosing qualitative method for this study is because data will be collected using one-on-one interviews in order to gather an in-depth understanding of the women's experiences. The paradigm of the school of thought for this study is mainly interpretive social science. This paradigm emphasis is on the meaningful social actions, socially constructed meaning and relativism Neuman (2003). He further says that people operate on the basis of untested assumptions and taken for granted knowledge about others and activities around them.

This study requires the application of the qualitative approach because the study is fundamentally interpretive and the researcher needs to interpret the data. This includes developing a description of an individual or settings, analyses data for themes and categories and finally makes an interpretation or draws conclusions, stating the lessons learned and asking further questions (Creswell, 2003). There is a great need in this study to have an in-depth understanding as to why there is low participation of female educators in high schools of Ehlanzeni region, and this has been done in a form of semi-structured interviews.

3.2.2 Feminist Approach

Another approach that has been used for this study is the feminist theory. A female-defined paradigm is an essential component for research on women in educational leadership. The study has taken into account that educational leadership as a discipline borrows from the social sciences and forms of organizational theory and research. Feminist researchers according to Weiler (1990, p. 58), "begin their investigation of the social world from a grounded position in their own subjective objection". It centralizes women's subjective experiences and the significance of everyday life both private and public.

Weiler (1990, p. 62), believes that "focusing on the everyday world reveals the ways in which larger forces, both ideological and material, place limits on conditions on our actions". Dueli- Klein (1983, p. 94) refers to this

method as “conscious subjectivity in which both observer and observed are acknowledged and validated”. This type of research is characterized by its political commitment to change the position of women and thus to changing society.

Feminist research puts women at the centre of the discourse and not as ‘the other’ in relation to men. Stanley and Wise (1993), believe that emotions and involvement is a central factor in locating and describing women’s experiences, whilst Scott (1985), maintains that valid feminist research has caused researchers to cut across the usual methodological boundaries between personal experiences, feelings and needs of the researchers. Shakeshaft (1989, p. 26), feels “it must explore the situation in order to legitimize it as seen from the eyes of a woman. Such research is a way of seeing the world without using a yardstick that has been the measure of men in the world”.

3.3. Research design

A simple interpretive study will be the form of the research design in this study. Creswell (2003), highlights that this is the most efficient means of collecting emotional and factual information.

Walker (1985) points out its advantages to be: the familiarity of the interviewees to an interview structure, the ability to discuss complex issues and its adaptive characteristics. He further adds that its disadvantages are “the impact of the researcher in this process, confidentiality concerns of the respondents and the possibility of differing interpretations of questions being asked by the researcher to the respondents during the interview process”, Walker (1985, p. 36).

3.4. Data collection

The data collection stage in the study is very crucial because the collected data has informed the conclusions that were made for the study in order to answer the research questions that were guiding the study in terms of data

collection. Both primary and secondary data have been used in order to get the relevant information for the study.

3.4.1. Primary Data

Primary data has been collected through in-depth interviews with female educators who are in the schools management team. The interviews were done on two different dates: 11/01/2011, on this day the principal (Ruth) and one HOD (Gladys) were interviewed. The second date for the interviews was the 12/01/2011 where the second HOD (Charlotte) was interviewed. These interviews took place in the premises of the school, Sekwai High School. It is important to note that the respondents agreed to have their real names used in the study.

Neuman (2006, p. 305) defines interviews as “a short term, secondary interaction between two strangers with explicit purpose of one person obtaining specific information from the other”. Manion (1980, p. 271) describes interviews as a “two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for a specific purpose of obtaining research relevant information”. Creswell (2003) says that interviews provide the best opportunity for the respondents to share information in a comfortable and familiar manner.

The advantages of semi-structured interviews is that they give allowance to an adaptive quality and the researcher can probe more should the need arise to do so Creswell (2003). He further says that the disadvantages of semi-structured interviews is that there may be concerns with regards to confidentiality and the reluctance to share sensitive opinions and at times the respondents might not understand the questions clearly. Some of the questions to be asked will be **behavioural** questions as it is important for the researcher to establish the kinds of behaviours the female leaders of the school will display in certain circumstances.

Interviews have been conducted at Sekwayi High school and only to the female educators who are members of the School Management Team

(SMT). Only three interviews were conducted for there are only three female educators who are SMT members of the school. The leadership positions occupied by the female educators at the school are: the principal ship and two departmental head (HOD's).

At the time of the study the researcher used several means of communications (e-mails and telephone) in order to get the necessary additional data. The secretary to the Regional Manager (Jacky Venter) and the Sabie circuit administrator, Shirley, were the two main people that helped the researcher to gather information about the distribution of educators in leadership positions in the high schools in the region and in the circuits. Also two visits were done, one to the office of the Regional secretary (05 January 2011), and the other to the Sabie Circuit office which is located in Graskop on the (07 January 2011). These visits, telephone calls and e-mailing communications were done so that the researcher could gather the relevant information needed for the study. The researcher had to rely on the information given from the two offices and the challenge with such data is that neither office had available documents about the gender distribution of the management in the circuits and in schools. This information had to be gathered from different offices and units and bits and pieces of it were gathered on several occasions.

This kind of data has been gathered from the staff enrolment documents of the schools and the regional staff enrolment documents, in order to be more informed on the trends of women participation in the leadership positions as from 2009-2010. The advantage of this type of data is that it enables a researcher to obtain the language and words of participants and the disadvantages of it is that there may be protected information that will not be made available for the public for private access Creswell (2003). From the way this data was collected, one may not be sure if it is an accurate data.

3.5. Sampling

Purposive sampling has been used in this study, Walliman (2001) states that purposive sampling is the one when the researcher selects what she or he thinks is “typical” sampling. This type of sampling is relevant for this study because the study focuses on only interviewing female educators who are in leadership positions at Sekwai High School. Only three female educators were interviewed who are members of the School Management Team (SMT) of Sekwai High School.

3.6. Validity

Hammersley (1993, p.73) defines validity as “the property of the measure that allows the researcher to ensure that the instrument measures what it is expected to measure”. Turney and Rob (1971, p.10) state that “validity is concerned with the meaning of what can be attained from a particular assessment”.

In this study the female educators who are in leadership positions at Sekwai High School had been interviewed using the same set of questions and the responses from the responded differ for each question. The data analysis from the study is valid only to the school from where the respondents are based and the findings will not be generalized to all the other schools in the region. To ensure validity, the researcher has interviewed the relevant people whom in this case are the female SMT members of Sekwayi High School.

3.7. Reliability

Hammersley (1993) regards reliability as the extent to which repetition of the study would result in same data and conclusion. Miller (1993) defines reliability as the findings should be independent of the unintended circumstances of the research. This study is concerned with perceptions, and perceptions can be both true and false, Hammersley (1993). To ensure reliability each respondent will be asked the same questions and the interviews will be semi-structured.

3.8. Limitations

It is important to note that each and every research comes with its own limitations. For the sake of the study to get more information it would have been very interesting to interview every female SMT member in the region and this would have provided a wider spectrum of their experiences and the findings would be generalized to the whole region. The study only aims to interview female SMT members in Sekwai High School, so the findings and recommendations of the study will only be valid to that specific school.

The initial plan for the collection of data was that the researcher would use a tape recorder during the interview sessions. What transpired during the interview sessions was different from the initial plan. During the interviews the three participants did not feel comfortable about the use of a tape recorder, so the recorder was not used during the interviews. Accessing official documents from the regional and circuit office was a challenge for the researcher because relevant documents that were of importance for this particular study were not available, eg. Gender distribution of educators in schools management.

Accessing official documents from both the region and the circuit offices was a challenge, so for the sake this study, one had to rely on the fragmented information that was given to the researcher by the secretaries of the two offices until the information was complete. Most of the times the secretaries had to rely on information given, at times telephonically by other units and schools. The two offices do not have official documents that speak to the gender distribution of educators in the leadership positions at schools and circuits.

3.9. Ethical considerations

Neumann (2003, p.129), states that “codes of ethics and other researchers provide guidance, but ethical conduct ultimately depends on the individual researcher, the researcher has a moral obligation to be ethical even when research subjects are unaware of or not concerned about ethics”.

In the process of this research the researcher was aware that it is important to first get permission from the different people, the following people were first contacted to get permission to conduct the study and to be able to access information that was needed for the study: regional manager, Sabie circuit manager, Sekwai High School principal and the three ladies that were to be interviewed. It is also important to make the purpose of the research known to all participants before one can start with the interviews and the researcher did that before the study was conducted.

The issue of anonymity is very important and sensitive when conducting research, the researcher asked permission from the participants if they were in agreement or not to have their real names used or not to reveal their real identity. The participants were happy to have their names not changed. The above issues were addressed by the researcher just before the interviews could start.

The researcher was also in full awareness with regards to the confidentiality of any information gathered in the study and the researcher discussed with the participants that the information will only be used for the study. With regards to the official documents that might be needed and received from the department and from the school, it is crucial to treat such documents only for the purpose of this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to present the data that was collected for the study. Two sets of data has been presented for this study, the first category of data is the one obtained from the two offices (the regional and the circuit offices), secondary data. This type of data gives insight about the number of educators in the schools and the gender distribution of the educators. The second category of data that has been presented is the one that was obtained through the one-on-one interviews; primary data. The three women who were interviewed were comfortable to have their real names used in the study. The presentation of the primary data from the interviews has been presented in two different formats: a) personal information and b) in-depth data.

In this report the collected data has been categorized according to themes and has been summarized, it has been presented according to the research questions that were guiding the interview questions. More other data from the interviews has been presented it was relevant for the study.

4.2. Data Presentation

4.2.1. Primary Data

This section presents the data that was collected from the two secretaries from the two offices (Jacky, telephonic interview, 19-20 August 2010) and (Shirley, telephonic interview 20 August 2010). The presented data is in a table format, which illustrates the Regional Management Team of Ehlanzeni (table 1). The second table shows the Sabie Circuit Management Team (table 2) and (table 3) illustrates the High School Leadership in the Sabie Circuit. As noted earlier that visits and telephone communications have been done in order to get the relevant data for the study.

TABLE 1: EHLANZENI REGIONAL MANAGEMENT TEAM (CIRCUITS AND SCHOOLS

CIRCUIT NAMES	TOTAL NO. OF SCHOOLS	MALE PRINCIPALS	FEMALE PRINCIPALS	MALE DEPUTY'S	FEMALE DEPUTY'S	MALE HOD'S	FEMALE HOD'S
BARBERTON	07	O6	01	08	02	11	15
INSIKAZI	12	09	03	06	03	27	14
KHULANGWANE	14	12	02	08	10	33	34
LUBOMBO	11	08	03	07	04	25	17
LYDENBURG	03	03	00	02	01	09	04
MALELANE	11	09	02	04	02	16	10
MBOMBELA	07	05	02	06	04	21	14
MGWENYA	12	12	00	08	07	34	18
NKOMAZI EAST	15	12	03	08	14	29	20
NKOMAZI WEST	13	09	04	08	07	26	12
NKULULEKO	05	05	00	04	03	13	13
SABIE	09	06	03	09	00	18	07
SIKHULILE	08	06	02	10	00	20	12
WHITE HAZY	14	12	02	10	03	33	23
WHITE RIVER	10	11	01	06	02	14	12
TOTALS	**151**	**123**	**28**	**104**	**62**	**329**	**215**

Source: Own (2011)

The above and the below tables (tables 1 and 2) shows that Ehlanzeni Region has 15 circuits and Sabie circuit only has 9 high schools, from the 9 high schools in the Sabie circuit only 3 schools have females as principals, only 8 female HoDs and no female deputy principal is found in the whole Sabie circuit.

TABLE 2: SABIE CIRCUIT MANAGEMENT TEAM (SCMT 2009-2010)

SCHOOLS	MALE PRINCIPALS	FEMALE PRINCIPALS	MALE DEPUTY'S	FEMALE DEPUTY'S	MALE HOD'S	FEMALE HOD'S
1) HLONG	01	00	01	00	01	01
2) KADISHI	01	00	00	00	01	01
3)LM KGANANE	01	00	01	00	01	00
4) MAKUKE	01	00	00	00	02	01
5)MEMEZILE	00	01	01	00	01	01
6)PANORAM	00	01	00	00	01	01
7)PILGRIMS REST CITY	01	00	01	00	01	00
8) SEKWAI	00	01	01	00	01	02
9) SYBRAND V/ NIEKERK	01	00	01	00	02	01
TOTALS	**06**	**03**	**06**	**00**	**11**	**08**

Source: Own (2011)

TABLE3: HIGH SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN THE SABIE CIRCUIT (2009-2010)

POSITION	TOTAL NUMBER OF MALES	TOTAL NUMBER OF FEMALES
Principals	06	03
Deputy principals	06	None
HOD's	11	08
TOTALS	**23**	**11**

Source: Own (2011)

Table 3, illustrates the gender distribution in the leadership positions of the Sabie circuit. The total number of educators in leadership positions at Sabie circuit is 44 and from the total, only 11 educators are females.

This kind of data has been gathered through one-on-one interviews between the researcher and the three women educators from the sampled school. The study made use of two categories of questions in the interview

schedule. The first category was about the informants' personal information and the second one was about the in-depth information. The following table, table 4 presents the personal information of the respondents that were interviewed. The following table, Table 4, represent the personal data of the three respondents that participated in the study.

4.2.2 Personal data

TABLE 4: Respondents' Personal Information

	RUTH	CHARLOTTE	GLADYS
POSITION	Principal	HOD	HOD
AGE BRACKET	35-40	40-45	50-60
NUMBER OF CHILDREN	One	One	Four
MARITAL STATUS	Single	Married	Married
YEARS OF TEACHING EXPERIENCE	16	21	26
YEARS OF LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE	09	06	15

Source: Own, 2011

4.2.3 Presentation of in-depth data (interviews)

The in-depth questions that were used in the interviews will be presented as summarized responses from the research questions as they were guiding the interview schedule. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are the cultural norms and practices that affect women's ability to participate in leadership positions?

According to Ruth, Gladys and Charlotte (interview, 11 and 12 January 2011), they were of the same view that there is some evidence of cultural norms and practices but these are slowly fading away. Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011) further added that most people are getting educated and moving towards being a modernized society where women are seen as equals to men as they are capable of taking up the jobs that were thought were fit for men. The cultural belief that says, for example;

> *"women cannot be superior to men and so as a woman it is not culturally fit to be heading men because at home a woman is expected to be submissive to men and that is also expected at the work place, that seems to have taken a different mind shift*", Ruth (11 January 2011).

Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011), also highlighted that previously in the Black culture women were not allowed to be educated because it was believed that she will get married and move away from home so it was seen as a waste of money to educate a woman because it was believed that she doesn't carry the name of the family because she will get married and bear kids for the other families that she is married to. She further said

> *"This kind of belief is not good at all in the current economy because things have changed and that is why I saw that it was important to educate all my four children so that they can be independent".*

She further mentioned that her two daughters are professional people, one is an attorney and the other is a social worker and she had always encouraged her children to get educated so that they can enjoy the economic freedom and get good paying jobs. Gladys (interview 11 January 2011) further said

> *"Where would I be if I was not educated and had no career since my husband died long time ago before any of my children went to tertiary?"*

Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011) shared her personal experience when she got married at an early age (20 years of age), her late

grandfather told her dad that he has made a mistake and wasted his money by educating her, during her 'lobola' negotiations her granddad demanded that they (the grooms family) pay all the expenses for educating her and fortunately her father did not buy what the granny was saying. She highlighted that the school's learner enrolment of is dominated by female learners which means that;

> *"There is a mind shift in the society about educating a girl child".* Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011).

Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011) argued that the few cultural norms and beliefs that still exist may not be attached to a majority but to a few individual and she further added that;

> *"In many families people no longer believe and practice the same cultures as before and people are too free to make their own choices".*

2. How are the 'dual-roles' (mother and career woman) and responsibilities affecting women's ability to participate as leaders?

Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011), said that she is fortunate that she has one child, a teenage girl and a supportive husband whom they are relating very well together so they understand and support her as a mother, wife and as a career woman and her daughter understands that sometimes she has to cook when she has to work till late and she never complains about helping her with some chores. Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011) further mentioned that;

> *"it is important to establish and maintain good relations and good communications with your family and your team members at work, make them understand what you are doing and faced with and that will make it easy for them to understand and support you".*

She added that as a career woman and a mother it is important to balance your life and have a good plan that will also accommodate both your family and work and she stressed that;

> *"Families are more sensitive and they must not feel neglected, after all my family comes first",* Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011*).*

She further added that if she had more than one child she was going to need extra help at home and she was to consider having a full time domestic helper to help with some of the domestic chores.

Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011), said that she was staying alone and her child stays with her mother so that gives her more time to be more of a career woman than a mother and the only time where she is with her child is during school holidays and when she has to attend to work matters she talks to her child first and she is an understanding child because she had always maintained an open and good relationship between the two of them. She concluded by saying that;

> *"At times when my child is here with me and I have to attend to my work matters I do that without stressing and the dual roles and responsibilities are not a problem to me because we have a good relationship with my child",* Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011).

However it is interesting to note that Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011) had a different experience from the others because she has four grown up children (two boys and two girls) and they are all not staying with her anymore and she is staying alone, so, for her the dual roles and responsibilities do not seem to be a problem because she feels that she is more of a career women than a mother although she is a mother biologically.

The three women's family members seem to play a very supportive role most of the time in their career and motherly lives, and also they understand that they are career women too, so they are not experiencing difficulties with being career women and mothers at the same time.

3. How the stereotypes in the community affect the perceptions of women to participate in leadership positions?

During the interviews, it was clear that few signs of stereotypes are still evident in the community and at the work place and this is what Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011) had to say;

> *"These stereotypes are still affecting some women negatively such that they are afraid to take up leadership positions".*

Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011) shared an experience that she had when she was applying for the principal ship position and she mentioned that when she personally handed her application to the circuit office and the circuit manager who is male was there to receive the application and he asked her if she was sure that she wanted to lead those troublesome educators and he further said that in that position she will cry everyday and her life will be miserable and that position needs a strong men. She said the comment from the circuit manager really disturbed her a lot and at the same time she was so determined that she wanted to prove him wrong and her interpretation of the circuit managers comment was that;

> *'Women are not strong to be leaders and leadership is only meant for strong men'.*

Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011) said at times at the school when people are to volunteer or to be nominated for certain tasks, in many occasions the male educators will mostly nominating women educators to do certain tasks and she said she is still not sure if they do that because they trust the nominated person who happens to be a woman to do the task well or maybe they do that because they still do not believe that women can do tasks better and she further said she wasn't sure maybe they nominate a woman because they want to find faults and want to capitalize on the faults. Some few examples of stereotypes that were highlighted during the interview sessions were these ones:

> *"women are too emotional, they are too sympathetic, they are not strong, and they cannot handle pressure and are not assertive enough to be leaders",* Ruth, Charlotte and Gladys (interview, 11-12 January 2011).

4. How are the different forms* of resistance *experienced by the women in leadership affecting their leadership roles?

Charlotte (interview,12 January 2011), Ruth and Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011), were in agreement that they were experiencing some form of resistance when it comes to delegating tasks and most of the resistance comes from the male counterparts and some women do resist at times.

Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011), highlighted that she experienced a lot of resistance especially during the time when she was appointed to be the principal of Sekwai and for the fact that she was coming from another school made things worse. She said that at first when she resumed office as a principal one male colleague had a problem of not participating and reporting to work during athletics time and she had to call him to her office and talk to him and as a result she had to instruct him to report everyday and to go to the grounds where everyone goes and the educator agreed and he never came to work for the next three days. Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011) further said that;

> *"I thought the educator was one of those men who won't take any instruction from any women because they think women are their subjects".*

She further added that when she came to Sekwai as a principal, most of the male educators and some females would not do what she asked them to do, in most cases they would say that they had lot of work to do and never had enough time to do what she asked them to do and she first found that very disturbing but she eventually learnt how to deal with such situations and now she was succeeding to handle the educators.

Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011) argued that some men resist your orders as a woman in order to frustrate you and when they see that you are frustrated they think you might want to give up and surrender your position and she said she was not a person who gives up very easily. She further said that;

"those men who like frustrating women should have seen by now that most women are not very quick to giving up on anything, they rather hold on even if it's difficult"

Charlotte said that she believed that men who like frustrating women are mainly the ones that are abusive to their wives at home and they see every woman as an object to be abused or they might have been brought up in abusive homes.

The two HOD's, Charlotte and Gladys were in agreement that at times they experience difficulties with most of the males educators who do not want to submit their work and mark schedules on time and they are always giving excuses and at times will submit incomplete work. They said they seem to be getting along well with the female educators; they try very hard to honour submission dates.

It is interesting to note that other interesting issues came out from the interviews and those issues are relevant to the study and they give more insight of what is happening on the ground and bring more light to bear on the women's experiences. The following questions were part of the interview schedules which brought more important and interesting issues that are relevant for the study, the questions and their responses are presented below which are part of the responses to the research questions.

5. If you were to be given another chance to be a school leader, would you take the same opportunity again?

Charlotte and Gladys (interview, 11 and 12 January 2011) had the same view about the above question raised. Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011) said she would be delighted to take the same job again because there are lots of challenges and said she was very pleased with her work as a leader and this is what she had to add;

"since I have started heading the Commerce department there is more order now instead of the chaos that it was in and the matric

> *results have improved a lot since I took over from Mr. Sono, I am a person who gets bored very easily so change is always good for me for it makes me to always stay alert, though it is not easy but I will definitely take it",* Charlotte (interview, January 2011).

Gladys (interview, (11 January 2011) said that she would take it because she enjoys to be in control and give people advises and guidance because as a leader people see you as someone whom they can rely on.

Ruth had a different response from the two ladies and this is what she had to say;

> *"No, I will not take it because I feel that the experience that I have already gained so far is enough and I will rather go for a much bigger challenge than being a school principal and there are other bigger institutions out there that need women like me to lead them, so I will rather go for a bigger challenge",* Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011).

6. According to your opinion do you think that women in the region are given fair opportunities to be leaders and why do you say so?

The three women Ruth, Charlotte and Gladys said that the region was not treating women fairly especially when it concerns promotions. This is what Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011) had to say;

> *"No, I don't think that women are given a fair chance because very few are still occupying leadership positions especially principal positions, even though most of them do qualify to be school leaders".*

She further added that most females are compromised by males even though the male may not be competent enough when compared to the women he was competing with and the stereotype that women cannot do things better still exist in some men's heads and in most of the cases one find that the interview panels are dominated by men.

Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011) pointing out that women in the region are not given a fair chance to be leaders and the numbers are a confirmation of unfair practices. She further said that:

> *"I happened to be in the Sabie Circuit Short-listing Committee (SCSC) when candidates are being short-listed to be interviewed for promotional positions one always find that most candidates to be short listed happen to be males and the committee is still dominated by male educators, so the males' influences on the decisions to be taken are dominating because they outnumber the women in the committee".*

She further said that she believes that once the SCSC is gender balanced things will change and more women will be considered in those positions because most women educators are well qualified for these positions.

Charlotte was also in agreement with Gladys, she said that women educators in the region are not given a fair chance to be leaders of schools because males are still dominating the senior positions.

7. In general, what do you think needs to be done in the region as a whole to have more women leaders being considered for leadership positions at schools?

The three women, Ruth, Gladys and Charlotte shared the same view and they are stressing that something has to be done to change the situation in the region; Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011) said that;

> *"the situation in the region doesn't favour women at all and it was not good at all when I brought my principal ship post application to the circuit office and the circuit manager saying to me that the position needs a strong man because the school has lots of challenges and it occurred to me that he doesn't believe that as a woman I can do a great job",*

She further said that she find it very discouraging if the people in the top management positions are having wrong attitudes towards women and are not being supportive to them.

Charlotte, (interview, 12 January 2011) expressed that in the region the gender equity policy is not implemented the way it should and it is high time that policies must be taken as guidelines to every process and if the policy was well implemented there would be a high number of women educators occupying leadership positions. She went on and added that

most of the men that are in leadership are still hanging on to their stereotypes beliefs about women and that has to change because most women have proven themselves to do a better job than men and she further argued that;

> *"Since I became the HOD in the commerce department there has been a great improvement especially in the results of the learners".* Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011).

Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011) shared her experiences as a member of the Sabie Circuit Short-listing Committee (SCSC) that the circuit and the region need to be gender sensitive when they are forming committees that are promising to bring change in the gender equity status of the region, for an example the SCSC which is part of the Ehlanzeni region and she is a member of the committee which is dominated by men and she further said that;

> *"More women must be drawn in to such committees and also the interviews panels must be gender balanced". Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011).*

8. What would be your word of advice to other women educators who are still aspiring to be leaders of high schools?

Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011) had this to say;

> *"Nothing is impossible, focus and know what you want and you learn in the process. Have a plan and a dream and I believe women can make good leaders because I believe that women were created to nurture things and they are dedicated beings. Women are natural fighters and perseveres and don't easily give up".*

Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011), encouraged women to continue to upgrade themselves and suggested they must be informed about what is happening around them. She further said;

> *"never stop climbing the career and education ladder because I believe as women we are looking after many people even our grandchildren end up in our care"*,

She further added that women must develop themselves education-wise, and that will make their lives and the lives of those around them much easier because they will be empowered and have the financial muscle to empower and help others.

Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011) had this to share, which is that women must not undermine themselves, they must take chances and participate in leadership positions and they must never fail to try, it is best to try than to fail to try. She continued by saying;

> *"I am one example who took over a department that was almost not functional but through determination and believing in myself I have proven to do a great job and I still believe I am capable of doing much better than what I am doing now".*

She further added that for one to excel in everything, one needs to develop and maintain healthy relations which leads to receiving great support and she pointed out that;

> *"Make sure your relations are good with everyone if you want to succeed in life",* Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011).

9. *What other challenges are you experiencing as a leader at school?*

These were the challenges the three ladies Ruth and Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011) and Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011) have mentioned which were: a) having to push most of the male educators to do their work especially to honour submission dates; this is from the two lady HOD's.

> b) Having to deal with most of the teenagers that are always fighting in the school premises and that makes one to push away their work and try to solve their issues which may be hard at times and *"in most instances the male HOD's would not want to avail themselves to solve such cases of learners fighting",* (Charlotte, interview, 12 January 2011).
>
> c) *"Having to be away from the school attending regional and provincial meetings and conferences that needs a representative from each circuit, one will always be nominated by the Sabie Circuit*

Management Team (SCMT) and this takes me away from the school in most of the times", (Ruth, interview, 11. January 2011).

d) Having to get more male parents attending parents meetings, most of the parents meetings are mostly attended by women parents, not sure if they are still not comfortable in seeing women in leadership, (Ruth, interview, 11 January 2011).

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter; chapter 4, the aim of this chapter is to analyse the collected data collected for the study. There are two types of data that have been collected; the primary and the secondary data. The primary data has been grouped into categories on the basis of similar features, concepts or themes. The analysis of data is be based on the themes that were presented in the previous chapter which are: the experiences of cultural norms and practices, dual roles (mother and career woman) and responsibilities, experiences of stereotypes, other challenges, opportunities given to women in the region to be leaders and lastly, same career choice for the future.

5.2. Analysis of Primary Data

The collected primary data was presented in the previous chapter in table formats (table1, 2 and 3). The three tables gives evidence that the Sabie circuit, which is at the centre of this study, has 44 educators that are in leadership and from 44 only 11 of them are females. This suggests the gender imbalance in the distribution of high school leaders in the circuit.

Mangena (1996) argues that in many Southern African countries, women lose their individual rights upon marriage and widows are deprived of matrimonial property. He further calls on to what he refers to as “An Empowerment Approach to Development in Southern Africa” which aims at: recognizing that all developmental efforts must include women as equal partners. It is believed that a paradigm shift away from a more gender-related perspective to leadership in the school environment, to an equity-related perspective based on qualifications, experience and leadership skills training of both men and women educators is the way forward.

One strongly agrees with the scholars that are for a feminist approach. I strongly believe that women are great leaders because one once became a school leader for several years and great results were achieved during my leadership. Many women have proven to be great leaders and are doing well in their different fields. In this study, the women in leadership are happy to be leaders and believe to be doing a great job and more interestingly they are still aspiring to lead greater or bigger institutions. The gender inequality is still a challenge, which needs to be seriously addressed by everyone.

5.3. Analysis of Primary Data

The data that has been analysed in this section is the one collected from the one-on-one interviews with the three ladies; this data has been presented in the previous chapter. The analysis has been done using the themes that were identified in the beginning of the study as these themes were guiding the study.

a) Experiences of cultural norms and practices

The three respondents agreed that the cultural norms and practices that used to be widely practiced in the past, especially in the Black communities, are slowly being eroded or are not openly evident because most of the people do believe that education is the key and most women are now getting educated and taking leadership positions in the workplaces. Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011), said that her four children are all educated including her two daughters of which one is an attorney and the other one is a social worker. She further said that she never saw it as a waste of time and money to educate her daughters as it was seen before. People believe in sending their children to school to get educated because they believe that education is the key to a better future.

Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011) argued "I encouraged all my children to get educated and have a profession because it is important that everyone enjoy the economic freedom which makes life easy for everyone

and where would I be if I was not educated and had no career since my husband died long time ago before any of my children went to tertiary?".

Rosin (2010) argues "when a country educates its girls and women its Gross Domestic Production (GDP) grows and when a company adds more women in its senior leadership, it performs better financially than if there were men only".

The researcher agrees that every one, men and women, has to be educated and be in positions of leadership in order to make things better and one strongly believe that women can make better leaders as Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011) highlighted how things in her current department changed for the better since she started heading that department.

b) 'Dual-roles (mother and a career woman) and responsibilities

All three women are mothers as they have children but their responsibilities as mothers are not the same. Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011) and Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011) do not stay with their children but they stay alone. They feel that the pressure of being a mother and a career woman do not affect them at all in their duties. Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011) who stays with her daughter and husband said that she balances her domestic responsibilities and her work well, she said she is able to manage both very well and she said she believed that establishing good and healthy relations is very important both at work and at home so that one receives the necessary support. Charlotte (interview, 12 January 2011) added that if she had more than one child she does not think that the dual roles would be a problem because she would have considered getting a helper to assist with the domestic work.

Evetts (1987), in his research about the career strategies of married women who became primary school principals in England, found that their family responsibilities were always of fundamental importance to them and determined to a great extent their career decisions. The accounts of

married women head teachers participated in that study largely confirmed these findings. Even when they became head teachers they had to meet family and work commitments and always had to strike a balance in both areas for the rest of their working lives.

Kziara (1987) and Sutherland (1999) asserts that having to look after children does not have any effect on women's job as career women in most cases they have helpers to look after their children.

The researcher supports the concept that if one is a career woman and a mother one will not be negatively affected by the dual roles and responsibilities because one believe that most professional women can afford to get assistance for the domestic chores so that your life is well balanced as a mother and carrier woman and also tends to strongly agree with Charlotte when she says that it is important to establish good relations at home and at work so that you do not easily get stressed, especially when no one understands what you are doing and that helps for the support you will receive as a career woman and mother.

c) Experiences of Stereotypes

There is still evidence of existing stereotypes from other people especially male educators about women. The principal, Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011), shared her encounter she had with the circuit manager when she was applying for the principal ship position when he said to her that the post needs strong men and according to her that was a stereotypical thinking about women.

Murphy and Hallinger (in Bennet, *et al*., 1992, p.43) maintain that "some men believe that women lack self-confidence in performing managerial tasks in the work environment, primarily because women in general prefer to adopt a more democratic and collegial leadership stance, rather than the assertive and aggressive leadership norm adopted by men in leadership positions in the workplace".

From personal experience, one had been subjected to unfair treatment because of some stereotypical beliefs. In 2007 one applied for the deputy principal ship position from the school where one used to work, during the interview proceedings, one was intentionally scored the lowest and the scores did not correspond with one's responses. The other candidates were males and the one that was given the highest scores had the worst responses according to a reliable source from the regional panel that reviewed the whole interview proceedings. At that time one thought that one was not given fair scores because one is a woman and also because males dominated the panel so they might have thought that a woman may not be fit for the position of deputy principal ship.

One fully agrees with Dines (1993) when he maintains that *"*although some women in education institutions may have higher qualifications and more experience than some of the men, these women may be 'covertly' removed from consideration from promotion because they are women".

d) Challenges that women leaders experience

The women expressed that there are many challenges that they are experiencing in their jobs. The two HOD's Gladys and Charlotte said that they were having difficulties with some of the male educators who do not want to honour submission dates and in some instances some of them even though they had submitted on time, the required work was incomplete. The principal Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011) also made mention of another male educator who does not want to take instructions from her, she said she tried to instruct him to avail himself for his duties assigned to him during athletics time and he agreed but never pitched at work for several days instead. The two HoDS' mentioned that the other male HoD's do not avail themselves to assist in solving matters of learners that happen to be fighting. It seems like there are a lot of challenges experienced by these women leaders.

Wolfe, as quoted in Barret (1979), maintains that "Even when the path is nominally open, when there is nothing to prevent a women from being a

doctor, lawyer, engineer, magistrate, there are many phantoms and obstacles I believe looming on her way. To discuss and define them I think of great value and importance for thus only the labour be shared, the difficulties be solved".

As a researcher, one has served in the department of Education in Mpumalanga from 1998 to 2009 as an educator. From one's own personal experience, in 2006 one applied for a promotional position at a certain school which is at Ehlanzeni Region, It was unfortunate that during the interview processes the researcher was subjected to unfair treatment by the panel members who were mainly men. It was later discovered by the regional panel that the researcher was scored very low and the scores that were allocated to her did not tally with her responses and a male candidate was given very high scores because the panel preferred him to take up the promotional position (deputy principal) just simply because he was male.

As a researcher one agrees that most women leaders are still faced with many challenges that one would strongly believe are done intentionally just to frustrate a woman because there are still people out there who believe that a woman is an object to be abused.

e) Opportunities given to women in the region to be high school leaders

The three women said that they strongly believe that women educators in Ehlanzeni Region are not given fair chances to be in leadership. Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011) argued that women are not given a fair chance to occupy leadership positions in the region even though most of them are qualifying to lead schools. She further said that; "most females are compromised by males even though the male may not be competent enough when compared to the women he was competing with and the stereotype that women cannot do things better still exist in some men's heads and in most of the cases one find that the interview panels are dominated by men.

Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011), said that she sits in the Sabie Circuit Short-listing Committee (SCSC) when candidates are being short-listed to be interviewed for promotional positions one always find that most candidates to be short listed happen to be males and the committee is still dominated by male educators, so the males' influences on the decisions to be taken are dominating because they outnumber the women in the committee. She further said that she believes that ones the SCSC is gender- balanced then things will start to change for the better.

Wolfe (1978), is of the idea that labour has to be shared and one does not think he was referring to the idea that it has to be shared amongst men or amongst certain individuals who belong to a certain category and one believes that when something has to be shared it means it is for everyone who qualifies and there should not be any discrimination.

Dines *(*1993*,* p. 21*)* maintains that *"*although some women in education institutions may have higher qualifications and more experience than some of the men, these women may be 'covertly' removed from consideration from promotion because they are women". It is also perceived by some professional women who apply for management posts, that the men on interviewing and selection panels, often prefer to appoint a man, rather than any of the women applicants, who may have higher qualifications or more experience than the male applicants.

In the preamble of the Commission on Gender Equity Act (CGEA), 1996 which states that "the Constitution provides that the objective of the CGEA, 1996 shall be to promote, advise and to make recommendations to Parliament and to any other legislature with regards to laws and proposed legislation that affect gender equality and the status of women". The Employment Equity Act (EEA), 1998 states that its purpose is "to achieve equity in the workplace by: a) promoting equal opportunities and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discriminations. b) Implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated group, in order to ensure their

equitable representation to all occupational categories and levels in the workforce".

The researcher strongly agrees that there are unfair practices that are happening in the region that happen to compromise women. From personal experience shared earlier, when applying for a promotion which was not granted because of the applicant's sex, is an example that shows unfair treatment. The statistics of the region speak for themselves that there are some unfair practices because one knows that most women are educated and do qualify to be leaders of schools. One does not expect fair practices when most of the decision making bodies i.e. the SCMT (see table 2) are being dominated by men.

f) Same career choice for the future

The two HoD's are willing to take the same leadership positions in the future if they had to choose positions again. Gladys (interview, 11 January 2011) proudly said she enjoys being in control and being a role model to others. Ruth (interview, 11 January 2011) had a different response from the two women and she can be viewed as a very ambitious and confident person when she said she was not going to take the same position if she had to choose for a position in the future, she said she trusted herself that she can be a great leader so she wants a bigger challenge than being a principal.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1. Introduction

The department of Education in Ehlanzeni Region is still faced with diminished participation of women in leadership positions in high schools. The purpose of this research was to establish the experiences of women educators who are in leadership positions in high schools and the researcher believed that by gaining insight of the women's experiences there would be an understanding as to why there is still fewer women in leadership positions in the high schools of the region.

The research, through the analysis of its primary data collected through interviews and analysis of secondary data attempted to find answers for the following research questions.

1. What are the cultural norms and practices that affect women's ability to participate in leadership positions?
2. What are the "dual-roles" (mother and career woman) and responsibilities that affect women's ability to participate as leaders?
3. How the stereotypes in the community affect the perceptions of women to participate in leadership positions?
4. How the different forms of resistance experienced by women in leadership affect their leadership role?

Based on the analysis of data, the following conclusions were drawn with regards to the experiences of women educators in leadership positions of Sekwai High School (Ehlanzeni Region).

6.2. Conclusion

6.2.1. Cultural norms and practices

It has emerged in the study that the cultural norms and beliefs that used to be practised before are still evident even though not in a greater level and are no more that much of a barrier to women who want to be leaders. In the interviews it was also highlighted that the learner enrolment of the school is dominated by female learners, **which suggests that more females are getting education and that may yield positive results for them to gain access to leadership positions in the economic world.**

6.2.1. Dual-roles (mother and career woman) and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities of being a mother and a career woman at the same time no longer affect women in leadership that much as it was the case before. Most women do not feel the serious pressure that each role and responsibilities as a mother and career woman can bring in their lives. Establishing healthy relations at home and at work helps to lessen the pressure that one may be faced with.

6.2.3. Stereotypes

There are a few stereotypes about women that the three women still experience even though through time and being consistent in doing things at school and as soon as people have proven that you know what you want, those stereotypes slowly fade away and they start to trust you, because in many cases women have proved to do a good job as leaders and Ruth is trusted to be a good leader as a women for an example she is always nominated to represent the circuit in meetings an conferences.

6.2.4. Challenges that women in leadership experience

The main challenge that these women experience is that some male educators are still refusing to take the women's orders or to respect and acknowledge them as their leaders.

6.2.5. Opportunities given to women educators in the Region

The women feel that in the region, women are not given fair chances to become leaders of high schools. Most of the decision making bodies (e.g. SCSC) in the circuit and in the region are still dominated by males who have more influence than women in decision making in those bodies.

6.2.6. Same career choice for the future

Women are happy to lead and they believe they are doing a great job and they strongly believe that they are making a positive input in the institutions that they are leading. It is interesting to note that there are women like Ruth who are aiming higher and want bigger challenges than the ones they are currently faced with.

As one concludes, the data collected for the study reveals that women in leadership positions at high schools are still experiencing some challenges. These challenges might be viewed by other women who are still aspiring to be leaders of schools as barriers and this might somehow discourage them to take up leadership positions. Also the women who are in leadership enjoy their roles and responsibilities because they believe that they are doing a great job as leaders and as women or as mothers. Other women as leaders still want more leadership challenges and greater responsibilities because they strongly believe they are making a positive contribution wherever they are.

6.3. Recommendations

The recommendations that forwards for this study is that a) Ehlanzeni Region should have decision making structures that are gender-balanced and b) Mentorship programmes must be established in Ehlanzeni region to empower and mentor women educators.

Recommendations for future research:

a) Examine the implementation of the priorities of the Gender Equity Directorate Unit of the National Education Department.

b) Determine to what extent is the input made by the women leaders in the education system recognized.

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APPENDIX 1

1.2. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A) Questions intended for the female leaders of Sekwai High School

Personal questions

1. What is your age bracket?

2. What is your marital status?

3. How many children do you have?

4. How long is your teaching experience?

5. For how long have you been serving in the SMT of this school?

6. What is the staff enrolment, males and females?

More in depth questions

1. How do you feel about yourself as a high school principal / as member of the SMT?

2. Before you became an SMT member / principal, what were your beliefs about being a female leader?

3. How are the relations between yourself and your colleagues, yourself and the school governing board? Explain.

4. What does it mean to you, being a mother/woman and a school leader and how does it affect you in your leadership role?

5. Do you think you are getting the support you deserve from your family with regards to your career?

6. Is the local community supportive to you as one of the female leaders in the school?

7. Are the any beliefs of stereotypes in the community that is related to women as leaders?

8. If there are any, what are those and how do you think they affect women who aspire to be leaders?

9. According to your knowledge, are there any cultural norms that you know that exist in the community that you think may be affecting women in playing a leadership role?

10. Have you ever experienced any resistance from any member of your staff that may be affecting your work negatively as a leader and if so, how do you handle such situations?

11. If you were to be given another opportunity to make a career choice, would you still choose to become a high school principal / an SMT member and why?

12. In Ehlanzeni Region there are 110 high schools and only 11 of them are lead by females as principals, what do you think might be the reason for this under-representation of women in these positions?.

13. According to your opinion do you think women in the region are given a fair chance to be leaders and why do you say so?

14 In general, what do you think needs to be done in the region as a whole to see more women taking up leadership positions?

15. What are the challenges you are experiencing as a leader?

16. What would be your word of advice to other women who are still aspiring to be leaders of high schools?