

The Gendered Perceptions of Women in Management Positions in a
Primary School in the Kwadukuza (Lower Tugela)
Region

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by

T. P. Mthembu

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Declaration

This study represents the original work of the author and has not been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma to any tertiary institution.

All services and literature have been duly acknowledged.

Thembisile Patricia Mthembu

Student Number 20193419439



Prof. R. Morrell

Durban

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Abstract

This study explores how women in management are perceived especially in a Kwa-Dukuza Lower Tugela primary school (with the pseudonym, Mbonisweni). Mbonisweni is situated 5 kilometers away from my school. I was motivated to conduct this study by the negative perceptions of women in management positions that I detected in my own school (with the pseudonym, Vela). Vela is a new primary school, which was established as a result of overcrowding at Siyathuthuka senior primary school, which was at first a combined primary school. I was interested to see if a similar situation pertained at Mbonisweni and to find out what might be the reasons for any negative perception of women managers.

Data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews with eight educators from Mbonisweni Primary, including the principal of the school, 4 management team members and the 4 educators (two females and two males).

The study found that evidence of some negativity towards the school principal and in some cases such negativity was based on gender stereotyped attitudes. The situation was not, however, simple. Prior to

conducting the research I had anticipated that there might be strong support from female HODs and educators for the female principal (manager) but this was not uniformly the case nor was it the case that all males in the study were opposed to the female manager. The situation was more complex.

Three quarters of the males interviewed supported the female management although their support did not mean that male teachers were in necessarily in favour of gender equity more broadly nor did it preclude some men from expressing view that could be seen as sexist. While three quarters of the females interviewed also supported the female management it was clear that no encompassing bond of sisterhood existed by which women automatically supported the females in the school's management team.

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ACRONYMS

SMT: School Management Team. It constitutes the Principal, Deputy Principal and Head of Departments.

SGB: School Governing Body. It constitutes the representatives of the parents (five members) the principal of the school and one member from educators.

HOD: Head of Department. Their duty is to control, manage and give support to the new educators.

IQMS: Integrated Quality Management System.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the study. The rationale for doing this research is discussed and the research questions are introduced. This study seeks to investigate gendered perceptions of females in management positions and some information about how these perceptions affect them.

Since 1994 when South Africa obtained independence, the government has prioritized social transformation in order to remove the imbalances and inequalities that existed in the educational sector, for example, racial disparities of curriculum in schools and lack of visibility of competent women in management. In the realm of education, there have been many policies introduced, such as National Education Policy Act 27 of 96 and Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (PEPUDA) that were instituted in order to enhance injection and the entrenchment of the ten important fundamental values of the constitution of South Africa in the teaching and learning situation. These values include: social accountability, equality, non-sexism, uBuntu, respect, reconciliation and accountability, to

count a few. An important key component of the educational sector that has been targeted for the promotion of equity and equality is school management.

Under the Apartheid regime, most school managers were men. Because of the general perception of women as incapable of holding management positions, they were barely considered for senior posts when they were vacant. Men on the other hand were appointed to senior managerial positions because they were perceived to be more capable than their female counterparts in making sound decisions. This bias towards male teachers as potential managers is still very pervasive in the primary school sector even though educators are predominantly females. De Lyon and Migniuolo (1989: 14) argue: 'women dominate in number but not in status, in the field of primary education, particularly working with children between the ages of 3 and 8 years'. They also state that women outnumber men, forming about two thirds of schoolteacher population; however they do not necessarily appreciate the extent to which promotion is weighted in favour of men.

The current document on education policy, the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 is designed to increase the number of women in management positions and to enhance their status and accorded due recognition in management positions. In Kwa-Zulu Natal Province, the most populated region

of the country, following a review of the situation, the policy adopted has been that of moving competent women into management posts. Although men still dominate numerically in management, I have noticed that more women are joining men in management positions.

Cultural, social and traditional beliefs still influence women in management, who think that they must conform to certain social expectations (De Witt, 1991: 53 – 57). Female managers believe that they must prove to men that they possess leadership capabilities that match those of their male counterparts (Chisholm, 2001: 392 – 394). There are constraints which arise from socially defined expectations that create problems for women in management. Some of these problems include: that a woman is responsible for domestic matters such as childcare, lack of recognition and acceptance by their male counterparts, lack of the voice to justify their visibility in crucial matters (Chisholm, 2001) coupled with the frustration of irresponsible spouses whose lack of support for the wife results in the poor performance of their children at school. An example is the case of adulterous misconduct of a husband who blames his infidelity on the wife who accepted a senior post away from her family. The children as a result perform badly at school because their mother is no longer close to them to assist with their homework. For similar reasons some women are reluctant to accept a promotional post that is far from their families.

Although men are generally blamed for problems that women-in-management encounter, some women are also locked into the patriarchal mindset about women in leadership. Some female educators who feel uncomfortable with women in authority make their jobs difficult by not accepting their authority, and are critical of the activities of other female managers (Shakeshaft and Nowell, 1992: 14). In consequence of the resistance encountered by female managers, they sometimes become either passive or overly aggressive at work.

Some members of the School Governing Body (SGB) and parents, especially males, are sometimes antagonistic towards female managers. This is the case at Mbonisweni primary school, which is the research site for this study. Here male educators and community members are reluctant to cooperate with the female manager. Educators refuse to follow her instructions and some male members of the community take decisions without consulting the school manager. The above will be dealt with in detail in the sections further below.

The purpose of this study is to understand the gendered perceptions of educators, especially in relation to women in management positions in the primary school sector, using Mbonisweni primary school as a case study. The study further investigates the perceptions of the female manager held by other

members of the school's management team and members of the teaching staff. My interest in this study stems from my fifteen years of observation of hostile responses and reaction of management and teaching staff to the appointment and leadership of women.

1.2 Motivation of the study

As a female level 1 educator and now a Head of Department in my school, I have (through the years of my teaching) observed that women in management position are often faced with numerous difficulties. They are unduly criticized, undermined and are not taken seriously by their male and female colleagues. The phenomenon observed earlier contributes significantly to the difficult relationship between the women managers and their colleagues at work.

My motivation for undertaking a study of perception of female managers was in the first instance to establish whether there existed prejudicial attitudes towards the female principal at Mbonisweni primary school cite of this study. Secondly, I wanted to find out what reasons educators gave for their perceptions of the female principal and wanted to find out what her (the principal's) perceptions of the situation were. I was finally also interested to make some suggestions that might improve the situation in this school. Behind my curiosity is a belief that gender discrimination and freedom from

discrimination is enshrined in the Bill of Rights. People should be treated fairly, that is, without discrimination based on gender, race or class. Female educators and managers should also enjoy protection from discrimination.

1.3 Personal experiences and socio-economic history of my school

I am currently occupying a promotional position as an Education Specialist, formerly known as Head of Department (HOD) at Vela primary school, in Kwa-Dukuza. In 2001, Vela primary school was established as a separate primary school. Prior to this it had been part of Siyathuthuka combined senior primary school. Due to over crowding at Siythuthuka combined school a new school (Vela primary) was established and a female principal was appointed.

Since its inception, opposition to the female principal has characterized the school's affairs. For example, in 2004, she was not consulted about the date or the nature of the school opening ceremony. Normally, such an important function would involve senior managers. The forgoing example shows how female managers are sometimes undermined.

The school consists of 23 educators: 8 males and 15 females. The School Governing Body (subsequently referred to as SGB) consists of 7 members: 3 males and 4 females. As a member of the school management team I attend some of the meetings that involve the SGB. I have noticed that the final decision often comes from chairperson who is a male. When for some reasons the chairperson could not attend the meeting or will be late for the meeting the assistant chairperson (who is a female), does not preside. The principal of the school who is also a female would take the position of the chairperson but no resolutions would be made, meetings are often rescheduled until the male chairperson is available. This trend seems to perpetuate the male hegemony even at the primary school management level.

Community values influence gender relations at the school management level. The Parents' register indicates that mothers are more involved in SGB meetings than the fathers. When there is a need for both parents to sign for their child, for example in order to enable them to access support grants from the Department of Education, women would take the day off work while their husbands would not. The behavior stems from the pervasive 'malestream' thinking that men should only be breadwinners. The management is adversely affected by their distant attitude towards and lack of involvement in the activities of the SGB.

1.4 Brief description of primary school management in South Africa in KwaZulu-Natal South Africa

Little research has been done in the area of primary school management in South Africa and specifically in KwaZulu-Natal using a gendered perspective. Few dissertations have been produced in recent years on primary school management in KwaZulu-Natal province (Nair, 2003; Ponnusamy, 2002; Ngcobo, 2006). The available body of literature shows that there exist stereotypes of and prejudice against female managers, which serve as a major constraint to the efficient performance of some female managers and discourages other female educators from applying for promotional posts. Among the stereotypes are that females are not meant to be leaders, but are caregivers and nurturers of their offspring, while men are considered to be strong, protectors and providers. This crude understanding reinforces society's stereotypes of women. Although women are considered weak and lacking in management skills because culture has conditioned them to attend to home matters, the skills acquired from their activities at home are however adaptable to management responsibilities in the public domain.

If it is possible to relate the foregoing to the Australian experience, where feminist analysts of education management have discovered that the sexual division of labour is often justified as natural and normally justified due to

what is considered to be the nature of women who are supposedly the weaker sex and lacking in discretion (Blackmore, 1993: 44). Blackmore and Kenway (1993), state that some people believe that women are biologically inferior, requiring protection by males who dominate the material world. This discourse often infuses state education policy and practice in the society and contributes to the prejudice that women cannot be managers. A consequence of this discourse is that women have to prove themselves to be better than men in order to achieve the same levels of success.

There is a classic example of a female teacher in Australia who upgraded herself until she was awarded an MA degree before applying for a management position. It would be the first time in this particular school that a woman would be applying for a senior position. She was not short-listed but a less experienced and less qualified man was appointed (De Lyon and Migniuolo, 1989: 98). This is one of many experiences that represent how women suffer gender discrimination.

Sex discrimination is the process by which decisions are taken and judgments made on the basis of factors other than relevant skills (De Lyon and Migniuolo, 1989: 99). The other studies done in South Africa by Ngcobo (1996) and Dimaza (2000) were limited to secondary schools. Ngcobo (1996)

has found that the educators, both males and females, who have worked with female managers, had witnessed how gender prejudice against women results in discrimination against women in management. Ngcobo's study shows that preconceived perceptions coming from prejudice is considered to be real.

The study will show whether the above perceptions are still posing problems for women in management and also if they have any effect on the performances of women managers.

1.5 The research questions

- How do educators in a Kwa-Dukuza Lower Primary School perceive the women or female educators who occupy leadership positions?
- To what extent do educators not accept the leadership of female managers?
- What is the female principal's perception of her colleagues and their acceptance or non – acceptance of her?
- Is there any indication among the schools educators that they support government policy to advance women into management and leadership position?

1.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the motivation and background to the study. I have indicated the line of discussion that I will pursue in the subsequent chapters concerning school management and the gendered perception of female managers in primary schools. This chapter suggests that gender prejudice still exists and has a negative impact on women in management positions. The next chapter on theoretical framework will discuss the nature of gendered perceptions of women in management position in depth.

CHAPTER 2

Literature review and theoretical framework of the study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews relevant literature on the position of women particularly in primary schools. Sometimes, I will incidentally review works that discuss women's plight in secondary schools. The focus will be on the negative perceptions that women suffer from men and other women once they occupy management positions at primary and secondary schools in South Africa and other selected locations across the globe. The position of women in school management has been receiving scholarly attention for over twenty years. Coombs aptly captures the universality of negative gendered perceptions of women:

although more studies were done overseas it is obvious from studies carried out in South Africa that most of the perceptions towards women in educational management are global and not restricted to one group, nation, ethnic group or specific school or institution (Coombs, 1990: 11).

Walker, argues that black women teachers in South Africa “suffer a triple oppression of gender; race and class have a rhetorical common place” (Walker, 1990: 2).

This study complements the insights of Shakeshaft (1992), Ngcobo (1996), Ponnusamy (2002), Maharaj (2003) and Nair (2003), among others, and applies their theory in a South African context. As one of the pioneers of this work Shakeshaft, identifies sex role stereotyping and gender.. socialization as problematic, and shows that some feel uncomfortable with women in management (Shakeshaft, and Nowell 1992: 14). Their work help to show the difficulties that result from women’s appointments to managerial positions. The difficulties include harsh criticisms and undue disparagement from colleagues. According to King (1981: 166), men are reluctant to work under a woman in management because of the perception that no sooner has she assumed the office of a manager than she loses her femininity. Teachers resist the authority of female managers and this produces numerous obstacles that prevent women from achieving their true potential within their work environment.

The South African Government has earmarked funds for the acceleration of the advancement of black people, especially women under the black empowerment programme. This particular focus on women was engendered by the government recognition that they suffered gender oppression under the apartheid regime. Currently in South Africa there is the disproportionate representation of women in management positions in secondary schools. Chisholm (2001: 389) asserts that women in management are still experiencing extrinsic barriers of which some are based on preconceived gendered perceptions held by stakeholders of schools.

Some of the preconceived perceptions that still influence the women's way of thinking include cultural, social, and traditional beliefs. According to Chisholm (2001: 389):

problems that women are still experiencing are that their authority is not accepted, they are invisible and not recognized, they have no support from their spouses and their department, there is a lack of mentors for them and they have a double role to play as mothers as well as managers.

On the other hand, the Department of Education has organized a series of workshops on Masculinity that focused on gender transformation. In these workshops men were encouraged to implement equity and equality plan vis-à-vis, knowing the importance of taking care of their children and bonding with their children, or baby – in effect to consider being ‘daddy nannies’ as an honourable role and to participate in doing house chores. The process of transforming gender attitudes is not, however, simple. Men who buy into changing understandings of masculinity might revert back to their former selves if, for example, their positive and supportive attitude has been abused by women. Furthermore it is difficult for men to give up their male power in a context where such an action may be regarded as a sign of weakness. Nevertheless there are men who are committed to gender change (Peacock, Khumalo and McNab, 2006).

2.2 Women in management positions

According to the research that has been conducted by gender scholars, women traditionally were mysteriously excluded from senior positions. In South Africa women’s promotion prospects were adversely affected by having a career break, which can be construed as a prejudice against women. For example if a woman returned to service after her mates had been promoted to middle management positions, she would have start from

the bottom rung of the ladder all over again (Level 1 educator SA terms). Up until late 1980's female educators in South Africa had to compulsorily resign if they fell pregnant out of wedlock, while the paternity was never questioned even though the men responsible may have been colleagues at work.

The unfavourable and prejudicial conditions of service under apartheid forced many women to marry unsuitable men, which resulted in divorce. De Lyon and Migniuolo (1989: 195) state that women lose out in two ways: their career break often coincides with those years that yield the most promotion and they lose the promotion they have already achieved. They further assert that inequality and discrimination is more connected to power than to gender, therefore 'challenging for equal power in teaching means challenging power throughout the society' (1989, 197). These are some of the gendered issues that hinder women from applying for promotion positions.

Although many women are now appointed into management positions, they still experience various forms of discrimination. Gender prejudice is universal even though it assumes different forms in different contexts depending on the cultural, social and economic parameters that define

gender relations. In KwaZulu-Natal, Zulu women favour their sons over their daughters. The patriarchal tendencies in Zulu culture promote the interest of men over women to the extent that a newly born son is given a royal reception at birth because he is considered to be a possible heir to the chieftaincy (*indlalifa*). Some of the cultural practices often influence the preference of men over women when management positions are vacant at schools, even when women are appointed into leadership positions, prejudice against them are still prevalent (Baron, 2000:211). Although women are being promoted into management positions, the gender balance still favours men. Such is the case in the school where I conducted the fieldwork, where males still outnumber females in the School Management Team.

There are a number of perceptions about women in management positions. The following section will discuss the problems that women encounter in management positions, in greater detail.

2.3 Perceptions of women in management positions

2.3.1 Women are less capable of leadership

The educational system is a reflection of the larger society. This relationship largely explains how the former serves as a means of perpetuating patriarchal structures which promote the interest of men. The negative attitude of educators at school reveals a certain influence from society that shows discrimination by gender, race or class. De Lyon and Migniuolo (1989: 113) rightly state that sex, race, class, and to a lesser extent sexuality are important factors that influence the way women are viewed and treated, and the way they behave towards others.

Manau (1995, 35) assert that women managers “are always at fault or at least, this is what men think. If they are strong they are regarded as aggressive, tough not feminine. If they are jovial they are permissive, if they cry they are emotional, or make a mistake one is likely to hear a remark like: “that is what you can expect from women”.

Women therefore, do not challenge lack of visibility, but instead choose to be quiet at meetings. They do not demand recognition for their work because if they become noticeable, the men in management see them as a

threat. There is a pervasive notion in society that women are unstable workers: a generalization that usually results in a female manager's loss of confidence that then manifests in a series of mistakes (De Witt, 2002: 530).

Dowling however feels that women are under pressure to perform at all cost (Dowling 1989: 84). When women hold management positions, society often exaggerates the smallest error they commit (De Witt, 1991: 553). They are under constant public scrutiny due to the perception that women are less able to cope with crises, which in effect affects their managerial capabilities.

Chisholm (2001: 389) states that women are still experiencing the problem of lack of acceptance by colleagues at work, and there is lack of mentoring programmes to accelerate their professional development and little or no support from their spouses. However, there have been changes that have helped women. Masculinity workshops at different places, for example have encouraged men to be more involved in house chores.

Baron (2000: 245) in his comparison of men to women claims that women tend to undermine themselves given societal attitude in general and collegial attitudes in particular. Although the principle of equity is

entrenched in the Bill of Rights, society needs to accelerate the implementation of the equal opportunity agenda to enhance the representation of women in managerial positions.

Generally managers are involved in the mundane administrative and organizational activities in an establishment. Leaders interact, communicate and take interest in the progress of their colleagues. In principle, these definitions contain no elements of gender discrimination, but in practice, when the two genders are involved in senior positions people start to see differences in management style, judging from a gendered perspective.

In a school, a principal is expected to have both leadership and management skills because the principal necessarily must combine both leadership and managerial qualities. The research of Sharpe (2000: 19) has revealed the general gendered perception and disposition of society towards leadership, and that is, that men are by nature leaders. Women's mass entry into the labour market saw an alteration in understandings of femininity because not only were women moving into the male-dominated public domain of work, they were also moving into various leisure activities which had also hitherto been regarded as exclusively for men, for example, golf. Shakeshaft (1989: 39-84) observes that women in management positions are perceived to be

weaker than their male counterparts. She argues that, “We have not studied self-confidence through the eyes of the women to be measured by male-defined standards of self-confidence. She further asserts that society attributes weakness to the female because of her ‘relative build which gives an impression of lack of strength’. Lynch (1990: 2) is however unhappy about the general lack of progress in the advancement of women. She believes that after three decades of data that establish the managerial and leadership competence of women, society still looks for men who are considered by nature to be efficient, self-reliant, forceful and ambitious leaders.

2.3.2 Some men and women find it difficult to work under a women management

Men start getting uncomfortable when women take up leadership positions and move out of traditionally subordinate positions in the public realm and begin to demonstrate capability and independences and show a sense of responsibility. Shakeshaft and Nowell (1992: 14-18) found out that some men experienced discomfort in communicating with a member of the opposite sex in the workplace. Some men have a tendency to exhibit hostility when dealing with female managers. These managers have to work harder for men to follow their instruction. However, it is not only men who

present this difficulty. Some women also resist the leadership of other women when they take management positions (Chisholm, 2001: 388-390). According Ngcobo (1996: 21) and Burton (1993: 278), men and women are generally not prepared to work under a woman because they feel that the moment a woman becomes a manager she has lost her femininity. At the other end of the spectrum are people who consider women to be poor leadership material if they act 'feminine'.

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According to Wood (1993: 21) '[s]tereotypes may impinge on the effectiveness of management. Some negative effects are that women often internalize negative stereotypes that others hold of them concerning their roles and abilities which often results in under-performance'. Some of these stereotypes are perpetuated by females themselves by trying to do more than they are capable of and in the process proving to be failures.

Chisholm (2001: 387-390) finds in her research that every woman she interviewed had a problem with colleagues recognising her authority. Society's expectations are in most cases impossible to fulfil, it seems that cultural social and traditional beliefs still influence the belief and behaviour of women managers that they should perform to be seen and be what the world wants them to be (Dowling, 1988: 39-64). As a leader, interaction

with other people is the only way to get through to each other. A manager's authority needs to be complemented by the acceptance and recognition given by his/her fellow colleagues. She also needs to be trusted; this will develop her self-esteem to be effective as a leader and ensure the smooth running of the school.

De Witt (2002: 520) emphasizes that a woman manager will use a different style when dealing with authority and delegation. It seems that women do experience problems with authority but not because of their sex alone but because there are so many perceptions, prejudices and stereotyping of women in management positions. The *South African Constitution, Act 76 of 1998 (Policy Handbook for Educators 2003: G-31)*, provides the following framework for redressing the gender imbalance in the education sector:

a major purpose identified is to achieve equality in the work place by promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment through the elimination of unfair discrimination, and implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups, in order to ensure their equitable representation in occupational categories and levels in the working place

2.4 Theoretical framework

I have drawn from the work of various feminist theorists including Stone (1994), Blackmore (1993) and Kenway (1993). I have specifically focused on their insights into gender power in order to understand how gender inequalities can cause problems for women managers and undermine their performances. A universalist feminist position is that that women are biologically equal to men but are historically denied equality. Analyses which privilege biology lead to ideas about a rigid sexual division of labour in which women are relegated to the least visible, least powerful and least prestigious positions. According to such ideas, women are carers and men are protectors and providers. When these stereotypes surface in a school environment, they make it very difficult for women managers to exercise authority, and more generally to do their job effectively. Feminist theory has critiqued this view arguing that it naturalises inequality (Blackmore, 1993: 44). Kenway argues that naturalised gender thinking is to be found in the literature on educational administration. Rejecting naturalised modes of explanation, feminists argue that management and leadership should be given to those with experience and expertise and subtle forms of gender discrimination should be monitored as these continue to operate in the favour of men.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided us with the positions of different scholars on women in management. Scholars have debated the patriarchal view that women are considered unsuitable for senior positions because of the general stereotypes of women as weak, whose place is in the kitchen and best in nurturing. The following chapter will be on the methodology adopted in conducting this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the methodology for this study. In the sections that follow, I discuss: the research method and reasons for choosing it, sampling and the participants in the study, the action process in the study, the research instruments, limitations and ethical issues associated with research project.

3.2 Research Method

The method adopted for this study is the qualitative research method which followed the phenomenological design. The researcher collected the data by interviewing the participants in the study.

3.3 Reasons for choosing the research method

There is consensus among scholars that the negative perceptions towards women in management in the educational sector is a global phenomenon and is not restricted to one nation, ethnic group or specific institution (Coombs 2005).

I have therefore used a qualitative approach, which has followed the

Phenomenological design where the semi-structured interviews were used as a tool to collect data as mentioned earlier on. Leedy and Ormrod 2001:153) regard phenomenological design as the one that attempts to understand perceptions, perspectives, and understanding of a particular situation. They also describe phenomenological approach to research as interpretative, enabling a researcher to be imminent about the nature of a particular phenomenon and therefore it was an appropriate method to employ in this project. The semi-structured interviews have also been successfully used by other scholars such as (Ngcobo, 2005:155) who states that it establishes an understanding between interviewer and interviewee on the concept. Nair (2003:20) refers to semi-structured interviews as a tool that allowed her the latitude to probe into more sensitive and complex questions and issues. They allowed her to develop a conversational approach to the data collection. Leedy and Ormrod (2001: 153) consider semi-structured interview to be participant-centered where there is relaxed atmosphere in conversation, because the researcher mostly listens and the participants are left to do all the talking. Such interviews typically allow the researcher and the participant to work together to arrive at a mutual understanding in away that more structured interviews sometimes prevent (Leedy and Ormrod 2001: 147).

The approach, however, does not provide other means of validating the data collected. And this thesis has limitations regarding the amount of data that can be collected and the number of sources that can be tapped. This meant that the study did not benefit from triangulation.

3.4 Sampling and the participants in the study

This study has adopted two approaches, purposive sampling and probability sampling where random sampling will be used in the selection of participants in this study. The targeted population consisted of nineteen educators including the school management team (SMT). The researcher intended to include the whole SMT and therefore purposive sampling was relevant for choosing these participants. Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2004: 207) posit that cases are chosen in purposive sampling on the basis of typicality, which enables the researcher to gather a satisfactory sample for the study.

The simple random sampling was used after the procedure here described. The female manager (school principal) gave a list of educators of all teaching staff at Mbonisweni to the researcher. The names were serially numbered (1-14). The researcher then cut pieces of paper with numbers assigned to educators. The pieces of paper were put into a box. A child from the same school was asked to pick any four papers out of the box. The four names of

educators picked together with SMT members were constituted into the body of participants for the study. Since this study focuses on gender issues, one would anticipate a gender balance in the constitution of the participants. The sample coincidentally matched the sample formation required for the study even though the sampling method was random sampling: two male educators and two female educators plus four members of the SMT.

3.5 Action process in the study

In February 2005, I requested permission to conduct the research from the ward manager of Kwa-Dukuza. I then proceeded to the school manager of Mbonisweni and asked if I could be allowed to conduct fieldwork in her school. The participants were informed about the nature of the study to be conducted. I had to wait for two weeks while the school manager (the principal) consulted with the SGB on this issue. The manager, SGB and the educators finally allowed me to proceed with the interviews.

I conducted interviews with the whole School Management team (SMT) that is the Principal, the Deputy Principal and the two education specialists which included discussion of their experiences as managers. I conducted similar interviews with the HOD's but included a question on the promotion of gender equity. The educators had similar interview questions. The principal

had an additional question that required a discussion on the obstacles in the way of a successful female manager. Below are the steps of the action plan which the researcher followed.

- The researcher negotiated appointments dates with the participants.
- The schedule of dates was drawn according to appointments.
- On the agreed dates, interviews were audio taped.

3.6 The research instruments (procedure)

Given the sensitive nature of the study, I assured the participants that pseudonyms which guarantee the participants' anonymity would be used. The participants and the researcher agreed on the following:

- that I could audio tape the discussions,
- that I could keep an exam pad and a pen in case of a power failure in which case, I would have taken notes during the interviews. However, the tape recorder did not malfunction, so I did not have to take handwritten notes, and lastly,
- that I could interview them after working hours: either at home or at school.

Different times were allocated for the interviews, which allowed for individual and personal discussions with the researcher and an ample time for an in-depth exploration of the pertinent issues. This approach fostered privacy and confidentiality, encouraged the participants to express themselves without the fear of unwarranted confrontation from colleagues who may have been the subject of discussion in the interviews.

The interviews were conducted after working hours. Before I embarked on the questions I asked if the participants would be comfortable in answering the questions in English. 80% of the participants were comfortable with the English language while 20% decided to code switch: mixing English with Zulu. In the course of transcription, I decided not to translate Zulu into English in order to retain the original ideas and attitudes of the participants. As a bilingual, I did not find it difficult to understand both languages since I possess pragmatic competence in both Zulu and English however I did encounter some language-related problems as discussed further below.

3.7 Limitations and the ethical issues

There was no time limit fixed for the completion of the interview. In order to save time and allow for the flexibility of interviews I gave the participants an itemized schedule of question. The latter enhanced the flow of ideas from the

participants; giving to participants itemized questions sometimes hinders the process of interviews but fortunately this was not the case in this study. However the practice of administering Itemized questions could provoke some bad thoughts and make them think twice about whether to engage fully with questions-they could for an example become evasive or fanciful in their answers having had time to think about the issues in advance. Conducting the interviews after working hours proved difficult for me. I had to drive to the homes of the educators sometimes at night and during winter. Since it was winter, I often had to find my way in the dark and along unlit township roads. The other disadvantage of interviewing educators at home was that there was often not enough privacy and you as an interviewer felt uncomfortable with the members of the family. However the researcher ensured that the interviews were carried out smoothly. The researcher had to remain strong and be objective during interviews.

The participants at first did not at first feel comfortable with the type of questions that were asked. There was a concern about what my intention was in conducting such sensitive a study and I therefore explained to them the purpose of the study and ensured them of their safety in the study. I felt that I might have inflamed passion and caused dissent among educators as one of the participants spent almost 5 minutes searching for a convenient place for

his interview. Another problem was the language competence. Some educators thought it was not wise to turn to their own mother language which they understand clearly as I conducted the interviews in English, as a result they did not express themselves deeply and I could sometimes hardly get the message, despite the fact that I explained that they are free to choose the comfortable language to their responses. Generally interviews pose limits because one can never be sure about whether respondents are telling the truth Leedy and Ormrod (2001:147). This might have been for the reason that participants tried to hide something or feel intimidated or have issues with me because I am also a female and I could be taking sides.

Transcribing data was difficult because participants became excited and spoke extensively. It took me five weeks to complete the transcription of audio-taped data, because there was not enough time, since I had to do some of my Departmental work at home and spend some of my time on transcription. The use of the tape recorder allowed me to focus on the interview without interrupting the flow of respondents.

3.8 Research Questions

For my interview schedule the following list of itemized questions were administered to educators.

1. How do educators in Mbonisweni primary school perceive the women or female educators in leadership position?

The question was seeking to finding out the perceptions of educators since this study is about perceptions towards a female manager.

2. Do educators accept the leadership of female educators who are in management positions?

This question was designed to elicit descriptions about the work relations at the school where a manager is a female, as well as to find out if there is any resistance or hostility towards her.

3. What is the (female) manager's perception of her colleagues and their acceptance or non-acceptance of her?

This question was directed to the female manager (principal) and the deputy principal and sought to get their description of work relations at Mbonisweni primary school. In asking educators a question similar to that asked of female manager and the deputy manager I hoped to obtain a balanced view of the gendered nature of management in the school.

4. Are there any obstacles that were preventing the female manager from showing her capabilities of fulfilling the role of a manager in her management position because she is a female?

This question was directed to the Principal to find out what if there any other things blocking her as women from being a successful manager.

5. Is there any indication of support of government policy that promotes gender equality and equity to advance women and leadership position among the school's educators?

The above question was asked in order to find out if educators have involved themselves in doing away with negative perceptions of female managers in order to forestall any form of discrimination at work. The researcher hoped the question would also encourage respondents to speak candidly about their attitudes towards gender equity.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented the methods used in collecting the data for the study. In the next chapter, I will present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings of the study, which are organized by the research questions, discussed in chapter 3. The research was designed to determine the educator's gendered perceptions of female managers at Mbonisweni primary school. The aim of this chapter is to analyze and present the data collected for the study. In the subsequent sections, I categorise the data under the following sub-themes: the gendered experiences of educators, the school management team, and the problems confronted by the female manager in her promotional ascent, and lastly, the involvement of educators in promoting gender equity and equality. I will analyse participants' own oral responses, and translate, where necessary, the Zulu words used in the interviews.

4.2 Biographical Data

The researcher interviewed eight educators in the same school including the manager. The participants in the study constituted of four School Management Team (SMT), which are the Manager (principal), the Deputy Principal Two female and a male HOD, two female educators and two male

educators. The participants' ages ranged from the late twenties to the late forties. They were all IsiZulu first language speakers. Pseudonyms were used instead of participants' real names.

Mrs. Kheswa was the first female principal to be appointed at Mbonisweni in 2003. She was in her late forties, and had been a deputy principal serving under a male principal. She became the principal after the male principal left the school on promotion. Mrs. Kheswa is a divorcee, and has two boys. Mrs. Kheswa's deputy principal was Mr Mthethwa and they were in the same age group. He is married and had two children a boy and a girl. He had taught in different schools for more than fifteen years.

Mrs. Ntuli was a Senior Specialist Educator or Head of Department (HOD). She had been a post level one educator for more than ten years before coming into to Mbonisweni Primary School. She was married and had five children. Mrs. Ntuli had a senior diploma in teaching and was well versed in gender because she had been attending workshops on gender in the past years. Another HOD in the school was Mr. Khuzwayo. He was married, had two children both are boys and had been teaching for eight years in another school before he was promoted as an HOD in his present school. Besides being an HOD in his school he was also a sport organizer of the school.

When he is not at work he spends most of his time studying. He was enrolled with University of South Africa on part-time bases. Post level one educators in the school were Mrs. Zungu, Ms Sithole, Mr. Cele and Mr. Khoza. Mrs. Zungu had eight children, seven girls and one boy. Mrs Zungu is a breadwinner in her family. All four educators were studying on a part-time basis at different institutions in order to improve their qualifications. Ms Sithole had a life partner. She had one child from her ex-boyfriend. The other level one educator was Mr Khoza, he was unmarried and living with his parents.

The teaching experiences of educators ranged from five to eight years. They were commuting to school from their homes. Some were using their own transport and others coming to school by means of a public transport.

4.3 The experiences of the Manager (Principal) and Deputy Manager (Vice- Principal) in management

Mrs. Kheswa, the manager and Mr. Mthethwa, who was the Deputy Manager were asked about their experiences and their views on the performance of the female management. Their responses indicated that there was fallout between Mrs. Kheswa and Mr. Mthethwa.

The following were the responses of both Mrs Kheswa and Mr Mthethwa to the question relating to their experiences as managers:

Mrs Kheswa:

There were difficulties in obtaining a senior post; there were threats and pressures as to why was I elected and better if the male took the position. If there were a way I would have withdrawn. I also had fears of being overpowered and I was not fully respected at first. Some members of the School Governing Body (SGB) expected to get a male however my strong motivation kept me going.

Mr. Mthethwa.

She is gender biased, because she caters more for the females. For an example my problems are solved differently to those of women. She does not stick to her words. She gives too many instructions.

In response to the question posed to Mr Mthethwa about his thought on the view that men should be managers rather than females, he clapped his hands in agreement and responded as follows:

Oh, yes males are able to handle females and males equally. They give information in time, they have many ideas, and they are easily approachable. They accommodate problems that come their way.

Mrs. Kheswa and Mr. Mthethwa used gender perspectives that bore the imprint of local, patriarchal cultures. Culturally, females were regarded as weak, while men, because of their physical being were seen as people who could handle difficult situations. Some females felt (and feel) overpowered and oppressed in such situations because they had to regard everything said to them by men as correct. The response of Mr. Mthethwa shows hegemonic masculinity which is defined by R W Connell as gender practice which represents an accepted answer to the problem of authority of patriarchy which guarantees the dominance in the position of men over that of women. (Connell, 1995: 77).

Mrs. Kheswa acknowledges the strong hold the SGB have and their influence in the selection of candidate that they want. The following paragraphs will be on experiences of specialist educators working under the management of a female manager.

4.4 The experiences of HODs (Specialist Educators) towards the female manager

Mrs. Ntuli and Mr. Khuzwayo were Specialist Educators at school. The analysis of findings revealed that Mrs Ntuli was aware of the importance of gender issues especially in the work place. Nevertheless, her views

emphasized the power of males and their insistence that their superiority be recognized and she felt that action should be taken in addressing this particular issue. In response to the question about her experiences Mrs. Ntuli said the following:

I started as a leader in a primary school; we have more females than males. I am an HOD in a senior phase and most of males are there. Each time you advise a male, he could just resist. When you write in a recommendation book and send it to those of your department for a meeting or just to cascade the principal's instruction that might be urgent, after you have nearly given up, males come in drips and drabs. You then think that they do this because you are a female and if I were masculine showing power like a man they wouldn't do this. About my experience under female leadership, what I have noticed is that some people become jealous and they react negatively especially if you are more intelligent, even people you thought were your friends suddenly change the moment you get a promotion and they start to hate and make you feel uncomfortable in your position.

Mrs. Ntuli was then asked if she thought that males in management had the same attitudes and responded as follows:

Oh no, how can they be, some male managers are good, however others do not want a person who is above their level of education to come closer to them. They might even use their powers to influence the interviewing Committee not to shortlist that particular person especially if she is a female. They fear that she might be more efficient and be recognized (rather) than him. However, males are not all the same.

The following response from Mr. Khuzwayo showed the knowledge of patriarchy which he believed might have influenced the thinking of the female manager and he also acknowledged that females have been oppressed in the past and are still vulnerable to the power of man. He considered the fact that his principal expected him to play his role as an HOD but felt that she exerted too much authority. When he was asked to elaborate on his working experience under a female-headed management team, he said:

Babeka ngokuthi thina Bantu besilisa sizama ukuba overpower kanti ubandlululo olwakudala, (that males are trying to overpower them yet discrimination happened in the past). Females sometimes loose

their confidence; they start to act stronger if they speak to a male, because akafuni ukuthathwa kalula ('they don't want to be taken for granted'). She forgets that I am just from post level one and I still have little knowledge about my position. She simply demands things to happen as soon as she thinks, forgetting that as much as I am an HOD I am also a full class educator.

Mr. Khuzwayo was also asked if he thought males were better suited than females to fill the management positions or not. His answer to this question clearly indicated support of the female managers. Gender balance was revealed in his experience as he acknowledged the fact that some men also have problems in the way handle things.

Oh no, some females are good they are open, they accept and are willing to help others. I think they deserve to be managers too. kuhle umuphathi umtruste ngoba uzomdinga uma ususenkingeni, (you should trust your manager because you will need her when you are in trouble). Some males have problem in approaching a person.

The same question on whether males are better suited than females to fill the management position or not was also directed to Mrs. .Ntuli and her response showed that she was of an opinion that males and females should

be treated equally. She did not only respond on the basis of her experience alone but also on the basis of negative experiences she had had with her colleagues. She said:

I don't agree with that because now is the time for transformation, whereby males should change their style of perception about females. Males have long been holding leadership positions at churches, work and at home which was their refuge and depression for women because they had to do double duty. I don't think that only men should fill leadership position, because we are all educators and we all upgrade our profession through different tertiary institutions as part time students. I think it is the time that females get a chance of holding these positions too.

When one analyses Mrs. Ntuli's response one can see that she had been influenced by negative, sexist, perceptions and that these perceptions are held by both males and females. This was supported by the use of the collective noun 'people' in the quote about experiences. The opinions of the heads of the departments, (one female and one male), were overlapping significantly in some instances. Both of them understood that gender is +important and that gender prejudice exists. Their understandings reflected however their experiences and the positions they were holding towards this

issue. Mr. Khuzwayo was aware that his (and other men's) promotion prospects were being limited by current departmental promotion policy that favours women. He reacted by making an argument favouring men to be in management positions but his argument did not denigrate women. Mrs. Ntuli, on the other hand, was firmly in favour of gender transformation and the promotion of women into managerial positions. She showed little inclination to take an inclusive position on management position in schools.

The following sub-sections will be devoted to an examination and discussions of the perceptions of two females and two male educators towards female management.

4.5 The perceptions of female educators under female management

The two female educators Ms. Sithole and Mrs. Zungu were in agreement in their perceptions of the female management at school. When they were asked to say more about their experiences under female management, Mrs. Zungu said:

You can report any problem to the female principal, but some of males will think of you as someone who is not serious about work. You can't even tell your family problems to a male because he might

take advantage of you. The female principal can relate to her family experiences and find ways to help you.

Ms. Sithole, responding to the same question, said;

You don't feel free telling your family problems to a male principal it is better if it is a female because she will advice you from skills learnt from home however there are times when you really don't know what has happened when a female principal just become moody, you then start feeling it would be better if the principal were a male.

When they were asked if they would prefer to work under female or male manager their responses were:

Mrs. Zungu

I would prefer to work under a female principal because I am also a female. A female principal is humble and a male principal is sometimes harsh.

The second educator Ms.Sithole responded as follows to the above question:

I would prefer to work under a male principal because, female principals you know (bayanaka) they scrutinize minor things, they like scolding as if someone has been gossiping about her.

When Ms. Sithole was asked, what would she change if she were given the chance to manage at school? She responded by saying the following:

I would change the male power because males ogombelakwesabo (they are selfish),...they don't care about our feelings as long as they are happy, everything is okay. I would add more females because they know how to take care of children; they listen to their problems especially now that they live with dying parents who are HIV/AIDS positive. Some come to school without food and a female principal will go a step further to find food for those children.

The responses of Ms Sithole and Mrs. Zungu were overlapping. Ms. Sithole showed that she was more interested on the feminine side of the female principal, than her managerial part. She acknowledged the fact that females play a good role of femininity as care givers. However she was hesitant of a female principal as a manager, due to what she considered as weaknesses from her principal. It was hard to tell ascertain her perception about female principal however she saw both male and female principals as personnel

with different weaknesses. Mrs. Zungu's responses focused on one kind of perception, the perception that males are not better than females in management, in actual fact she favoured a female principal to a male principal. Mrs Zungu's response showed some negative gender experiences of man, this could relate to her difficulties with her own family background which influences her perception of male manager since her husband is not working thus is a breadwinner in her family.

4.6 The perception of two male educators towards female management

Mr. Khoza's perception of a female principal showed some resistance though he did not mention any problem, but had some reservations of her management because as a male he was given power to be in management affairs even though he was not a member of the SMT. Mr. Cele was lamenting about being under a female principal. When asked about their experiences under female management, Mr. Khoza said,

At first it was difficult and I really didn't know how to start, because in the past years I was working under a male principal. However working under a female principal has shown me some positive aspects about her because each time she does her work she would call upon males to verify that work.

Mr. Cele who posed himself as skeptical had a response that implicitly lamented the move, to take women into management positions:

The difference is that the male principal handles things properly. The male principal is in control of everything and has more confidence. The environment is sharp. The male principal is more respectful in his position, automatically. He knows exactly what to do. I have not seen a female of that character.

.....

After this comment one would think that Mr Cele would have nothing positive to say about female principals but when he was asked about his relationship with the principal he said:

The relationship with the female principal is good, but there are nasty things said about her, by others, because her personality is unstable. She loves to have meetings now and then, sometimes females waste time just gossiping.

Mr. Khoza agreed saying:

My preferences have always been that of a male principal.

Adding to the above about what he would change if he were given a chance in management, Mr. Khoza said:

I would add more males to schools however there are fewer males than females in general but we are strong.

These men's views indicated that not all men are opposed to women in management. Some men have difficulty accepting this but are submissive all the same. Some men displayed uncertainty in their opinions (in some respect they are positive, but in others they have reservations).

4.7 The obstacles in the way of a successful female manager

Mrs. Kheswa was asked if there were any obstacles that are preventing her from showing capabilities of fulfilling the role of a manager in her management position because she is a female. She answered:

The first difficulty is that sometimes the educators don't trust females. As a female they don't think I can manage, they compare me to a male manager. They see a female manager as someone who is overcrowded with family problems. I don't deny the fact that I sometimes have family problems but that is how I get the skills for counseling others at school, which I always do at home as parent and as a wife and as senior teacher at school. For an example if it were a male facing the educator the educator who has a serious

problem he wouldn't have a technical way to solve that problem. I do have obstacles but they make me stronger, which helps me to face any challenges at work, however my work comes first.

Mrs. Kheswa was aware that there was opposition to her among her counterparts, however she believed that she was a better manager because she had skills that she had acquired from being a mother that men do not ordinarily have.

Borrowing from De Witt (2006:23), women will use different styles when dealing with authority and delegation. There are all kinds of challenges that women face if they are to aspire to move up the ladder. Female managers, for example, are sometimes not seen or are evaluated as individuals. They are considered to be weak emotionally and if they are appointed they find themselves marginalized.

Mrs. Kheswa's response to the following question showed that although she was trying to make good relations in her school, but still she suffered stress due to educators who did not heed to her authority sometime. The research has shown that every woman has a problem with colleagues recognizing their authority (Chisholm 2001:381-390) Responding to the question, related to stress in the job? Mrs. Kheswa said:

I do stress and I feel angry if intimidated but I look for a relevant solution to solve that situation. Like if one is supposed to lead and one just ignores the work, to discipline him or her I simply do the job myself. I know that one-day they will have a problem when the In-service Quality Management Support (IQMS)) comes, as they will need me to evaluate and endorse their work. That is when they will automatically be self-disciplined to follow the instructions. However, it is just those individuals who try to add stress but as a manager I remind them of the school policy, which was designed by all the stakeholders of the school, and this keeps them disciplined and also keeps the relationship between us strong.

On analyzing Mrs. Kheswa's statement it prevailed that she was gender unbiased this is qualified by using the collective word 'they' or by using both pronouns 'him or her.' She is conscious that some obstacles result from male or female educators who are her subordinates who may resent or feel that she is insufficient or feels female principals give too many instructions as one of the participants said earlier on in this chapter: *She does not stick to her words. She gives too many instructions.*

I asked Mrs Kheswa if she saw any indication of support amongst educators concerning the advancement of Government Policy on women in management position, she replied:

Yes there is little evidence that, some females are striving to empower themselves but there should be a strong motivation, because some women still think it is the males who can automatically be trusted for senior positions.

Mrs Kheswa was not happy in the way some females perceive themselves due to stereotypes against them. She observed that some women have lost self esteem through being judged by their counter parts as inadequate beings for their competency. In this regard Greyventein (1989: 95) draws a conclusion that women will wait to be chosen, discovered, invited or persuaded to accept promotion management positions. According to this scholar, this is referred to as the psychological phenomenon where women feel unworthy of leadership positions unless someone discovers them.

4.8 The promotion of gender equity and equality at school

The main purpose of the curriculum is to develop students' minds in such a way that they know about the great ideals of life such as truth, beauty goodness, liberty, equality and justice (Adler, 1981). The principles of

gender equity and equality can be infused in these curricular goals to enhance and strengthen them. For this reason transformation in schools undertaken by curriculum developers and authors introduced gender sensitivity and sought to remove gender stereotypes. For example contemporary authors depict in the textbooks girls as electricians, boys as nurses. The new books remove the gendered bias that would have perpetuated patriarchal norms in society however not the entire out comes based education system have been transformed. Kotecha says that “schooling plays a central part in socializing boys and girls for their eventual contribution to economy: the cycle of gender differentiation is reproduced and reinforced in the classroom through the curriculum as well by way of educator expectations and the roles that male and female educators perform” (Kotecha, 1994, 22). The department of education has not only designed a policy document but has also provided it to all educators as a means of emphasis on the importance of knowing their rights in the work place. Although the idea in changing stereotypes was merely in favour of women, not all women are in favour of gender equity, equally not all men are against gender equity.

The following discussions are about HODs negative perceptions of female managers. I wanted to know how the HOD’s have involved themselves in

doing away with negative perceptions at their school. In working towards the answer above I asked the two HODs the following question: Have you promoted gender equity and equality in your school? Responding to this question Mrs. Ntuli answered:

I can point out few things that I have done to promote gender equity with my learners. I made a list of both girls and boys to sweep, and they all have the same responsibility. You know in the past you had things that were to be done by girls alone like cleaning, sweeping the floor and there were those that were to be done by boys only like cleaning the chalkboard, moving the desks and all the hard work.

The same question was also asked from Mr. Khuzwayo and his answer was:

I can't really remember how, but you know as a Head of Department I some time delegate duties to educators say if we have visitors males organize sports and females decide on meals, I don't say that females can't organize sports but you know females are very good in cooking. Some of the staff members help with some items for the learners to entertain our visitors.

Mrs. Ntuli appears to be promoting gender transformation in her school. She was also dedicated to upgrading herself to meeting the challenges of

negative perceptions of female managers. She knew that the upbringing of children from homes and schools would have an influence on the way the boys and girls would perceive each other in the future.

Mr. Khuzwayo, on the other hand, is still locked into the 'male-stream' way of thinking about the gendered nature of men and women's activities. The assumption that females can cook better than males is true at a given situation but through learning and training men too do become better cooks. Although his attitudes were 'traditional' and rely on gender stereotypes, he was not opposed to gender equity and was not standing in its way. In analyzing the findings, I discovered that the participants had different feelings about the female managers. Some were not concerned about who was managing the school while others did express their concern about the manager; however some men are still in the patriarchal system of thinking.

4.9 Summary of findings

Gendered perceptions about women in management in this study are drawn from different past experiences of educators. Most of their perceptions of a female manager were full of ambiguity and uncertainty for an example one female respondent suggested that she would prefer a male manager, but she would add more females to work with. I presume that this female was

conforming to patriarchal expectations which allow men to be leaders and females as followers. 75% of male's responses had positive perceptions to female management due to their past experience of female management although the latter had some reservations about female manager. The other 25% of males had negative perceptions of female management. It also emerged from this study that from both sides of males and females there was a resistance to certain aspects of the leadership of women when they take management positions. 75% of males supported the idea of female managers although stereotypes still hamper their way of thinking towards females. 75% of females were in full support of a female manager. One female acknowledged the fact that equality should be practiced in workplaces. They agree that giving females respect as they hold senior positions should eliminate gender-based discrimination. Out of 8 participants two were opposed of female management and 6 were in support of female management. Therefore it is not true that all males oppose female managers. The situation is filled with ambivalence and gender lines (of loyalty towards the female manager) are not clear.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapters have presented the reader with the background to this study, the relevant body of literature, methodological framework for the study and the actual data that were collected during the interview sessions. In this chapter, the discussions will attempt to answer the research questions in chapter one using the following themes, the experiences of females and males managers, female and male educators' perceptions of a female manager, and lastly the promotion of gender equity and equality by all educators.

5.2 The perceptions and experiences of school management team (SMT)

The findings in this study agree with research work done by other scholars Ngcobo (1996) and Blackmore (1999) and others female scholars who had interest in issues relating to women in management positions. This study and those of other scholars on gendered perceptions have revealed that female managers do experience problems in asserting their authority at the work place; however

it has also emerged from this study that 75% of both males and females give support to female managers. Nevertheless there are still those who are influenced by their negative experiences. This study focused on female and male educators who work under the leadership of a female manager. Coombs (2003: 8) suggests that 'Such obstacles are de-motivating to women and also cause the slowing down of women's promotional paths. The findings from this study showed that two out of three female educators interviewed, Mrs. Kheswa, Mrs. Ntuli and Mrs. Zungu supported the management of a female except Mrs. Sithole. Mrs Kheswa and Mrs. Ntuli were concerned about the educators who do not heed to their authorities. The above concurs with the findings by (Chisholm 2001: 387-390) where every woman that was interviewed had problems with their subordinates not accepting their authority once they had been appointed as managers. The female managers interviewed in Mbonisweni primary school also felt that some educators undermine their authorities.

Males were divided on this issue out of four males that were interviewed only one was totally against the idea of a male educator working under the management of a female.

There were various negative perceptions of female managers, one male educator gave an impression that the reason why woman are not favored to hold management position is that they are judged based on their body physical structure in comparison to that of their male counterpart which often leads to the conclusion that men are stronger, can face more difficult situations and should continue to hold management positions, this is qualified by using the word 'automatically'. The participant's argument is in consonance with (Lynch 1990: 2) who concludes that in spite of more than thirty years of data there is the perception that the ideal manager must be masculine. Lynch further adds that 'this male stereotype continues to be the dominant ideas of what a principal should be, in both schools and communities, a self-reliant, forceful, ambitious, and strong leader'.

The data revealed that that the manager is adversely affected by the negative perceptions of her by her counterpart and her educator, which makes her lose confidence and self-esteem. Although there were only 25% of the respondents with negative perception however, she claims that sometimes these perceptions serve to motivate her, and make her strive for success. In difficult times, she adopted some of the coping mechanisms and skills acquired from home at the workplace. According to her,

A woman may be faced with challenges at home like

sickness of a family member and/or might be expected to support the family; however she tries by all means to emerge above water.

Democratic South Africa has paved the way for women in numbers to assume senior management positions. The findings in this research contradict (Chisholm, 2001) findings that women were leaving management positions because of opposition. This study showed that women are experiencing less opposition from both males and females under their management although there are still preconceived perceptions which influence the way of thinking about the female managers

The findings in this study also revealed that female managers are able to use their position to bend teachers to their will. Under certain circumstances, for example during periods of accreditation and promotion, female managers are able to use their authority and power to ensure that teachers accept and respect them. The female manager said:

I know one day they will have a problem when the In-service Quality Management Support (IQMS) comes as they will need me to evaluate and endorse their work. This is when they will automatically be disciplined to follow the

instructions.

Some of the male teachers were ambivalent about their feeling towards female management. Mr Khuzwayo, for example, felt that some female managers were competent but qualified this by saying that they were sometimes grumpy and unreasonably demanding. The obvious conclusion one can draw from the comment is that the above male educator accepts a female manager even though he has some reservations.

Men generally realize that females have other responsibilities besides their schoolwork and they use this understanding to justify a critical attitude towards the female managers. Arguing that female managers place family responsibilities above their work, they claim that females are not always good or suitable candidates for management positions.

The perception that women cannot cope with management work due to their dual careers shows a lack of sensitivity to gender issues on the part of these men. Women do have domestic responsibilities to attend to, but I disagree that these responsibilities affect them negatively in their jobs. The domestic responsibilities of females seen by males is a fact, I would agree, but not in the sense that females cannot cope in managing their work but in the sense

that females carry major responsibilities in the household. Men who participate in household duties or caring run a risk of being regarded as sexual deviants (Acker 1994: 88). Nevertheless some men have changed and they do provide support in house chores. The household management role is a gender boundary, which remains contentious and difficult to dismantle (Lewis 1994: 231). The relationship and perceptions of educators and female managers hinge to some extent on the foregoing beliefs and teachings.

5.3 The perception and experiences of educators towards their female manager

Educators, male and female, are surprisingly ambivalent when it comes to their views about female managers and gender equity. However very few educators are totally not supportive and critical of female managers. One female educator, displayed two sides of her feelings about the female manager. First, she said that she would prefer to work under a male manager and then, when responding to the question relating to what she would change if she were appointed as manager, she stated that she would change male power because males are sometimes selfish and females take care. She was only concerned about the femininity part of a female as a care giver but did not support her as a manager. Mr. Cele initially also gave an

impression that he had nothing positive about the female manager, but surprising made positive statement about his relationship with female managers at school. This is what I would rather call gender inconsistency. In the light of this we need to acknowledge that feelings about gender equity are complex and, in addition, understandings of gender reflect the highly complex nature of gender relations.

...The findings discussed above show evidently that the stereotypes towards female managers do not come only from male but also from female employees. The problems associated with gender in the workplace may be due to the lack of promotion of gender equity and equity and equality at school. The following discussion will look at the involvement of educators in promoting the equity and equality amongst themselves.

5.4 The promotion of gender equity and equality by all educators

The two HODs (Mr. Khuzwayo and Mrs. Ntuli) responded differently to the question of how they would involve themselves in promoting gender equity and equality. The participants had ample time to enable them to discuss exhaustively their positions on the subject matter. In their responses, they were expected to elaborate on the methods that they would adopt in

promoting gender equity and equality at school. The female HOD had some understanding of gender issues but she could not elaborate on how gender differences affect the perception of her learners. The male HOD did not consider the promotion of gender equity and equality important. Although, one can conclude that Mr. Khuzwayo has been influenced by his traditional beliefs, however his viewpoints were not prejudicial to female management.

If the responses of the two participants on the above topic of promotion of equity and equality are an indication then one could say that there is a lack of effective implementation of policies on gender transformation in schools. The use of the Employment of Educators Act, No.76 of 1998 can enhance and accelerate the implementation of policy on gender equity and equality.

5.5 Recommendations

There should be the promotion of the mindset that women are competent both at home and at work. The educational sector will rely on the cooperation of the wider society. Such changes would include an expansion on the definition of childcare, maternal and parental rights (Moss 1995: xxii). Findings in this study revealed that the female manager had problems with the Governing Body because they were expecting a male to take up the position of the school principal. According to Mrs. Kheswa:

Some members of the School Governing Body SGB expected to get a male however my strong motivation kept me going.

This was also the case in my school, Vela primary, when the SGB was not in, the female deputy chairperson could not make any decision, despite the fact that the female principal was there.

The school Governing Bodies should also have workshops dealing with this issue in-order to eliminate discriminatory practices and biased decisions they make when conducting interviews and even when the female manager has taken the position. All school Stakeholders should support all managers regardless of gender.

5.6 Conclusion

This research project and its findings hope to act as an eye opener to educators, researchers and other stakeholders in the field of education. Further research is recommended to assess the extent of transformation taking place in the educational sector.

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