A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF WOMEN PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADS' EXPERIENCES AS EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN POST COLONIAL ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

This research study was carried out in order to gain an understanding of the experiences of women primary school heads, their perceptions of their roles as leaders, the challenges they face and how they dealt with them. The study focused on the lived experiences of five women in Zimbabwe's primary schools.

Literature relating to the issues and experiences of women in educational leadership within school contexts and the conceptual framework is examined. The importance of leadership has been emphasised in the literature of school effectiveness. Leadership theories tended to emphasise measurability and effectiveness of leadership, oversimplifying the complexity of leadership phenomenon. These features reflect research approach adopted by researchers from a positivist orientation.

This study is an in-depth qualitative study conducted along the lines suggested by a phenomenological-interpretivist design with emphasis on rich contextual detail, close attention to individual's lived experience and the bracketing of pre-conceived notions of the phenomenon. Views and experiences based on the participants' perspectives are described through in-depth interviews which were dialogical in nature. Through this approach, I managed to grasp the essences of the lived experiences of women

The research highlights the women's perceptions of themselves as educational leaders. What emerges is the variety of approaches to handling challenges. My findings show a rich and diverse culture of *creativity* in the way participants adopted a problem-solving strategy, which is not reflected in the mainstream leadership. Though educational leadership emerges as a complex phenomenon, with alternative approaches to educational research, there is high potential for increased understanding of woman's leadership, its importance and implications for school.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

My interest in the topic of women in leadership has been an abiding one for as long as I can remember. From an academic point of view, however, my interest was aroused by a course I followed in New Zealand entitles *Women and Educational Leadership*. This course greatly assisted me in developing an awareness of the problematic nature of gender and educational leadership issues, not only in developing countries, but also in western societies.

Topics like women in management, female styles of leadership, disadvantages suffered by girls and women in terms of career opportunities and the under-representation of women in managerial and leadership positions further provoked my thinking leading me to develop an interest in wanting to know more about those women who seem to be leading effectively and are in positions of authority. In interrogating this issue more carefully I found myself questions similar to those raised by Soobrayan (1998:38):

> Do women who attain leadership positions transform themselves to fit into pre-conceived roles or do they re-define leadership in terms of their own experiences and ways of thinking and knowing?

This is so because women who do rise to leadership positions today almost invariably find themselves in male dominated contexts. This is clearly what Soobrayan has in mind in raising the above questions. For me the question became: What, therefore, are women leaders' *lived experiences,* and how do they perceive their roles as educational leaders since they have ventured into male dominated domains?

To explore these questions I set out to investigate the women principals' perceptions and experiences of their leadership roles within school environments. Through my central research question: *What are the women school heads' perceptions of their role, and lived experiences as educational leaders?* I hoped to illuminate these and other questions. I shall also argue that women in educational leadership positions tend to go unnoticed and un-researched, and their beliefs and experiences have not been duly considered.

Two publications dating from 1998 - Drake and Owen (1998) and Gordon, Swainson, Bondera, and Kadzamira (1998) drew attention to the paucity of research into gender in education issues in Zimbabwe. Gordon *et al.* (1998:92) went on to observe that there is an urgent need to a better understanding of women's leadership, particularly in Zimbabwe where "very little in-depth qualitative research on gender and education has been undertaken". A more informed discussion on women in educational leadership can be hampered by the paucity of literature on the subject, as has been observed by Gordon *et al.* (1998:92) who found that in Zimbabwe "...where gender concerns are raised, they form only one section of articles, papers and research reports on education, or only one section of overviews of gender issues". The position has changed in many parts of the world, but, to my knowledge, not in Zimbabwe, a fact that further motivated this study.

1.2 Research goals and questions

The intention in this study with regards to women educational leaders' lived experiences was to gather quality and in-depth information, and this remained the main goal of this study. This study focusing on women's lived experiences, their roles and perceptions had four specific objectives namely:

- To examine women principals' perceptions of their roles as leaders within the school context.
- To examine women principals' perceptions of their leadership styles.

- To examine and interrogate the challenges women face as educational leaders in primary schools
- To identify strategies women school principals use to overcome these challenges.

A phenomenological approach helped me to develop an understanding of how women see their roles, grounded in their own understanding and worldview, using their cognitive maps in understanding and interpreting the world around them. Hence, the study sought to explore and document the perceptions and experiences of five women principals of primary schools, in Mashonaland East Province in Zimbabwe. The method and tools in relation to this approach are expanded on later in chapter three.

1.3 Origin of this study

The kinds of issues and questions that pre-occupied my mind could best be understood in the light of my own background which reflects a family life that perpetuated patriarchy and gender inequity leading to the disadvantage of the girl child in terms of her career opportunities and/or social justice at the work places. My understanding of and interest in the topic I have pursued for my doctorate draws on my experiences as a secretary, teacher, and later a university lecturer, all achieved after a struggle.

With the exception of my university studies my parents had a strong bearing on my schooling and educational attainment. Being the second born and first daughter in a family of six, four boys and two girls, my education was cut short after two years of secondary school. This decision from my parents came as a result of my elder brother's decision to undertake his mechanical welding course after completing form two i.e. two years of secondary education, and I as a female, was not allowed to advance and to become educated more than my brother.

My experience seems to relate well with Okin's (1989:16) observation that "the family is a crucial determinant of our opportunities in life of what we become" and that "the opportunities of girls and women are centrally affected by the structure and practices of family life". From the above view it would also appear that what parents value in relation

to their children's futures determines the level of education the child gets and the kind of individual (socially and morally) that child will be as an adult person. The valuing of sons' education more than that of daughters' seems to be a phenomenon that occurs worldwide. Parents in developing countries - such as Zimbabwe - in particular saw and perhaps still see their sons' education as an investment; in other words they were not just educating a child. Parents believed that girls would eventually marry and leave their natal homes hence girls were mostly prepared for marriage. This in a way contributed to gender imbalances in workplaces leading for instance to the under-representation of women in educational leadership positions. Women's under-representation - though not the focus of this study - provides a backdrop against which I attempt to understand the lives of women in educational leadership positions particularly those in Zimbabwe, where this study was conducted. I return to this issue in Chapter 2.

It is important that I now look briefly at the broader context in which the research is situated.

1.4 A brief history of Zimbabwe's educational system

Like other developing countries, Zimbabwe has a rich diversity of cultures with political, social and economic features rooted in tradition and patriarchal values (Jayaweera 1997). Implications for such values will be elaborated on in the next chapter. Zimbabwe is one of the Southern African Development Community (SADC)) countries of sub-Saharan Africa. In 1980, Zimbabwe, a British colony formerly known as Rhodesia became independent. In many ways colonisation contributed further to entrench women's oppression since the focus of social concern was usually race. O'Callaghan and Austin (1977) observed that before Zimbabwe's independence, schools were dominated by racial discrimination and later the discourse of black male-female inequalities. Little attention was given to gender issues.

The Rhodesian government policies for African education drastically reduced enrolments by introducing bottlenecks and fees so that only a few could afford to pay (Mlahleki

1995:84). This prevented many young Africans, particularly girls, from attending school. In short, African education did not expand, such that at independence in 1980 "there were literally thousands of young people waiting to [enter] any door of any school at their levels" (Chikomba 1988:12).

To demonstrate the extent to which the Zimbabwean system of education quantitatively expanded Chikomba highlighted trend for ten to fifteen more years after independence, as reflected in the table below.

Table 1: 1979-1982 and 1985 Enrolments by Level and Types of Education

	1979	1980	1981	1982	1985	Increase
Primary	819,586	1,235,994	1,715,169	1,934,614	2.5M	205%
Secondary	66,215	74,321	14,869	224,584	442,584	538%
Colleges	2,249	2,829	3,610	4,873	17,000	656%
Univ. of Zimbabwe	1,481	1,873	2,535	3,091	5,000	238%

Initially, primary schools, which numbered about 2, 401, increased to 4,161 and the enrolment, which stood at 819,586 in 1979, increased to about 2.5 million in 1985. At independence only 40% of primary schoolchildren were in school and in 1985 the enrolment role rose to 93% of this age group. When the Zimbabwe government "initiated mass, free education to eradicate educational inequalities that existed during the colonial period" (Gordon *et al.* 1998:85), the rate of expansion of schooling in the first decade of independence 1980–1990 was phenomenal, but gender was still not an issue in educational policy (Gordon, 1994).

Despite the increase in enrolments fewer girls were enrolled than boys which meant that fewer girls reached the level required for transition to secondary and tertiary. With regards to issues concerning women's careers going back to the late 1970s, O'Callaghan and

Austin (1977) found that women undertook training in the lowest level of the teaching profession such as infant and the domestic sciences areas. Men dominated higher-level teacher training.

It is through socialisation that women are often steered away from leadership positions as Gaidzanwa (1993:3) noted: "...women are not expected to aspire to the same high professional and occupational status as men Gordon (1994) revealed that there has been a high dropout rate of girls since 1980, especially after the re-introduction of school fees in 1992. The higher the level of education, the fewer the girls become. Gordon *et al.* (1998) further acknowledged that men outnumbered women in technical education colleges, with the exception of teacher training colleges, where since 1993 more women have been enrolled than men. The proportion of women teachers is said to have risen from 39% in 1985 to 50% in 1995. Yet despite the increase of women teachers, women are still under-represented in key areas of the economy and the teaching profession (Gordon *et al.* 1998; Drake and Owen, 1998). According to the Harare regional director's monthly report (August 1998), of the 5 741 primary school teachers, 4 245 were women, and of the 3 758 secondary school teachers 2 346 were females. When it came to headship, out of 162 primary school principals 12 were women and out of the 123 deputy principals only 7 were women.

Against this brief educational background it is clear that the issue of gender in educational settings particularly in Zimbabwe has historically roots, hence, the importance of this particular kind of history to this study, as it provides a backdrop against which I attempt to understand the lives of women who are in leadership positions within school settings in Zimbabwe. To understand challenges the women face within their context, it is important to take note of the country's educational history.

1.4.1 Lack of resources and the implications for schools heads

While education in Zimbabwe expanded at all levels this created its own problems particularly the lack of resources both human (mostly teachers) and financial (for funding physical facilities) resources. The lack of funds did not affect programmes only but the availability of physical facilities such as classrooms, desks and chairs, science kits, books and other stationery. This problem of the shortage of resources had a direct impact on school leaders as the schools were supposed to continue functioning despite all the hardships and limited resources. Chikomba (1988:25) acknowledged that "many new schools have had to operate *under trees* and or *under the blazing sun* with constant disturbances by torrential rains in rural areas", and this kind of school set up has been metaphorically named 'hot sitting' (or 'hot seating'). The situation required school principals with innovative skills. Yet despite the highlighted problems, the expansion of education in Zimbabwe was both inevitable and desirable given the context and situation noted above.

It is important at this point to define some of the terms used in this thesis, such as the SDA, SDC, authority and 'hot-sitting' since these concepts emerge in the data.

1.5 Classification of schools and defining terms that emerge in data

The Education Act (1996:619) suggests that:

> Schools in Zimbabwe shall be classified as either Government schools or non-Government schools; and in such other categories as the Minister may determine, taking into account the social and economic standards of the communities in which the schools concerned are situated.

In the field of education in Zimbabwe there is the School Development Committee (SDC) for non-government schools and School Development Association (SDA) for government

schools. These committees mobilise parents in the building of schools, the paying of levies and they see to it that the school fulfils its function. The SDC is a committee that provides and assists the operation and development of the school within a non-governmental school. It promotes the welfare of the school for the benefit of its present and future pupils and their parents and teachers. It is charged with control of the financial affairs of the school for which it has established. In the exercise of its functions a School Development Committee has the power to employ, hire or fire the staff in order to serve the needs of the school, and this power is exercised with the approval of the Minister.

The School Development Association provides the same services as that for the SDC committee with only small differences since the SDA represents Government schools. SDA members are elected parents of the pupils enrolled at the school and the teachers employed at those schools. This body serves to promote and encourage the development and maintenance of the school, and assists in the advancement of moral, cultural and intellectual welfare of pupils at the school.

The responsible authority (in relation to a school) refers to the person, body or organisation responsible for the establishment and management of that school (Education Act 1996:619).

'Hot sitting' is used as a metaphor referring to classes conducted outside the buildings, in the "blazing sun" as Chikomba (1988) suggests. It is perhaps a variant of 'hot-seating' a term that refers to double session or platoon schooling.

1.6 A few words on methodology

In this study I was concerned with gathering high quality and in-depth information. A phenomenological approach helped me to gain access to women's lived experiences and enabled me to understand their perceptions of leadership from their perspectives, using their cognitive maps in understanding and interpreting the world around them. This

approach allowed the women to express their views and experiences and in the process my objectives were also achieved.

It is my hope therefore that this study will create an awareness of the importance of women's leadership role in schools. This study will also help to fill the gap in research on women and educational leadership and gender issues in the Zimbabwean schools. It will hopefully contribute to the literature on education and gender awareness in schools, and may be useful to those in leadership positions, and those who write policy and leadership development programmes and briefs. Its chief value may lie simply in the role it might play in drawing attention to a neglected field.

1.7 How the thesis is organised

Chapter One is the introduction, highlighting my reason for doing this research, what attracted me to this topic and my personal experience from which part of the interest sprang. This chapter also gives a brief overview of the educational system in Zimbabwe as and highlights key issues that form the backdrop for this research. The chapter tries to situate or put into context both the study and the researcher. It has outlines the topic and the goal of the study and makes brief reference to the methodology.

Chapter Two constitutes a review of leadership literature that is pertinent to the current study. It examines leadership and organisational theory, arguing the point that women's views, beliefs and values have largely been ignored and neglected in leadership research. It examines further the power concept in leadership and the women's views and perceptions of their roles and lived experiences in search for a re-conceptualisation of leadership.

Chapter Three highlights the research approach, and also describes the process, justifying the use of the phenomenological approach used in this study. The chapter presents an account of the how the research was conducted.

In Chapter Four the research findings are presented. It is in this chapter where the first set of situated descriptions for the five participants is presented and the essences of their experiences explicated. Each participant's description is based on meaning units obtained from the participants' interview protocols, which appear in the Meaning Unit section from page 191 onwards.

The discussions then move on to Chapter Five where there is a presentation of more concretely situated descriptions of the five women school leaders' lived experiences. Chapter Six describes significant themes that emerged from Chapter Four and Five through rigorous reflections of each participant's descriptions.

Chapter Seven discusses the women's experiences, their views, perceptions and the challenges they faced, linking and comparing them with other research findings and identifying new questions. In this chapter I also consider how important the phenomenological approach has been in illuminating the questions in this study.

Chapter Eight is the conclusion, which is a critical reflection of the phenomenological approach and its usefulness to the study. It considers the limitations of this study and offers suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the educational leadership experiences of a selected group of women school principals, (contextualised in male-dominated societal and organisational structures) in Zimbabwe. This chapter provides a conceptual and theoretical framework of this study, from a review of literature on women and educational leadership, focusing firstly on society (i.e. the family and education) as one of the contexts in which the experiences of women leaders can be explored. Maddock (1999) and Wacjman (1998) emphasise the need to tie in the cultural obstacles women leaders face in organisations with the wider social situations of women. Blackmore (1998:93) observed that historically, schools have been organised in hierarchical ways in which authority is considered as legitimate and is accorded to the principal, who generally is male. Hence traditional leadership and organisational theory – being the dominant paradigm - helps to frame the context in which women leaders operate. Alternative views are also explored in this chapter with particular focus on the current thinking of women and leadership and women heads' perceptions and experiences.

I begin by exploring issues on gender and educational leadership. My first focus is on the problem of a gender stereotyping in education. The purpose is to explore literature and find out how education has served largely to maintain the 'status quo' in gender relations, reflecting on continuing inequalities in male and female access to power and resources in the wider society. The next focus is on the family as the initial institution where much of the social construction of gender takes place. The purpose is to reflect on how patriarchal norms strengthen and emphasise gender difference, and how men's dominance in leadership positions is linked to societal values. By presenting a brief review of the relevant literature on the under-representation of women in educational leadership, I

provide a backdrop that helps one to appreciate the *context* in which women principals operate, and in the process, helps in fostering an understanding of how *women experience leadership.*

The second section looks at the evolution of mainstream leadership theory, from 'great man' to contingency theory, and how thinking has continued to shift, based on research, to transformational theory. The purpose is to explore literature on traditional approaches to leadership within the functionalist paradigm, and find out how dominating leadership and management theory has shaped the assumptions, beliefs and values that have become the underpinnings of leadership and organisational theory. Using literature I also highlight how the assumption of the universality of the male experience has been the consequence of a privileging of positivist knowledge claims and research approaches. This helps in fostering an understanding of the context in which women leaders who attain leadership positions are coming from, and perhaps contributes to our understanding of how *women experience leadership.*

The third section reflects on alternative and emerging view of leadership, such as constructivist and distributed leadership, and leadership for social justice and this is followed by a discussion of organisation theory since leadership does not function in a vacuum.

The fifth section offers a feminist critique of traditional leadership theory. Feminist literature reflects on the shortcomings of mainstream approaches to leadership research arguing that research has often been dominated by approaches which search for reality and for true findings that validate a predetermined set of hypotheses. Hence the approaches to leadership present seemingly neutral and unproblematic accounts that ignore issues associated with gender and inequalities in organisational life, and power differentials and organisations.

This is followed by historical accounts on how some of the concepts adopted by female leaders and/or women's approaches originated, for instance women leaders associating

their role with motherly care and love/nurturing. The section presents a story of women in leadership.

Mindful of the idea that sometimes leadership is perceived as empowering others I examine leadership as empowerment and enrichment in the sixth section of this chapter by discussing literature on women's perceptions of their leadership roles and how it is different from the historical management practice that emphasise manipulation. In this section the work of Hurty is of particular importance in that, consistent with my study, Hurty focuses on school principals' experiences. Her study presents findings on a special type of approach to leadership which characterises empowerment of the whole school community - teacher, pupil and the community - and hence its importance.
Finally in the seventh section a discussion of the coping strategies women use to ward off challenges and to communicate or understand others' interests or needs is presented. The conclusion revisits some of the salient issues pertaining to school principals and educational leadership.

2.2 Gender and educational leadership

Historically men have dominated the field of leadership and management positions in education (Enomoto 2000:375). It follows that public power has been a male preserve and been mostly out of reach of women. However, literature shows that women and other minorities have increasingly assumed leadership positions, thus gaining greater access to previously male-dominated arenas (*Ibid.*). Other studies on women managers' experiences suggest that women's conception of leadership is very different from those of men (Blackmore 1998; Drake and Owen 1998; Eisler 1994; Enomoto 2000; Fennell 2001; Helgesen 1995; Hurty 1995; Kark 2004; 2005; Mathur-Helm; Rosener 1990; Shakeshaft 1999; Soobrayan 1998). The challenge for women who are beginning to achieve positions of leadership is whether to transform themselves to fit into a preconceived role, or to re-define leadership in terms of their own experiences and ways of thinking (Soobrayan 1998:38).

It is however important to recognise that "the concept of leadership does not enjoy any ontological status free from the machinations of society" and that "one of the fundamental premises of a patriarchal society is that power is vested in the hands of men" (Soobrayan 1998:39). It can be argued that in order to address the issues that are central to the present study the significance of the sociological phenomenon of gender in leadership be examined from educational and societal perspectives.

2.2.1 Gender stereotyping in education – what impact does it have on women?

The goal of gender equity in education has been on the agenda of national governments internationally for some time now. However, Leach (1998:50) claimed that "education has served largely to maintain the 'status quo' in gender relations, reflecting continuing inequalities in male and female access to power and resources in the wider society". For instance in Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Education Sports and Culture (MOESC) in association with UNICEF (1998) observed that there is a gender stereotyping in education. In school text books women and men are portrayed according to culturally accepted gender role definitions; that is, women as mothers and housewives and men performing outdoor activities (Sharma 2000). In Zimbabwe, the teaching starts at home where boys and girls perform different duties, and are always reminded to act or behave like a boy or girl if they are perceived as tending to behave outside the expected norm. The schools then serve as agents of the society by transmitting the values of society to the pupils. Russell (2001:78), discussing the role of values in leadership suggested, "Persona values affect moral reasoning, behaviour, and leadership style". Yet leaders' value cording Bass (1990), may also be a function of education and cognitive style.

ilar situation existed in New Zealand as evidenced by O'Neill's (1992:62) assert gendered-type subject areas led to a limited range of "gendered-typed ca mities". The humanities and arts subjects were said to be the girls' 'soft' cho ground to such subjects was identified as leading women into the nurturing, c e-oriented occupations (O'Neill 1992). While girls were perceived as hav

choice in their career path, Blackmore (1992:85) argued that "girls were actively encouraged to leave school" at a lower level than boys and to pursue certain career options. Literature reveals that focus should be put not only on education as problematic, but society's influence on career choices inclusive of family since; "the results of socialisation and the historical dominance of men over women . . . are not easily overcome" (Acker and Feuverger in Cubilo and Brown 2003:281).

2.2.2 Family as the determinant of both moral development and career opportunity

The issue of opportunities relating to girls and women has been well articulated by Okin (1989:18) who argued that, "the family is a crucial determinant of our opportunities in life of what we become". This argument stems from the notion that much of the social construction of gender takes place within the family particularly in the area of parenting. Her belief is that almost every person in society starts life in a family of some sort, and while the form varies it is the potential place where people do or do not learn to be just. She believes that the family is important for the moral development of individuals, especially the development of a sense of justice that grows from sharing the experiences of others and becoming aware of the points of view of others who are different (Okin 1989:18).

The issue of moral development of individuals, a sense of justice and appreciation of others is further explored by Russell (2001:77) in a review of literature regarding "values in leadership" reflecting on what influences personal values and choices, the social context in which they develop, such as the school and the family. Kuczmarski and Kuczmarki (1995) also specified factors that create values, some of them growing from childhood experiences. It can be argued that this is a simplistic generalisation that does not hold true for all children. However further examples can be found, such as Giligan's (in Soobrayan 1998:41) study of female psychology; she observed that:

> Male children learn to put winning ahead of personal relationships or growth; to feel comfortable with rule, boundaries and procedures, and to submerge their individuality for the greater goal of the game. Females learn to value co-operation and relationships; to disdain complex rules and authoritarian structures; and to disregard abstract notions like the quest for victory if they threaten the harmony of the group as a whole.

Similarly Butz and Lewis (cited in Russell 2001:76) noted that "males differ from females in their moral reasoning modes, with females showing higher relationship and caring characteristics". Russell believed that leaders may themselves be moral or immoral; however, personal values of leaders have very significant effect on leader-follower relationships. Russell (2001:76) perceived "values" as "important parts of each individual's psyche", as they are "core beliefs ... the underlying thoughts that stimulate human behaviour".

Among the theorists of justice who articulate similar views is Rawls (2003), who argues that a just, well ordered society would be stable only if its members continue to develop a sense of justice. Thus Rawls sees the family as the foundation for building or developing in individuals a sense of justice through early teaching and socialisation. The family can also foster a sense of injustice in family members choosing, for example, to educate one child at the expense of another because of his or her gender.

Okin similarly (1989:22) sees the family as the first "series of associations" in which we participate and from which we acquire the crucial capacity of a sense of justice, to see things from the perspective of others. It can be argued therefore that if the family is the primary institution of formative moral development the structures and practices of the family must parallel those of the larger society if a sense of justice is to be fostered and maintained, and be committed to equal respect for all its members (Okin 1989:22). It is therefore essential that children who are to develop into adults with a strong sense of justice and commitment to just institutions spend their earliest and most formative years in an environment in which they are loved and nurtured and in which principles of justice are practised.

Apart from – or in addition to – the influence of upbringing a gendered career path, whether through choice or channelling, contributes to the under-representation of women in school management (Blackmore 1996:1998; Mumba 1997), an argument to which I now turn.

2.2.3 Under-representation of women in positions of authority

Literature shows that for both developed (Acker 1994; Court 1994; Blackmore 1998; Shakeshaft 1999; Cubillo and Brown 2003;) and developing countries (Dorsey 1996; McFadden 1997; Gordon *et al.* 1998; Oplatka 2002; Chitiga 2003; Kark 2004; Mathur-Helm 2005), women are under-represented in positions of authority in educational settings. In Western countries such as the United Kingdom (UK) and New Zealand, there are authors who have acknowledged the disparities between women's numbers in the teaching profession and their representation at senior levels (Court 1993; Blackmore 1992; 1999; and Wilson 1997). Male dominance has been observed in 'top' leadership positions women populate the lower levels of teaching and administrative hierarchies (Acker 1994; Court 1994; Blackmore 1998; Shakeshaft 1999; Smulyan 2000).

A publication by Wilson (2004) examines the situation of women in educational management in Europe from the 1990s. Her book exposes prospects of women's promotion in the education professional field, the obstacles to progress in that area and women's overall situation. She argues that gender was treated as a marginal issue in the literature on school leadership, yet "teaching represented one of the most highly feminised of all professions and in many countries it has been one of the few traditional avenues for female advancement". Since the under-representation of women has been extensively explored in developed countries, I will briefly concentrate my review on the countries that have received less coverage due to scarce literature on the issue, but are relevant to the topic of interest for this study.

In Zimbabwean schools a decade ago more than half of the teaching population was female. However, it was also true - as the Zimbabwe Teacher's Association (ZIMTA 1994:36) pointed out - that "women are generally employed in subordinate positions". Despite the existence of a women's promotional policy (Public Service Circular no 4 of 1991) in favour of women in Zimbabwe, school leadership up to now has remained male dominated. Similar trends have been observed in other African countries (McFadden 1997).

In South Africa black women have faced and are currently facing a dual challenge in attaining top management positions (Booysen 1999). This is simply because gender in South Africa is racially and culturally segmented as it takes on a particular apartheid-related characteristic, thus marginalizing all other forms of discrimination creating inequality among black and white women (Mathur-Helm 2005:66). This was the situation with Zimbabwean women before independence and to a lesser extent still is. In Tanzania, "women are poorly represented in the decision-making structures" in senior management positions and other areas within the employment sector (McFadden 1997:31). A regional update on women in decision-making positions at a workshop held in Zimbabwe on organisational development revealed that although the Zambian constitution does not bar women from holding positions of authority, very few women occupy such positions (McFadden 1997:31) A similar situation was observed in Kenya where women, as elsewhere, are under-represented in leadership positions. In Ghana too women were still under-represented in decision-making positions. Some writers – such as Kofi (1997:32) - argue somewhat naively that "one of the reasons for women not being in decision-making positions is that there are not enough educated women", an argument that of course misses the point since one should be asking why there are so few 'educated women'. Literature shows that sex role socialisation (Blackmore 1996:1998) and "the concept of the women's true sphere" (Shakeshaft 1999:102) contributed to the under-representation of women in the twentieth century in developed countries such as the United States where

teaching was seen as the proper sphere for a woman because it prepared her for the work of marriage and motherhood.

The next section focuses on mainstream leadership since it constitutes the context in which women's educational leaders are venturing.

2.3 The evolution of mainstream leadership thinking and its impact on women leaders

While leadership has been studied extensively in various contexts and theoretical frameworks and described in countless different ways it is nevertheless possible to identify a key tension which seems to underpin the construct. This tension may be described as a task-person orientation. For some theorists the task dimension dominates. Hemphill, in Hoy and Miskel (1987:270), for example, argues that to lead is to "engage in an act that initiates a structure in interaction as part of the process of solving a mutual problem". For others the person dimension is presented in terms of task-orientation, so that leadership emerges as a process of influencing subordinates in setting and achieving goals of an organisation or a school (Connelly, Gibson and Ivancevich (1987). A similar notion underpins many definitions of leadership. Yukl's (2002:3) definition, for example, reflects the assumption that leadership "involves a social influence process, whereby intentional influence is exerted by one person (or group) over other people (or group) to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation". Here the notion of influence is foregrounded, another central element in many definitions of leadership. The influence process of leadership is purposeful in that it is intended to lead to specific outcomes. For instance in schools, leaders may use intellectual stimulation (Geijsel *et al.* 2003) to encourage their subordinates to think in innovative ways or be creative. Cuban (1988:193) sees leadership as involving "people who bend the motivations and actions of others to achieving certain goals, and that it implies taking initiatives and risks".

However dominant task-orientation may be the involvement of other people shows that leadership is a group (or interactive) experience. It is clear that one cannot be a leader on her/his own.

Yukl's (2002: 3) reference to the role of leadership in *structuring* tasks and relationships suggests a view of leadership that is similar to management. Indeed, literature presents the concept of leadership as closely related to management (or administration as it is known in the USA) and I need to consider how important it is to make a distinction between the two. The term *management* derives its meaning from 'manage' which means 'to handle' 'to organise' or 'to carry out for a purpose'. The concept of management is seen to be rooted in Taylor's background and experience as a labourer, clerk machinist and chief engineer whose belief was that individuals could be programmed to be efficient machines (Hoy and Miskel 1987:8); hence management of schooling can be seen to be directed toward the achievement of certain educational objectives. Current literature, however, shows that empowering employees is a key factor in managerial and organisational effectiveness (Moye, Henkin and Eagley 2005:260), an understanding that moves the concept closer to what we understand by leadership.

A common trend in literature is to stress the interdependence of the two phenomena. Bush (2004:8), for example, argues that "leadership and management need to be given equal prominence if schools and colleges are to operate effectively and achieve their objectives". Bolman and Deal (1997: xii-xiv) similarly illustrated the importance and connectedness of the two concepts by indicating that:

> Organisations, which are over managed but under led, eventually lose any sense of spirit or purpose. Poorly managed organisations with strong charismatic leaders may soar temporarily only to crash shortly thereafter. The challenge of modern organisations requires the objective perspective of the manager as well as the flashes of vision and commitment wise leadership provides.

Both leadership and management are thus often regarded as essentially practical activities that involve action. Hence, while I do not report on management thinking *per se* it is important to bear in mind that practitioners – such as my research participants – may not see the distinction very clearly, and may at times describe 'management' rather than 'leadership'.

Before presenting an account of theoretical trends I need to write a few words on the role and value of theory. The importance of theory to any academic study cannot be over-emphasised. It is only through theory that one can 'make sense' of one's data and make a contribution to the field. Owens (2001:33) emphasised the interdependence of theory and practice stating that while it is theory that provides the rationale for what one does, "practice simply cannot be isolated from theory". Theory seeks to explain practice and provides leaders with a guide to action. Theories of leadership for instance, attempt to explain factors involved either in the emergence of leadership or the nature of leadership and its consequences (Bass 1990). Leadership theory therefore has implications for what goes on in schools and how leaders evolve and cope in changing times, such as the turbulent conditions under which school leaders in the current study operate and survive in Zimbabwe. Bush (2004:22) argues that while "practitioners tend to be dismissive of theories and concepts for their alleged remoteness from the real school situation" theory is supposed to inform practice and should be genuinely applicable to school settings. Hence features of leadership theory call for close scrutiny and provide my next focus. Here I briefly identify broad sweeps in the evolution of leadership theory over the past hundred years. This is not meant to be an exhaustive review: it is included here simply as a backdrop to emerging, current trends.

2.3.1 Trait theory

The earliest work in leadership research examined leadership traits. The trait approach to leadership emphasises the innate rather than learned psychological differences. Hoy and Miskel (1996:376) argued that "many individuals still believe, as Aristotle did centuries ago, that from the hour of birth some are marked for subjection, others for rule",

suggesting that the trait approach is by no means dead and gone. Aristotle thought that individuals were born with characteristics that would make them leaders, and leaders according to Hoy and Miskel (1996) were generally regarded as superior individuals who, because of their fortune inheritance or social circumstances, possessed qualities and abilities that differentiated them from people in general. This theory of dominated the study of leadership until the 1950s. Researchers using this approach "attempt to isolate specific traits that endow leaders with unique qualities that differentiate them from their followers" (Hoy and Miskel 1987:271), and such traits include physical characteristics (height, weight), a host of personality factors, values, energy, task and interpersonal competence, intelligence and charisma. Trait research came to an end in the late 1940s, replaced by the belief that a person does not become a leader by virtue of the possession of some combination of traits because the impact of traits varies widely from situation to situation (Stogdill in Hoy and Miskel 1996:377). Bass (1990:38), however, has argued that despite such misgivings about trait approaches to leadership 'The Great-man' theory of leadership is currently "espoused by those who show how faltering business corporations are turned around by transformational leaders", a notion I return to later.

Feminists regard trait thinking as by nature "gender stereotypic" (Blackmore 1998:102) since the approach assumes innate differences and while the construct of leadership remains male-gendered ideal types would obviously exhibit the desired traits. As Blackmore's (1998:103) put it:

> ...regardless of the appropriateness of the leadership style adopted by female leaders, their competence is judged according to whether the task itself is perceived to be masculine or feminine.

2.3.2 Situational theory

Situational theory developed in reaction to trait thinking and was pioneered by members of the Personnel Research Board at Ohio State University, especially Hemphill, Stogdill and Shartle (Watkins 1998:14). The Ohio school sought to define leadership behaviour in

terms of certain situational variables such as the nature and distance of group goal and motivation of the group, and as these factors vary with the situation, leadership would vary. Situational theorists believed that "leadership is all a matter of situational demands", that is situational factors determine who will emerge as a leader (Bass 1990:38). Describing leader behaviour was an amalgam of the perceptions of the leader's subordinates and the way in which the leader him/herself perceived his/her own attitude toward his/her role (Watkins 1998).

Halpin's (1969:313) studies of educational administrators and aircraft commanders promoted a view of effective leadership which was characterised by "high consideration" and "high initiation of structure" (the task-person tension mentioned earlier), notions isolated as the basic dimensions of leadership behaviour in formal organisations. Halpin used the Leader Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) to measure leadership ideology and leadership style. This behaviourist approach to leadership resulted in a plethora of fairly simplistic 'recipes' for effective leadership, typically placing task- and person-orientation in tension with each other. Examples that are still current today are Blake and Mouton's (1964) Managerial Grid, and Hersey and Blanchard's (1988) Situational Leadership grid.

These conceptions of leadership have not been without their critics. Greenfield in Watkins (1998:14) described the (LBDQ) based research as "unusually restrictive and static". Similarly Janda and Yukl in Watkins (1998:14) noted that "most research has been conducted as if leadership were a unique phenomenon, although most of the conceptions of leadership can be explained in more basic variables."

Watkins went further to suggest that this simplistic view of leadership has led researchers to exclude intermediate and situational variables such as power and class relationships: "By ignoring the inequalities of organisational power, it implied an acceptance of the power status quo" (Watkins 1998:15) suggesting a critical approach further developed by feminist researchers who argue that "leadership theory neglects the significance of gender. Rather, it discusses authority, power and the division of labour in an organisation as both

essential and neutral" Blackmore (1998:104). The main thrust of the research in Watkins' (1998:15) thinking was concerned with extracting "greater productivity while legitimating the power status quo and the class relations of organisations". Similar deficiencies are evident in the work on leadership done by Fiedler.

2.3.3 Fiedler's contingency theory

Fiedler's contingency theory (1967a) dominated much of the research on leadership during the 1970s. Fiedler (cited in Bass 1990:46) noted that the "effectiveness" of the leader is "contingent on the demand imposed by the situation". Fiedler attempted to synthesize the relatively unsuccessful attempts of the 'trait school' and the situationalists of Ohio thereby defining the

> ...leader as the individual in the group given the task of directing and co-ordinating task relevant group activities, or who in the absence of a designated leader , carries the primary responsibility for performing these functions in the group (Fiedler 1967:8).

Effectiveness according to this model is evaluated in terms of group performance on the group's primary assigned task – moral and member satisfaction are seen as by-products rather than as measures of the task-group performance (Watkins (1998). Fiedler's model postulates that leadership style is determined by the motivational system of the leader and that situational control is determined by group atmosphere, task structure and position power (Hoy and Miskel 1996).

The theory departed from previous thinking because it viewed leadership as an arena in which the leader seeks both to satisfy personal needs and to accomplish organisational goals. Despite being an advance on previous thinking the model fails to take into account the complex nature of organisation. Leaders intentionally seek to influence the behaviour of other people and, as Owens (2001) believes, any concept of leadership deals with exercising influence on others through social interaction. It follows therefore that in order to examine leadership there is a need to understand the nature and quality of the social

interactions involved. Hence although contingency theory was clearly an advance on trait thinking it was still trapped in simplistic notions of effectiveness and power, driven by "transactional elements of leadership, namely the exchange of inducements for desired performance". Leadership was now seen to be contingent on the condition of traits and situations involving transactions or exchange between the leader and the led (Holander 1986). In the next section the focus is on transformational leadership since according to Kark (2004:160) transformational leadership theory gained ascendancy over contingency leadership approaches.

2.3.4 Transformational leadership theory and how it intersects with gender

As women increasingly enter leadership roles that traditionally have been occupied by men, and with the increasing diffusion of transformational leadership theory, there is growing interest in the relationship between gender and transformational leadership (Kark (2004:160).

Kark (2004) observed that recent developments in leadership theory have shifted interest from earlier theories of charismatic leadership that viewed the leader as extraordinary and followers as dependent on the leader to neo-charismatic theories and transformational leadership theory which is concerned with the development and empowerment of followers to function independently and effectively.

Current leadership thinking is strongly informed by Burns' (1978) notion of transformational leadership, which emphasises empowerment of followers and their ability to transform organisations by working with followers' value systems. Transformational leadership according to Burns (1978:425) is "a reciprocal process of mobilising . . . various . . . resources . . . in order to realise goals independently or mutually held by both leaders and followers" (in Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood and Jantzi (2003:230).

The transformational conception of leadership originated most visibly in Burns' (1978) work concerning political leaders. For Burns (1978:3) transactional political leaders "approach followers with an eye for votes, or subsidies for campaign contributions ... such transactions comprise the bulk of the relationships among leaders and followers". Burns noted that while a transformational political leader also recognised that potential followers have needs, he or she went further, seeking to satisfy higher needs in terms of Maslow (1954) hierarchy of needs, and to engage the full potential of the followers.

Drawing on Burns' theoretical ideas, Bass (1985) developed a model of transformational leadership which conceptualised transactional and transformational forms as separate but interdependent dimensions. It is worth noting that the paradigm as developed by Bass (1985a, 1985b), "... augments the effects of transactional leadership on the efforts, satisfaction and effectiveness of subordinates" (Bass 1990:53). While "transformational leadership motivates others to do more than they originally intended, and stimulate change and innovation, transactional leadership is generally sufficient to maintain the status quo" (Bass and Avolio 1994:3). In this sense the notion of transformational leadership is a substantive departure from previous theories, all of which could be described as transactional on the basis that the notion of an exchange of some kind underlies them, and ultimately they are chiefly focused on the smooth functioning of the organisation.

Bass and his colleagues (Bass 1985; Bass and Avolio 1994) proposed four specific dimensions of transformational leadership as follows: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individual consideration. Idealised influence in Bass' (1985) terms meant that leaders put followers' needs first, and try to be role models for their followers by demonstrating high moral standards and avoiding the use of power unnecessarily or for personal gain. The ways in which leaders motivate and inspire those around them is what Bass referred to as inspirational motivation. These ways include practices that are aimed at creating attractive visions, and elevating follower goals.

These practices, according to Bass and Avolio (1994:3), provide "meaning and challenge to followers' work". When assumptions are challenged and problems reframed,

encouraging creativity and soliciting followers' new ideas become ways of stimulating followers to be innovative and creative. This is what Bass (1985) called intellectual stimulation, and it is aimed at developing follower's capacities to reach higher levels. If the leader can pay close attention to each organisational member's needs and interest, then in Bass and Avolio's (1994) view, he/she is exercising individual consideration. According to Bass and Avolio's (1994) coaching and mentoring became common ways for leaders in helping followers elevate their personal potentials. Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood and Jantzi (2003:234) suggested that "transformational leadership is intended to stimulate the extra effort often needed to bring about significant organisational change". Rosener (1990), one of the leading feminist organisation theorists argues that the conception of transformational leadership, with its emphasis on follower empowerment, is in line with current organisational changes and management theorising, stressing the need for organisations to become less hierarchical and more flexible and team oriented. Similarly Boehnke, Bontis, Distefano and Distefano (2003:6) perceived transformational leadership as "a shift of focus from simply leading followers . . . to empowering them to become leaders through the development of a relationship of mutual stimulation and trust".

As suggested earlier it is in the development of transformational theory that feminist views on leadership find their roots. While Bass (1985) described the transformational leader as one who empowers and motivates followers to perform beyond their expectations, various feminist researchers have argued that women leaders' approaches closely resemble elements of a transformational approach. Transformational concepts such as mentoring, reciprocity of dialogue, meeting followers' needs and creativity featured in Hurty's (1995) and Fennell (2001) studies on women principals lived experiences which will be discussed later in this chapter.

In exploring how various approaches in feminist thought intersect with the study of gender and transformational leadership Kark (2004) argued that "feminist theories are not only concerned with women's issues but rather they offer a gamut of inclusive field of organisational studies" (Calas and Smircich, cited in Kark 2004:161). Traditional theories

of leadership have been challenged for their failure to address a number of issues in leadership because of being hierarchical, and their inappropriateness to school organisational contexts (Kark 2004). Even the proponents of transformational theory have been challenged for focusing leadership research on positivist and quantitative approaches rather than adopting ideologically focused, critical or interpretive paradigms (Blackmore 1998; Kark 2004; Olsson and Walker 2003). The next section develops this line of argument and seeks to redefine leadership.

2.4 Emerging perspectives – leadership redefined

Several perspectives have emerged in the contemporary period and have come to dominate the field of leadership. Amongst these emerging perspectives is the notion of servant leadership.

2.4.1 Servant leadership theory

In his review of literature regarding values in leadership Russell (2001) draws pertinent attention to the concept inspired by Robert K. Greenleaf (1904-1990). Leadership according to Greenleaf should "meet the needs of others" (Greenleaf 1977; Lloyd and Spears 1996) in addition "motivation for leadership should be a desire to serve" (cited in Russell 2001:78). This advances the notion of the servant leader.

Russell (2001:78) identified three attributes of a servant leader namely "trust, appreciation of others, and empowerment" (Russell 2001:79). In discussing the importance of values in each of the identified attributes, Russell indicated that "trust provides the foundation for people to follow their leaders", since according to literature, "the essential values of good leaders include honesty and integrity" – "values" which "build interpersonal and organisational trust" (Russell 2001:79).

How servant leaders appreciate others according to Russell, is seen through their facilitation of positive images, by giving love and encouragement, inspiring hope and courage in others. Nix (cited in Russell 2001:80) argues for

> ...the application of love in order to transform the 'workplace into something that is better for everyone. He calls for 'all encompassing love;' that practices patience, kindness and forgiveness in work relations".

In Russell's thinking, appreciation of others by servant leaders reflects fundamental personal values that esteem and honour people. Kouzes and Posner (1993) similarly identified a shift in focus from self to others among important trends in managerial and leadership values, noting that concern for others - putting their needs and interests as priority - demonstrates empathy and elicits trust. A key way through which leaders demonstrate respect and appreciation of others is by developing the capacity for listening Russell's (2001), clearly a capacity which demonstrates an attitude of concern for others.

Empowerment - perceived as a central element in excellent leadership - is especially important in servant leadership (Fairholm 1998; Melrose 1997; Pollard 1996; Rinehart 1998). Here servant leadership involves entrusting workers with authority and responsibility and emphasises teamwork, reflecting the values of love. "Servant leaders multiply their leadership by empowering others to lead" (Wilkes 1996:25). Russell perceived the goal of empowering as creating many leaders at all levels of the organisation and argued that "empowerment is the opposite of historical management practices that emphasised manipulation" (Oster in Russell 2001:80). In this sense servant leadership resemble the notion of distributed leadership.

2.4.2 Distributed and constructivist leadership

Two contemporary approaches that signify a re-emphasis on the importance of the personal or human element are distributed leadership and constructivist leadership. According to Timperley (2005:417 "leadership by its very nature involves others who are

situated in cultural, historical and institutional settings". The notion of distributing leadership is thus akin to acknowledging where other come from and honouring their individuality. Significantly it is not simply tasks or projects that are distributed: the very notion of leadership as a 'natural' human activity is placed within the range of all members of the organisation. Lambert (2003), arguing for leadership as an activity to which various players bring and make meaning, indicated that leadership cognition and activity are situated within an interactive web of actors, artefacts, and situation. Her belief is that the situation or context is not an external force but an integral part of the leadership dynamic. Leadership is stretched over leaders, followers and activities within a "reciprocal interdependency environment" (Lambert 2003:424).

Lambert (2003: 422) challenged mainstream leadership thinking arguing that, "we are often preoccupied with the 'heroes' of leadership, those charismatic leaders who have dominated the landscape, both as powerful models of values in action and as anti-heroes". Lambert (2003:422) considered context as an important factor in leadership suggesting that for instance teachers in schools "become fully alive when their districts provide opportunities for skilful participation, inquiry, dialogue and reflection". Lambert (2003:422) links leadership with reciprocal processes that enable participants in educational community to construct meanings that lead towards a shared purpose of schooling.

Lambert perceives leading and learning as intertwined, and for her, the conception arises from an understanding of what it is to be human. To be human in Lambert's thinking is to "learn and to learn is to construct meaning and knowledge about the world that enables us to act purposefully" (Lambert 2003:422). By arguing that children as well as adults learn through the process of meaning and knowledge construction, inquiry, participation and reflection, Lambert (2003:423) believes that leadership can be understood as the "enactment of reciprocal and purposeful learning in community".

2.4.3 Leadership for social justice

The theory that moves leadership furthest away from its traditional organisational setting and its focus on effectiveness and profit is arguably the notion of leadership for social justice. Capper, Theoharis and Sebastian (2006) link leadership to social justice issues by proposing a framework for conceptualising the preparation of leaders for social justice. Consistent with Rawls (2003) (as explored earlier in this chapter), who challenged society to develop a sense of justice in its members, Capper (2006:213) *et al.* argue that "school leaders need to embody a social justice consciousness within their beliefs systems or values." While Russell (2001) perceives values as core beliefs that stimulate human behaviour, Capper *et al.*'s (2006:212) framework depicts what "school leaders must believe, know and do to lead *socially just schools*". Okin similarly (1989:22) underlines the argument that leader preparation for social justice is essential "if a sense of justice and a commitment to just institutions is to be fostered and maintained". Referring to the USA, Brown (2004:93) believes that a curriculum on consciousness needs to include an accurate history of schooling, including the "systemic nature of inequalities reproduced daily".

For Mckenzie and Scheurich (2004:609) social justice takes on practical dimensions as they suggest that principals need the skills to facilitate their staff "to get to know their students, and their students' families and community on a personal level", and to "dignify the culture of their students". Consistent with Mckenzie and Scheurich's (2004) thinking is Berreth and Berman's (1997:24) belief that "students and staff members appreciate diversity of cultures and beliefs through both study and direct experience" and that "we can help children develop social skills and moral values through modeling, direct instruction, experience, and continual practice". In building upon Mckenzie and Scheurich's (2004) idea of facilitation, Shield, Larocque, and Oberg, (2002) believe that leaders need the skills to lead dialogue that engages staff about issues of race and ethnicity, and for people to re-examine their own practices, perceptions and beliefs. The consciousness, knowledge, and skills that leaders need to lead socially just schools, according to Capper *et al.* (2006:220), will enable them to pursue leadership driven by a social justice agenda.

Contemporary attempts to theorise leadership thus focus strongly on the person dimension, the human element of the phenomenon. In a sense this brings mainstream and feminist thinking to a similar place in the 'task-person' tension, but gender is a more complex issue as I hope to reveal in the following sections.

2.5 Feminist critique of leadership theory

History is replete with the story as told from a male perspective only and the area of leadership is not an exception. The feminist critique of leadership theory according to Blackmore (1998:94) rests on the assumption that a

> ...masculinist model has been assumed to portray all experience and hence the universal individual central to this perspective of leadership is modelled upon men's experience.

According to Enomoto (2000:377) "dominating management theory has shaped the assumptions, beliefs and values that have become the underpinnings of leadership in organisations". In addition, Blackmore (1998:93) observed that historically, schools have been organised in hierarchical ways in which authority is seen to be legitimately accorded to the principal, generally male. Enomoto (2000:376) argued that the field of "leadership is gendered in favour of men," and further explained: "to argue that management is a gendered construction is to posit that there is one gender (male) that defines and dominates the discourse in the field of study". Feminist critics point out how the existing body of organisation and management theory assumes implicitly that managers and workers are male, with male stereotypic powers, attitudes and obligations (Ford 2005:243). While men are portrayed as fitting organisational behaviour, Ford (2005) observed that women are associated with the feminine characteristics of caring, nurturing and sharing that are allegedly more appropriate for domestic spheres. In Ford's thinking, charismatic and masculine models of leadership are still featuring in organisational

analysis whereby macho, individualistic, assertive and dominant behaviours continue to take precedence over the more feminine qualities.

Feminist theorists challenge the "emphasis on hierarchy and efficiency", such as the approach advocated by scientific management, which has led to the creation of the "myth of a neutral, professional educator" (Enomoto 2000:376.) Enomoto argues that early management theories were developed primarily by men for men giving examples of theories espoused by Taylor, Fayol, Barnard, Simon and Weber who dominated the field (Enomoto, 2000:376). Taylor's scientific management treatise established him as the "father" of industrial management. His managerial theory emphasised standardization, economic incentives, and expertise in large organisations. Fayol (1949) concentrated on administrative management, proposing top-down control through functions like planning, organising, commanding, coordinating, and controlling. Other theorists - Barnard (1938) and Simon (1957) - were proponents of applying behavioural science to management.

Enomoto (2000:376) further demonstrates her point of challenging the top-down hierarchy of control through identifying a female contributor to management - Mary Parker Follett, whose work in human relations challenged the bureaucratic emphasis established by Taylor and Fayol. Although Follett's approach was substantiated by empirical evidence (to be discussed later in this chapter) Enomoto believes that its theoretical contributions were not credited to the historical foundations of scientific management.

Another line of argument is that trait theory privileged traits associated with male leadership (Smulyan 2000). Leadership and management have been conceptualised, according to Eisler (1994:38), by focusing on traits associated with males such as "strength, toughness and decisiveness". Similarly Blackmore (1998:100) noted that although the trait theory model of leadership has been denigrated for its failure to differentiate between effective and ineffective male leaders, it has been duly resuscitated as an explanation for why women are not found in leadership positions.

Situational/contingency theories tend to perceive a match between the individual attributes or leadership styles (innate and learned) and particular situations or contexts. Women's apparent lack of such traits as perceived in their behaviour is seen to make them unsuitable for leadership (Blackmore 1998). From Blackmore's observation women are in a double bind. Chapman and Luthans reinforce this point of view in their observation that:

> If a woman displays the culturally defined traits of femininity (being emotional, passive, dependent, nurturing, intuitive or submissive) she is perceived to be a poor leader. If she acts according to the male role definitions of a leader (being aggressive, achievement oriented, self-confident, forceful or competitive) she is condemned as being 'unfeminine' (cited in Blackmore 1998:100).

Chapman and Luthans' observation reflects the context in which women leaders are situated and hence Soobrayan's argument of "placing women in positions of power in itself is not enough, women still have many hurdles to overcome" (Soobrayan 1998:34).

Another line of argument questions dominant research approaches in the field of leadership (Blackmore 1998:94). Many shortcomings of mainstream approaches to leadership research were highlighted by Ford (2005:241) who indicates that "positivist researchers are searching for reality and for true findings that validate a predetermined set of hypotheses". Hence the approaches to leadership according to Ford (2005:241) present "seemingly neutral and unproblematic accounts that ignore issues associated with gender and inequalities, organisational life, and power differentials and organisational politics". Ford (2005:241) argues that the literature from positivist researchers is "laboratory-based experiments or questionnaires, to the exclusion of contextually specific, qualitative studies". Women leaders and feminist researchers (Blackmore 1998; Enomoto 2000; Kark 2004; Shakeshaft 1999) perceive the dominant discourse as denying individual differences, ignoring *context,* and giving little or no consideration to the influence of diverse settings within which managers, leaders, and subordinates operated (Ford 2005). Ford (2005:242) sees much of the leadership research as locked within a positivist epistemology and hence reflecting "functionalist roots in theorising on leaders and

leadership" and an assumption that leadership is an indispensable component of all organisations.

Many of the comments above may have been more valid a few decades ago than today in 2006. The rise of more qualitative and critical research approaches has certainly challenged positivist research which held sway for much of the 20th century. There has also been a marked increase in research on women in management and leadership, probably also a consequence of many countries' policies of zero discrimination. Feminist research shows that women who become leaders are increasingly breaking new ground, challenging the stereotype of what women leaders are 'expected' to be and giving value to their own skills; they are giving expressions to their own conceptions of leadership (Soobrayan 1998:38).

Literature shows that women leaders call for

> ...a reconstruction of a view of leadership which counters the emphasis on individualism, hierarchical relationships, bureaucratic rationality and abstract moral principles (Blackmore 1998:94).

In Blackmore's (1998:94) view "leadership looks to empower others rather than have power over others", an attitude which would constitute a feminist reconstruction of the concept of leadership. These issues are pursued in the next section

2.5.1 A brief look at women in leadership

One of the leading feminists in the field of leadership, Shakeshaft (1999) believed that:

> There are scores of great women whose stories lie buried in school historical societies, and in the archives of national organisations. Learning more of their

> lives may help to shape and understand the knowledge base; at the very least, such research will provide a fuller explanation of the legacy of their early courage and sacrifice (Shakeshaft 1999:114).

What Shakeshaft is asking for, in effect, is an alternative discourse on leadership. This is what Hurty's (1995) work amounts to. Hurty used the writings of one of the early feminists, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, to posit an alternative discourse about female leadership. Gilman (in Hurty 1995) argued that the ideal is a humane society, not a patriarchal masculine-dominated one. On this point Gilman raised the issue that Okin (1989) also challenged, of a society that is patriarchal and masculine-dominated is not the ideal society. Gilman's writings highlighted a methodology which requires a full exploration of women's experience. Her discussion of education places women in participatory and responsible positions. For instance she argued that the instruction of a child by its mother has been largely neglected in our 'man-made' world where the dominant class views education as that which is organised in universities and slowly filters downward. For Gilman:

> The mother is the first co-ordinator, legislator, administrator and executive. From the guardian and guidance of her cubs and kittens up to the longer, larger management of human youth, she is the first to consider group interests and correlate them ... (Gilman 1911:183 cited in Hurty 1995:399).

Hurty (1995) also draws on the work of Mary Parker Follett (1924) to demonstrate a conceptualisation of power that was intended for practical, participatory strategising in the business community. Follett devoted her life to the study of how people treated each other. Her theoretical work included studies of human interaction, conflict resolution, and decision-making in organisations (to be elaborated on later). In her theorising Follett believed that people grew and changed by talking through conflicts and differences, searching for what each party really wanted (Hurty 1995:396). In Hurty's (1995:396) view the groundwork for a process of negotiation that discards the adversarial aspects of collective bargaining in favour of collaborative problem solving is found in Follett's

work. According to Hurty (1995:396 "such processes of negotiation do not rely on traditional notions of power as control or as the domination of decision-making."

The authenticity and integrity of female experiences, often hidden or missing from the public historical record can be appreciated as contributions to more fully accountable stories of human development (Hurty 1995:384). Women in Hurty's study got tired, angry, frustrated, and shared those feelings honestly with their subordinates. It is through the leaders' idealised influence – that is, putting followers' needs first and demonstrating high moral standards - that followers are motivated to perform beyond their expectations (Boehnke *et al.* 2002:6; Geijsel *et al.* 2003:230).

Gilman did not see the world's 'mother-work' as solely the work of but as an ideal situation, a shared human responsibility. She focused her attention on the educative aspect of motherhood and extended educational responsibility to non-mothers. The theme connecting nurturance with educational leadership is compatible with Gilman's work, in that leadership is also connective, persuasive, and collaborative. Hurty (1995) argued that the school leaders and bureaucracy builders of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century did not encourage these characteristics.

Follett was interested in how people came to an agreement, socially, and politically (Hurty 1995). Consistent with Follett's thinking is Irby *et al.*'s (2004) concept of synergistic leadership theory, synergistic meaning working together. Synergistic thinking in terms of understanding school leadership is important because people work together in administrative meetings, faculty meetings, parent-teacher associations and with the community.

As discussed in an earlier section literature shows that current thinking is moving away from leadership that emphasises individualism to models that encourage the working of an institution as if it were a community, a notion that resonates with feminist views such as

Blackmore's (1998) who regards leadership as being concerned with communitarian and collective activities. Leaders operating from such an orientation steer their followers toward self development and gain respect and trust from their subordinates (Charbonneau 2004:565). In summarising Hurty's findings Fennell (2002:100) concluded that women's views of and experiences with power have encouraged the seeking of theories beyond the previously dominant structuralist views of power. This leads me to examine literature on how women experience leadership, the chief focus of this study.

2.6 Women's perceptions and experiences of their leadership role

While the totality of women's experiences goes beyond women's perceptions of their roles this aspect is nevertheless key to a comprehensive understanding of women principals' lives as educational leaders. This section seeks to examine relevant literature focusing on role perceptions in order to have a deeper understanding of lived experiences.

2.6.1 Leadership as empowerment and enrichment

Empowerment according to Russell) 200l: 80) "is the opposite of the historical management practices that emphasised manipulation" and "is the relinquishing of traditional means of power and the delegation of decision making responsibilities" leaders who genuinely empower operate from a different value foundations than leaders who retain power and control. Hence Capper *et al.*' s (2006:216) suggestion (on a framework for preparing leaders for social justice) that "principals need the skills to empower staff through setting up collaborative and shared decision makings structures that allow staff to team and craft their practice" (Riester *et al.* 2002; Theoharis 2004).

Kark (2004:161) argues that women's styles of leadership tend to focus on leadership approaches that empower followers and motivate them to perform beyond their

expectations. Instead of the structuralist/functionalist views of power which according to Fennell (2001) and Watkins (1998) create tensions between individuals' and communities' needs, women leaders have been calling for alternative views such as constructivist leadership (Lambert 2003), servant leadership (Russell 2001), leadership for social justice (Capper *et al.* 2006) and other post-bureaucratic models (Jamali *et al.* 2006).

Literature suggests that the emphasis on reciprocal, shared responsibilities (information sharing) reflecting values of love/nurturance and involving followers in planning and decision-making is what characterises empowerment (Capper *et al.* 2006). Both Fennell (2002) and Enomoto (2000) used Hurty's (1995) findings of her study of women principals' experiences with power in trying to illustrate how women approach the work in leadership and how power can be used without the use of bureaucratic control.

2.6.2 Reciprocal and interactive leadership

Rosener (1990) suggest that interactive' leadership (reciprocity) encourages participation and arouses enthusiasm for work. Hurty (1995:389) suggests that reciprocal talk as a power strategy is "useful in building trust both at the school site and in relationship with the community." Hurty's suggestion reflects what Jamali *et al.* 2006:14) referred to as "post-bureaucratic organisation", and Eisler (1994:32) as a "partnership rather than dominator organisation". Nurturance of children's growth, treating them with dignity, respect and trust and giving them support and encouragement, require "reciprocal obligation" (Hurty 1995:389) that is, talking with others and listening to and learning from their points of view. In this sense Hurty's idea resonates with the concept of transformational leadership in that leadership has shifted from simply leading followers to "empowering them to become leaders through the development of a relationship of mutual stimulation and trust" (Boehnke, Bontis, Distefano, and Distefano 2002:6).

Hurty (1995) believed that, given the opportunity to focus attention on the roles and experiences of women who are in educational leadership positions, the educational research community would gain new insights that can be offered for the transformation of schools offering new ways of understanding and using power. Literature shows that

> Many women in school administration view power as being multi-dimensional and multi-directional and encourage empowerment of all organisational members through the development of communities based on collective values and actions (Fennell 2002:100).

Andrews and Crowther (2002) noted that the past decade has seen major developments in the re-conceptualisation of educational leadership for successful school reform. Hayes, Christie, Mills and Lingard (2004:520) also place emphasis on those "forms of leadership that support the development of whole school communities as learning organisations." These views about leadership relate well with Lambert's (2000:3 ...thinking that leadership should be "embedded in the school community" as a whole because leadership is about "learning together", and "constructing meaning and knowledge collectively and collaboratively".

Cubillo and Brown (2003:278) in an exploratory study of women leaders from different parts of the world described the "hostility and aggression that women encountered when working in male dominated organisational" contexts and "cultures". Marshall (1995:311) recounted stories of "women developing strategies for coping in a male dominated society. The next section focuses on the strategies women use to cope with organisational challenges.

2.6.3 The way women lead

Jeffery, Blitman, Maes and Shearer (2003:28) observed that many workplace conflicts were a result of failing to communicate or understand other's interests or needs and they

suggested that "using collaborative or shared mental models as a technique for team problem-solving, decision-making, and mediation is intuitively appealing". Collaborative change according to Crogan and Roberson (2002) is the art of defining common interests, common responsibilities, common problems and common solutions. Crogan and Roberson (2002:314) suggested, "instead of being focused on controlling events and people, the principal needs to share power". . Crogan and Roberson believed that making decisions together is part of sharing power. On the other hand, Walumbwa, Cindy Wu, and Ojode (2003) saw participation of members of the organisation in decision-making enhancing the smooth running of the school.

Kreitner (1983) identified six benefits of shared decision-making. The identified benefits were; greater pool of knowledge, which meant that better decisions tended to be made because ideas came from different people with different experiences. The second was possession of different perspectives. This meant that individuals with varied experience and interests help the group to see decisions and problems of certain decisions from different angles, and hence bring more alternative solutions.

Greater understanding was the third benefit, that is, involved people will have more understanding of the purpose behind decisions (Kreitner 1983), and in the end there was a sense of ownership and increased acceptance by the group. According to Kreitner those with less experience also learned how to cope with the group dynamics, by actually being involved. It should be noted the result from a shared decision reflects the collective experiences and wisdom of all those organisational members who have come together (Kreitner 1983; Hurty 1995). In attempting to reduce conflict and/or challenges, women leaders make use of coping strategies such as networks, collaborative strategies, mentoring and interaction – all involving communication.

Success of women educational leaders depends mostly on their ability to develop networks of influence and interaction patterns with other school communities (Jeffery,

Blitman, Maes and Shearer 2003: Lieberman and Grolnick 1997). Information sharing and dialogue with other school participants enabled the women leaders to develop a network of influence (Coleman 1996). Edson (1988) found that these networks were made possible through such things as conferences and workshops. Network enhances the leaders as facilitators and resource persons.

Shared understanding emerged from dialogue among such a network (Lieberman and Grolnick 1997). By organising activities around shared work, networks broaden both the leaders and teachers' experiences through collaboration. Hall (1999) informed us about the model of multiple organisation in which hierarchical authority was replaced by a network structure of control. (Lieberman and Grolnick 1997) observed that women in leadership establish informal collegial groups or networks as opposed to hierarchical models that are authoritative. In a similar vein Rosener's (1990) and Hurty's (1995 studies, findings revealed that women leaders believed in dialogue to settle organisational issues.

Chawla and Kelloway (2004:487) found that uncertainty in organisations is exacerbated when the primary source of information is the rumour mill. Open channels of communication therefore foster trust and reduce withdrawal behaviour. Fyre (1984:132) suggested that communication is "the transmission and reception of a message or idea from one party to another in such a fashion that it is mutually understandable". Women leaders were found to be tentative and more likely to use expressive language, which encourages community building, and which is more polite and cheerful (Shakeshaft 1989).

Mentoring was seen as a way of introducing a person to the organisation's culture and as Pocklington and Weindling (1996) suggested mentoring has been seen as an effective strategy for management development not only within the education system, but also within banks and insurance companies. It has been envisaged as an enabling and

supporting activity designed to help new comers to come to terms and deal with the transitional experience of becoming a head teacher moreover Pocklington and Weindling (1996) indicated that the mentor's work is to assist the new head teacher to build up an understanding of the nature of management tasks and its impact on the school.

Mentoring is a form of peer support, which is provided by experienced principals for their less experienced colleagues (Daresh and Playko 1994; Southworth 1995). It is the art of listening without judging, enabling without guiding, and exploring without dictating and getting the aspiring head to see things from a positive perspective (Pocklington and Weindling 1996). At the heart of mentoring is the principle that it should be a positive and constructive experience for the novice head.

There are three types of mentorship identified by Erich (1994); these are traditional, professional and institutional. Traditional mentorship used to be undertaken by committed individuals. Traditional mentoring according to Ehrich (1994) was done informally, through sharing information at meetings and clubs. Ehrich indicated that this type of mentoring tended to be very selective and as a result some women missed out.

While mentoring has been described as a way of introducing a person to the organisational culture (Ehrich 1994; 1995; Choy and Tin 1993), it also takes the form of coaching. Coaching is about having someone improve their performance, often by pushing their own barriers to success. Starr (2004:10) suggested:

When I learned the principles of coaching conversations, I naturally gained an increased level of self-awareness. That is great for me, and also great for people around me. For example, to coach people, I must give up my tendency to control conversations, or try to 'fix' other people ... So my team meetings become more about me facilitating conversations and when my partner comes to me with a problem, I do not jump all over

him or her with unwarranted instructions. Coaching skills becomes life skills (Starr 2004:10).

Mentoring involves listening and offering non-judgmental support ((Pocklington and Weindling 1996). It can also be seen as counselling, as it gives room for the novice head to interact, thereby enabling him or her to see things from a positive perspective. According to Pocklington and Weindling (1996), mentoring is an antidote to professional loneliness. It creates circumstances where new principals can examine their role and work both prospectively and retrospectively.

The process of mentoring facilitated the rehearsal of ideas, plans and strategies, and allowed individuals to try them out with a valued colleague whose opinion they trust (Southworth 1995). Mentoring improved self-confidence and provided emotional support (Ehrich 1995, Burns and Stalker 1994). Soobrayan believed that "women who are becoming leaders are increasingly taking the bold step of breaking new ground". Again mentoring has implication for success or failure of women leaders and developing a comprehensive understanding of women school leaders and principals' lived experiences.

Perhaps the most significant characteristic of contemporary leadership thinking, as has been observed, is the tendency towards the human and person-oriented in the tension between task and person. Along with the focus on the person comes an increased urgency to address moral and social issues, even to the point where leadership is seen to be operating outside the usual boundaries of organisation. What this section has attempted to show is that leadership theories developed by and for women to a strong degree resonate with broader shifts in post-heroic (and post-transformational) theory. What has **also** emerged is the importance of context, the situation in which the leader leads. Leadership, is has been argued, does not take place in a vacuum, and because it is so person intensive, and even constructivist in nature, it is essential the nature of organisation life is examined in more depth. Hence the next section looks at the evolution of organisation theory over

the past century. This is by no means an exhaustive literature review, but simply an overview of trends.

2.7 Organisation theory

Hall (1999) believed that organisations are active participants of society. It is important to reflect on organisations since their impact on any given society in which they are embedded is great, and schools as organisations according to Hall, are seen as change agents of society (Hall 1999). Since it is now a fact that women educational leaders have fully entered into male contexts their challenge is whether they transform themselves to fit into pre-conceived role (usually male) or whether redefine their environments and situations. This is perhaps the central question of this study. In broad terms organisation theory can be said to have evolved along similar lines to management and leadership theory. In all three fields the drive has been away from simplistic functionality towards more subtle appreciation of less visible elements such as culture; away from the need to control towards the need to understand and interact with influences, especially human and social influences; away from the drive for efficiency towards a broader effectiveness; and finally, away from regarding organisations as objective 'realities' and towards acknowledging the fact that organisations are constructs, the products of subjective thoughts and actions.

2.7.1 Bureaucracy

Early organisational thinking was strongly influenced by classical management theory and bureaucracy. This view sees organisations as structured entities composed of bureaucratic expectations and roles, a hierarchy of offices and positions and rules and regulations. These structures are designed to regulate the activities of individuals on the organisation; for instance in a school organisation there are the school head, senior teachers, junior teachers, but above them is the office of higher authority or the education office. Bureaucratic expectations are formal demands and obligations set by the organisation and

are the key building blocks of the organisation (Hoy and Miskel 1996). The structure of the school therefore revolves around the fact that the head is the one who regulates the functions of the school. Weber's (1947) description of the ideal type of bureaucracy serves as a model for understanding this view: a bureaucracy has a hierarchy of authority, limited authority, division of labour, technically competent participants, a set of procedures for work, rules for incumbents and differential rewards. Hall's (1999: 98) observation that for many people, the terms 'bureaucracy' or 'bureaucrat' have negative connotations, cannot be denied. It is therefore, important to understand the limitations of such concepts even though organisations today (including and perhaps especially schools) have a tradition that leans heavily on Weber who is known for his analysis of bureaucracy and authority.

Owens argues that classical and bureaucratic approaches to organisations tend not only to emphasise organisational structure and hierarchical control over people, but reifies these concepts, treating them as tangible (Owens 2001: 49). In Owen's (2001:49) view, "organisations are social conventions . . . human inventions and only concepts". Owen went further to say:

> Organisational concepts tended to put much emphasis on the linear, logical, hierarchical, authoritarian and disciplinary structure that one would expect of the military tradition. Generally these concepts were adopted uncritically by the large-scale industrial and business organisations that developed so rapidly ... The people who took a lead in designing and managing these organisations were usually engineers whose interest in human factors was largely focused on fitting people into the machine system, so as to create a more efficient and manageable human machine system (Owens 2001:31).

Ideas about organisations tended to come from people with industrial and military backgrounds and these traditions provided much of the logic that underlies organisational theories. Hall (1999: 104) saw Burns and Stalker (1961) as having taken a major step forward with their development of a model of multiple organisational forms which

identified the mechanical forms very like Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy as well as *organic* forms almost directly opposite. Thus instead of having a hierarchical authority, organic organisations have a network structure of control; instead of task specialisation they have continual adjustments and redefinitions of tasks: and instead of hierarchical supervision a communication context involving information and advice (Hall 1999: 104).

In agreement with Hall are Jamali, Khoury and Sahyoun (2006: 338) who argue that the classical bureaucratic system worked well when markets, production and technology were slow to change. In the new context management perspectives are being transformed, and the long held criteria for evaluating organisational and managerial effectiveness are being reinvigorated. For Jamali *et al.* (2006: 338) management in the twenty-first century is said to have taken "a new orientation", capitalising on fundamentally different approaches to managing employees than traditional disciplinarian, command and control philosophies. People in the new context are seen as a natural resource and capital assets of the organisation and in addition Jamali *et al.* (2006:339) highlight six characteristics of post bureaucratic organisations, which include empowerment, team spirit, trust, communication, commitment and flexibility.

From both Jamali *et al.* and Hall's observations it is clear that bureaucracies are not incompatible with organisations but have the potential to work well as an integral part of organisations. In fact Bush (2003: 55) believes that formal models of organisation – such as bureaucracies – are particularly prevalent in educational organisations. The problem is that there are organisational theorists who see 'formal' organisations as the only way by which desirable ends can be achieved (Hall 1999).

In the following sections I examine three competing perspectives and present a different understanding of how organisations such as schools function and how this affects leadership.

2.7.2 Systems theory

Following Darwinian logic inherent in their image of the organisation the systems theorists see "small, quick-witted democratic organisations replacing ponderous bureaucratic forms now expiring around us" (Bennis 1968, cited in Greenfield and Ribbins 1993:8). Hoy and Miskel (1996: 26) identify three systems views of organisations, namely the rational (or structural-functional), natural and open systems views. They saw these views as relatively distinct, yet partly overlapping, and partly complementary as well as partly conflicting.

The rational model, for instance, with its early roots in the classical organisational thought of the scientific manager, notes that the purpose of leadership in the organisation is to use people effectively, that is to say it is task oriented. Advocates of the rational model focus on the importance of goals and formal structure in determining organisational behaviour. In this sense Hoy and Miskel (1996: 28) acknowledged Weber's contribution to organisational analysis as the master of organisational theory. The rational system contrasts with the natural model, in that its proponents conceive organisations as structural arrangement deliberately devised to achieve goals.

A natural system advocates the view of an organisation as primarily that of social groups trying to adapt and survive in their particular situations. The natural systems had its roots in the human relations approach of the 1930s. It was a reaction to the scientific manager. While the natural systems analysis for this model acknowledges that formal structures do exist, behaviour in organisations is regulated primarily by informal structures that emerge to transform the formal system and in this regard Scott (1987) noted:

> Individual participants are never merely hired hands but bring along their heads and hearts; they enter into the organisation with individually shaped ideas. Expectations, and agendas and they bring them differing values, interests, and abilities . . . Participants within formal organisations generate

> informal norms and behaviour patterns, status and power systems and communication networks (cited in Hoy and Miskel (1996:29).

This notion of competition is problematic in that "the fate of organisations depends upon their ability to adapt to an increasingly complex and turbulent environment" (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993:8). The rejection of Darwinism resulted in the development of the 19th century theories of social evolution that viewed human societies as developing in a unit-linear fashion. Current proponents of the evolutionary theory of leadership emphasise the multi-linear rather than the uni-linear. The structural functionalist framework is to a great extent a modern version of evolutionary theories. It differs in that it focuses on the 'homeostatic,' or balancing nature of society to maintain uniform state. In light of this, education and its sub-system are considered durable and tending to stabilise or neutralise. These two theories share and contain a traditional conservative bias.

The structural-functional theory accepts the gross view that there are inequalities in societies but these inequalities are a necessary condition to maintain order. Structural functionalist see inequality and stratification in education as arising from the needs of society and not out of individual group interests. This theory looks at society basing its ideas on the view that society is made up of parts (structure) which are linked to one another like parts of the machine, such as family, the school and education and religion and is like a well oiled machine (Ritzer 1992: 96). This perspective is concerned with explaining how law and order, integration and continuity are maintained in society and education

The open systems perspective is a reaction to the unrealistic assumption that organisational behaviour could be isolated from external forces provided a synthesis takes place. This is a way of combining the rational and natural perspectives (Hoy and Miskel 1996: 30). Schools as open systems are seen as confronted with both rational and natural constraints that change as the environmental forces change, and yet as Hoy and Miskel (1996:30) observed "to neglect either rational or natural is short-sighted". While open system theory is concerned with both structure and process the behaviour in formal

organisations such as schools is influenced not only by structural and individual elements but also by culture and political elements. For the past three decades organisation theory has increasingly focused on the less tangible, less rational elements of organisational life.

2.7.3 Organisational culture

Hoy and Miskel (1996:38) argue that organisations develop their "own distinctive cultures" and as organisational members interact "shared values, norms, beliefs and ways of thinking emerge". Sergiovanni and Corbally (1984) pointed out that culture includes a school's customs and traditions; historical accounts; stated and unstated understandings; habits, norms and expectations; common meanings and shared assumptions (in Duignan 1987:208). Public occasions are good examples of traditions that are held. For instance in Zimbabwean schools pupils' educational achievements are usually marked by prize giving ceremonies officiated by an invited guest. Such traditions can be transmitted from generation to generation, since "culture shapes and structures people's experience and thoughts" (Owens 1987:165). Literature shows that schools are ideally looked at as institutions that reflect shared expectations, shared set of norms, beliefs and values (Bush 2003: 157). Hoy and Miskel (1996:38) indicated that despite the variation of beliefs, norms and values, "every school has a culture of its own".

Saphier and King (1985:72) suggested that culture, seen as a dynamic, "occurs simultaneously and through the way schools and people use their educational, human, and technical skills in handling daily events or establishing regular practices". Saphier and King (1985:72) saw a committed school leadership and teachers as pre-requisites to effective culture building in the school. They stress that schools need to *nurture* and build on the cultural norms that contribute to academic growth. For Purkey and Smith (1985) culture has influence beyond the organisation and they stress the importance of the relationships between what the school values and the community's beliefs, suggesting that collaborative planning and shared goals create a positive school culture and develop a positive school climate.

At Independence in 1980 the Zimbabwean government established an open education system that allowed every child, irrespective of race, to attend school for at least up to O-level. The exercise created shortages in material resources, human and financial resources, and problems that still plague some schools today. School principals were required to work together with the teachers and parents brainstorming on how to source funds for building and improving their school conditions. Hoy and Miskel (1996:35) saw culture as an element of a social system such as the school, and believed that "culture is the shared work orientations of participants" (such as an example above) and "it gives the organization special identity."

However, a critical reading of the notion of culture reveals that it is not a neutral, power-less force in organisations. A prevailing culture can privilege some above others. Focusing on organizational cultures, women managers and exclusion, Rutherford (2001:371-372) observed that "cultures exclude as well as include", providing evidence of "the gendered nature of cultures". Rutherford (2001:371) however, indicated that "most of the managerial literature on culture refers to its inclusive properties, the intangible part of an organization which gives it cohesiveness". Rutherford (2001:371) suggests that "cultures embody systems meaning and signification", that is they may act as a defense and as a means of providing stability. This has implications for the present study.

McDowell's (1997) *Capital culture* provides rich data on gender at work in the city reflecting work as an embodied performance and as the playing out of masculinities and femininities. Muddock similarly (1999) gives an analysis of gender and culture in public sector organizations in her book, *Challenging Women.* Muddock (1999:192) suggests that "male cultures vary from organization to organization but there are common themes one of which is that . . . men continue to underrate and undervalue women in general . . ."

Sarah Rutherford (2001: 372) conceptualised organizational culture as a means of patriarchal closure and suggested that to develop that concept "we need to see culture as

dynamic, as process, and as boundary-making practices." Rutherford's research builds on the work of theorists who maintain that patriarchal exclusionary practices have marginalized and excluded women from areas of employment such as school leadership positions (Walby 1986; Witz 1992). In demonstrating the concept of patriarchal exclusion Witz (1992: 54) applied the Weberian concept of social closure. Weber used the term "closure' to refer to the process of subordination, whereby one group monopolized advantages by closing off opportunities to another group of outsiders in the case of education sector the exclusion of women from leadership positions (Murphy 1988). Rutherford (2001:374) suggests that while each organization has a "culture of its own" an "organisation's culture is also heavily influenced by its past and its environment".

Considering the notion of organisational culture in this light enables one to bring the concepts of leadership, culture and organisation theory together. Watkins (1998:9) argues that the traditional approach to leadership "lies within the functionalist paradigm" that presents a "perception of administration which is static, a one directional view of leadership in which the leader leads an unquestioning mass of subordinates." Watkins further indicates that research and theory is looked on to serve and give support to those in positions of power. Fennell (2001:97) explored women principal's experiences with power relations in schools during times of increased decentralization and identified the "concept of power as dominance from a structuralist perspective which emphasises order and control and avoidance of conflict". She argued that the structuralist view of power creates inevitable tensions between the needs of individuals and the communities. Contemporary leadership theories discussed earlier seem to have deviated significantly from structuralist views and seem to be underpinned by a very different ontology as far as organisational life is concerned. To examine this radically alternative view I now turn to a phenomenological view of organisations.

2.7.4 Phenomenological theory

A phenomenological ontology has its origin in the distinction Kant drew between the noumenal world (the world as it is) and the phenomenal world (the world as we see it).

For Kant, a world of reality does indeed exist, but man can never see and perceive it directly: reality is always "glossed over with human interpretations which themselves become the realities to which man *[sic]* responds" (Greenfield 1993:8).

For Greenfield (1993) phenomenological orientations see reality as constructed by people in the process of thinking about it. Hence phenomenology leads to improved understanding of the *lived worlds* of people. From the phenomenological perspective, research, theory and methodology must be closely associated; theory must arise out of the process of inquiry and be intimately connected with data under investigation (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993:12). The aim of theory should be clarification and not only to test variables as in the naturalist positivistic modes. Phenomenological research aims at dealing with the "experience of people in specific situations", as in the study on the participants' experiences of leading in school environments (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993:19). Phenomenology thus presents an essentially different ontology of organisations. Reality - from a phenomenological view - can be understood through interpretations of the subjective meanings which individuals place upon their actions. Phenomenology views organisations not as structures but as complex inter-relationships among people and their environments. Our concepts of organisations must therefore rest upon the views of people in a particular time and place in order to understand the world as lived. To cite Addi-Raccah (2000:175) in relation to the above point, "the implications of such a stance ... deserve serious research", which is what this study attempts to be.

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explored the issue of leadership as a gendered construct. A brief account of the social and cultural roots of gender stereotyping and discrimination provides a context for a closer look at leadership theories. Traditional theories perpetuated the stereotype by focusing almost exclusive on leadership as a male phenomenon. The emergence of transformational leadership, in finally breaking with transactional modes, signalled the beginnings of a stronger emphasis on the personal, human dimension of leadership. Contemporary theories expand on this emphasis, presenting leadership as a

social, moral and cultural activity. Women's experience and perceptions of leadership resonate with current thinking, which problematises notions of power and ownership.

Contemporary organisation theory reflects a similar tendency towards the human dimension. The current interest in less visible elements of organisation, such as organisation culture, reflects a more complex and diverse understanding of how and why we work, and what appropriate leadership may be. A phenomenological view of organisation stresses subjective experience and perceptions, so that the notion of organisation is presented as a construct rather than hard reality.

Much of the feminist critique of leadership research centres on the researchers' limited ontological presentation of organisations quasi-positivistic and behavioural epistemology. Hence this study adopts a phenomenological orientation, which holds the potential to capture the subtleties of personal experience, in particular the experiences and perceptions of women running schools in male dominated terrains.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

> Phenomenological methods are non-inferential in the sense that there are no hypotheses to be tested; evidence resides not in the probabilistic support for a hypothesis, but the *description* of the *essential* significance of the phenomenon (Giorgi 2003:91).

This shows that the aim pursued is different from that of the natural sciences, which value objectivity as opposed to subjectivity. The term 'method' from a Greek philosophical base means the road to be taken if one wants to reach the desired goal; in other words, the purpose determines which road should be taken (Strasser cited in Stones 1988:145). Phenomenological method seeks to describe human experience. If therefore it is the unique demand of the problem which determines the method rather than the method limiting the problem, "it is phenomenologically unsound to establish a method that must be used that is prior to and independent of the phenomenon to be investigated" (Giorgi 1971 cited in Stones 1985:150). In phenomenology, it is only when the description is at issue that the researcher could employ a method that is appropriate to its topic and rigorous in its use.

Based on this understanding, this chapter focuses on the whole process of phenomenological research methodology – that is the approach used to gather data in all its uniqueness, as well as analysis of data. The rationale for adopting a phenomenology as the methodological impetus for and the conduct of the study will also be explored.

The study adopted an eclectic phenomenological approach. It recognised that phenomenology has several strands and for the purpose of this study I used key concepts drawn from different strands rather than privileging one form of phenomenology over other forms.

While there are various strands in phenomenology, I will briefly examine only two of them that is the transcendental phenomenology of Husserl and the existential phenomenology, of which Schutz is perhaps the most central representative. Husserl, regarded as the founder of phenomenology, was concerned with investigating and questioning the commonsense, or the taken for granted assumptions of everyday life. In order to do this, he opened up a new direction in the analysis of consciousness. His 'catch phrase' was 'back to the things' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2003). For Husserl, it meant finding out how things appear directly to us. To be able to do that, Husserl advises something quite relevant in case of my study, that, one needs to free oneself from one's usual way of perceiving the world. One needs 'to bracket', and what will be left from this reduction is consciousness. This process is however elaborated further in the coming sections.

Schutz on the other hand was concerned with relating Husserl's ideas to the scientific study of social behaviour. The central concern to him was the problem of understanding the meaning structure of the world of everyday life. Schutz's ideas relates well with my study as I seek to understand the women's lived experience and how they give meaning to it.

3.2 A phenomenological method: rationale

The use of a phenomenological method was deliberate commitment to an understanding of the social meaning of women school heads' lived world based on an analysis of their own accounts. The importance of a phenomenological method in placing meaning on

experience has been acknowledged by Wills (2004) by noting that thematic analysis which look for meanings of experience is a significant way of working in social science research. In trying to seek for a fuller understanding of the lived experiences of women leaders I conducted this study from a phenomenological perspective. Its orientation is that of interpretivism in which values and subjectivity are regarded as integral to the inquiry.

Ontologically and epistemologically assumptions of the symbolic sciences are generally quite different to the rationalist-empiricist underpinnings of positivist research; interpretivist researchers are interested in the meaning that people make of the phenomenon (Van Rensburg 2001:16). Women in my study had long standing stories, which had not been documented, and it is only through qualitative research from a phenomenological approach that those stories could be adequately unveiled.

Qualitative research is said to be a powerful tool for learning more about our lives and socio-historical context in which we live. I found it more appealing to specifically, use a phenomenological approach since according to Merriam, phenomenology "underpins all qualitative research...a phenomenological study focuses on the essence or structure of an experience" (Merriam 2002:7). From detailed, descriptive qualitative accounts, phenomenologists illuminate the intentional meaning of the participant.

Through a phenomenological approach, I managed to capture the women educational leaders' meaning of their experiences, (those in my study) and give them a voice. While they were describing their experience of managing schools in traditional male domains, I listened to them empathetically in line with phenomenological principles. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2003) indicated that the central endeavour in the context of the interpretive paradigm is to understand the subjective world of human experience, and to retain the integrity of the phenomenon being investigated efforts are made to get inside the person and to understand from within. In other words, I had to put myself into the shoes of the participants being investigated in order to capture the essence of their experiences. This

was one of the key issues of importance justifying the use of this method since with other methods for instance the positivist approaches they would not have enabled me engage in such a process.

A phenomenological method was used since it allowed the presentation of women's own stories, their understanding of the concept of educational and interpretations of their lived experiences, from their own perspective. My knowledge interest was to develop a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of women educational leaders. Interpretivist researchers are interested in the meaning that people make of the phenomenon (van Rensburg 2001. The process enabled me to gain access to the meanings of the women heads' experiences and social situations along the lines described in accounts by (Giorgi 1965, 1975; Williamson 1999 and Rogers 2003). It gave the participants in my study the opportunity to explore their experiences in their own view and to contextualise their personal experience.

Hansemark and Albinsson (2004) maintained that the aim of phenomenology is to describe the structure of experiences as they present themselves to consciousness, and also find what is hidden in ordinary experience. Furthermore Aanstoos (1983:248) suggested that the analysis should remain "faithful to the descriptive nature of the data" in order to disclose its essential meaning directly rather than on the basis of a hypothetical framework. My task as a researcher, as suggested by van der Mescht (2004) was to enter into dialogue with the participant and listen, in order to capture the essence of the women heads' experiences or perceptions. It is also noteworthy to note that phenomenology gives an opportunity to both the researcher and the researched to build trust in one another.

My pre-understanding, as a researcher, of the women in educational leadership positions, was grounded in a literature-based review of previous research concerning the phenomenon. While collecting and analysing data, I tried to keep my experience and knowledge at a distance to eliminate the risk of 'colouring' my observations and

subsequent interpretations of participants' experiences. Thus I had to believe in what was evident for me at that time. As a phenomenologist researcher, my design reflects an interest in contextual meaning making, rather than generalised rules. This is actually one of the unique aspects of phenomenology – respect for individual experience, thus valuing other people's beliefs and understanding and avoidance of a 'one size fits all' situation. In my study of women and educational leadership, again this is important since the issue of leadership as gender-neutral stems from the concept of generalisation, and this has since received stiff contestation by women writers, (see for instance Soobrayan 1998; Enomoto 2000). This thesis tries to expand our understanding of women educational leader's experiences of their world and the world around them, how they respond to the challenges and their own interpretation of the concept of leadership.

In accordance with phenomenological principles, scientific "investigation is valid when the knowledge sought is arrived at through descriptions ... [and] understanding of the meanings and essences of experience" (Moustakas 1994:84). While phenomenologists claim that a phenomenological approach is descriptive in orientation, there are three concerns that are emphasised in this thesis. Firstly, there is the interest in describing everyday lived experiences of women primary school principals without presuppositions or prejudices (Merleau-Ponty in Moustakas 1994; James 1982). Secondly the thesis focuses on presenting descriptive accounts of women school heads' personal account and meanings of their experiences as educational leaders (Kierkegaard 1980; Sartre 1956). Thirdly there is the concern with interpretation of women school heads' narratives (Gadamer 1996; Pollio, Henley and Thompson 1997). This position was achieved due to the characteristic of phenomenology, which is rooted in describing the essence of a phenomenon from the perspective of those who have experienced it (Wolf 2002). A further explanation of the characteristics of phenomenology is presented in the next section.

3.3 A phenomenological study: characteristics

> Phenomenology ... tries to discover and account for ... meanings in the stream of consciousness" (Giorgi 2003:6).

This approach is characterised by an attitude of openness, flexibility and adoption of non-directive techniques, which allows the investigator to grasp more fully the participants' lived experiences (Kruger 1988).

One viewpoint is that

> It looks at people's everyday lived experiences, and how these experiences are structured, focusing the analysis on the perspective of the individual experiencing the phenomenon (Wolf 1999:220).

While the women in my study had a history, which shows that they have not been given a voice and as such their views have not been heard, this approach enabled them to unveil their problems, their fears, their joys and their successes. By doing this, they were actually reflecting on their own experiences and making meaning of that experience. Using a phenomenological approach thus allowed me to listen to the stories of the women school principals as told by them. One of the features of this approach as noted by Reinharz (1992) is that it enabled the researcher to listen to participants speaking. Engaging in the complex process of understanding their experiences has the potential to uncover previously neglected or misunderstood worlds of experience.

Although phenomenologists differ among themselves on particular issues, there is fairly general agreement on some of their philosophical views. They tend to believe in the importance of subjective consciousness, and have an understanding of consciousness as a process that stimulates active participation and self-definition of situations. They further claim that there are certain essential structures to consciousness, of which we gain knowledge by certain kind of reflection. Phenomenology is also referred to as

Knowledge as it appears to consciousness, the science of describing what one perceives, senses and knows in one's immediate awareness and experience. The process leads to an unfolding of phenomenal consciousness. (Kockelmans 1967:24)

One of the most important features of phenomenology has been highlighted by Van der Mescht (2004:3) as its "insistence on description" ... and "the drive to stay with description until a holistic picture of the issue ... Embracing the notion of bracketing, phenomenological research works against the tendency to make early calls based on preconceived notions.

A major point of emphasis and focus is that phenomenology concerns itself with lived experiences. Schutz believed that the human world comprises what he termed various provinces of meaning, and each province of meaning has its own specific form that varies with regard to the tension of consciousness, spontaneity, bracketing, sociality, and self-experience. It is a system exploration of consciousness, that means the method is practised systematically through various steps or techniques, some of which are explored in the section on transcendental phenomenology.

3.4 Transcendental phenomenology

The goal of the phenomenological method as Misiak and Sexton (1973:7) put it is to "reach and grasp the essences of things appearing in consciousness". The technique consists of unbiased exploration of consciousness and experience. Transcendental phenomenology according to Moustakas (1994) begins by bracketing the phenomenon. Since *bracketing/Epoché* is fundamental to this approach I need to elaborate on it.

3.4.1 Bracketing/*Epoché*

Bracketing or the process of *epoché,* allows the experience of the phenomenon to be explained in terms of its own intrinsic system of meaning (Wolf 2002). By bracketing, a phenomenological method aims to achieve a direct contact with the world as it is lived (Merleau-Ponty cited in Giorgi 2003:91). In order to attend to any phenomenon as it is lived, it is necessary to take what is experienced just as it gives itself in any instance (Moustakas 1994:86). For instance, in my study of women educational leaders' lived experiences, I had to document every experience as it was presented and also gave them the opportunity to explicate the meaning of that experience.

To understand the participant's world one must first arrive at it by suspension or bracketing of presumptive constructs about it. I had to set aside the knowledge that I previously had about the phenomenon in order to capture the essence of what was being described and not distort it. Bracketing according to Pollio *et al.* (1997:47) is characterised as a "suspension of theoretical beliefs, preconceptions and pre-suppositions". It is "a process of removing conceptual biases that may serve to distort one's interpretive version" (Pollio *et al.* 1997:47).

The method adopted for this study proceeded through various steps. One of the steps of the phenomenological method is 'wersenschau' intuition of essences, insights into essences, experiences or cognition of essences. All things become clear and evident through an intuitive-reflective process, and for Husserl, intuition "is the presence to consciousness of essences" (Moustakas 1994:33).

This intuition is the starting point in deriving knowledge of human experience, free of everyday sense impressions and the 'natural attitude'. Husserl called the freedom from supposition (bracketing) the *epoché,* a Greek word meaning to stay away or abstain. In the *epoché,* "we set aside our prejudgements, biases, and preconceived ideas about things as have been mentioned before" (Moustakas 1994). We "invalidate, inhibit and disqualify all commitments with reference to previous knowledge and experience" (Schmitt in Moustakas 1994: 59). The phenomenological *epoché,* according to Moustakas, "does not

eliminate everything, does not deny the reality of everything, does not doubt everything – only the natural attitude, the biases of everyday knowledge, as a basis for truth and reality". What is doubted are scientific 'facts', the knowing of things in advance, from an external base rather than from internal reflection and meaning (Moustakas 1994:85).

This process is a difficult one but I tried to maintain it as best I could. The nature and meaning of *epoché* is a preparation for deriving new knowledge. It is also an experience in itself, a process of setting aside prejudices, predispositions, and allowing events and people to enter anew into consciousness. In Moustakas' (1994:86) view, *epoché* therefore "gives us an original vantage point, a clearing of mind, space, and time, a holding in abeyance of whatever colours... of that which has been put into our minds by science or society".

Epoché induces entering a pure internal place, as an open self, ready to embrace life in what it truly offers. From the *epoché* we are challenged to create new ideas, new feelings, awareness, and new understanding. We are challenged to come to know things with receptiveness. This way of perceiving life calls for looking and becoming aware, but without imposing our prejudgements on what we see, think, imagine or feel (Moustakas 1994:86).

Epoché is possibly a way of genuinely looking at some reality. The process requires an unusual, sustained attention and concentration, and although it is rarely perfectly achieved, Moustakas (1994:90) notes that the attention and "work involved" in reflection and self-dialogue, "the intention" that underlies the process, significantly "reduce the influence of preconceived thought[s...judgement and biases". The basic pre-requisite for the successful practice of phenomenological method is freeing oneself from any pre-concepts or presuppositions. Moustakas (1994:32) puts is as follows:

> By abstaining from the natural attitude, the everyday knowing of things, and by considering something in its naked presence, though there can still be an error in

> my judgement...whatever else may enter my awareness I cannot perceive it...my intuitive knowing of myself and what presents itself of its own accord does not betray me.

Just as the above is self-explanatory, it worked for me, as I just had to ignore all other thoughts and knowledge and concentrate on women's explications as they came.

The next step an attempt to grasp the psychological meaning is derived through a direct intuiting (Giorgi 2003:91). Intuition is essential in describing whatever presents itself. The focus of research in a phenomenological framework is, however, the world as revealed through a transcendental attitude, an attitude which does not aim to deny absolutely the existence of the natural world, but which strives to hold in abeyance (not in force) the natural scientific belief that the world is independent of each individual (Stones 1988:141) The phenomenological researcher is thus required to move from a natural attitude to a transcendental attitude through a process of phenomenological reduction.

Phenomenological reduction according to Wolf (2002) is the process of continually returning to the essence of the experience to derive the inner structure or meaning of it. Intuition of essences is also called "eidetic intuition." meaning essences (Misiak and Sexton 1973). Thus as Husserl puts it, eidetic reduction is the procedure of getting to the essences themselves. While *epoché* is the first step in coming to know things, in phenomenological reduction, the task is that of describing in textural language, the experience and the relationship between phenomenon and the self. All the process involved leads partly to or contributes to the value of research. The quality of experience is the focus and meaning of experience and this is the challenge, as the task requires the person to look and describe. This process uncovers the ego (personhood) for which everything has meaning. I managed to document women's views, their descriptions and their explications through this unique process.

The process is actually cyclic because it involves going back and forth and, reading and re-reading. Initially during horizontalisation every statement is treated equally as having equal value. Those statements, which were irrelevant to the topic and the question, were later deleted leaving only the textural meanings and invariant constituents of the phenomenon. These are also known as horizons. There are those statements that overlap and some that are repeated, and they were also deleted.

3.4.2 Imaginative variation

After phenomenological reduction, the next step in the research process is that of imaginative variation. Moustakas (1994:97) suggested that "the task of Imaginative Variation is to seek possible meaning through the utilisation of imagination", varying the frames of reference. The purpose of this is to arrive at structural description of an experience. While describing the essential structures of a phenomenon is the major task of Imaginative Variation, Moustakas added, the uncovering of the essences, the focusing on pure possibilities, is central to the process as well.

A reflective phase is included in the imaginative variation process and many possibilities are examined and explicated reflectively. It is through imaginative variation that the researcher is enabled to derive structural themes from the textural descriptions that have been obtained through phenomenological reduction. It is again through imaginative variation that "the researcher understands that there is not a single inroad to truth, but that countless possibilities emerge that are intimately connected with the essences and meanings of an experience" (Moustakas 1994:99). Through phenomenology, an important methodology is developed for investigating human experiences and one learns to see naively, to value conscious experiences, and to respect the evidence of one's senses and everyday experiences.

3.4.3 Noema and noesis

The concept of intentionality and its noematic and noetic foci, led Husserl to develop an approach designed to clarify the interpretational factors contained within every experience. While each person's experience of the world might contain commonly shared variables, it is less likely that individual experiences can be fully shared by any two people. This makes each of us experience a "unique and solitary phenomenal reality" (Spinelli 1989:29). Intentionality is comprised of a noema and a noesis. Every intentional experience is noetic. This suggests that the world we perceive is not a neutral fact-world (Fouche 1990:382). In considering the noema-noesis correlate, the question remains, what is the perceived as such? The perceived as such is the noema, the perfect self-evidence is the noesis, and their relationship constitutes the intentionality of consciousness. On the noematic side is the uncovering and explication, the unfolding and becoming distinct of what is actually presented in consciousness.

In any case, we cannot describe any experience as it occurs, "it is only once the experience has occurred that we may both describe and explain it to some degree of adequacy" Spinelli (1989:23). Even in the case of women in this study, what they were describing were events of the past. By describing those experiences of the past, the women were automatically reflecting on their experience. Description or explanation can hardly be possible when the process of any experience is taking place. Phenomenological inquiry distinguishes ... between the experience as it occurs (straightforward experience) and reflective experience. Straightforward experience is the activity of experience as it occurs. Reflective experience helps us to formulate meaning and construct the various hierarchies of significance contained within those meanings.

Phenomenological interview transcripts are interpreted to yield descriptions of lived experiences, to grasp essential psychological meaning through a direct reflective process by the phenomenon, a phenomenological method achieves this by engaging in a rigorously specified means of naïve description (i.e. bracketing). Using a

phenomenological approach allowed me to listen to the stories of the women school principals as told by them.

Literature on women and educational leadership shows that leadership is empowerment. While the research focus is on meaning and experience and not empowerment, the process of phenomenology tended to empower those who were being researched as the process of reflecting is actually an empowering process. Naturally, as noted by Van der Mescht (1996:42) with regards to phenomenology "there are shared experiences or areas that are shared, particularly where people have common cultural and linguistic roots". There is strength in this type of approach as noted by Reinharz (1992) that listening to women speak and understanding women's experiences researchers have uncovered previously neglected or misunderstood worlds of experience. The guiding theme in phenomenology is "to go back to the things themselves" and for a phenomenological writer one interpretation of that expression demands focusing on the everyday world where people are living through various phenomena in actual situations (Giorgi 2003:8).

3.4.4 Perceptions

Through continuous perceiving of acts, we come to know their meaning in our lives, and their relationship to ourselves. In phenomenology, perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge. Husserl calls the perception that emerges from various angles of looking, the horizons. Moustakas (1994:53) suggested that, "in the horizontalisation of perceptions, every perception counts; every perception adds something important to the experience". The features of a whole are the horizons, but as with all horizons, the moment we single out one meaning, the horizon extends again and opens up many other perspectives. In Merleau-Ponty's (1961:148) view:

> Perception opens a window onto things. This means that it is directed ... toward a truth in itself in which the reason underlying all appearances is to be found. The tacit assumption of perception is that every instant experience can be coordinated with that of the previous instant and that of the following and

> my perspective with that of other consciousnesses, ... that what is now indeterminate for me could become determinate for more complete knowledge.

3.5 The research design

Research design remains fairly open-ended and negotiable in phenomenological research: it is data through inquiry that should determine the methodology. This means that the researcher should not prescribe the method, and neither should the methodological steps be pre-determined. In the light of the above it is important to note that the procedure used in this study was more of a guideline for the development of a more specific methodology in relation to the phenomenon. The procedure outlined here should be viewed as a guideline for the development of a more specific methodology in relation to the issue under investigation.

3.5.1 Sampling procedure

A 'snowball' sampling technique was used as the chief sampling technique for selecting research participants. . According to Patton (2002:237) **snowball sampling** is an approach for locating "**information-rich key informants**", that is those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry. The criteria for selection was that research participants for inclusion in the study should have the experience relating to the phenomenon, verbally fluent and able to communicate their feelings, thoughts and perceptions about the phenomenon to be researched (Stones 1988; Blase and Blase 2003). The first woman principal was identified using purposive sampling basing on experience, fluency and willingness. I used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques, and that strengthened the technique. The individual from the relevant population was approached and then the individual acted as an informant to identify the next member from the same population for inclusion in the sample. The sample as a rolling snowball grew in size (Huysamen 1994: 45).

After the first principal was located, her consent to participate in the study was sought before proceeding with discussions involving the study. This was done by providing an information sheet, which participants read and upon indicating understanding and willingness to be involved, signed the consent form. This process was carried out with every participant in the research. The use of a snowballing technique also enabled me to understand the nature of women principals' social networks, as this seemed to be part of their lived experiences.

The way the women responded to my request for referring me to the next principal, seemed to acknowledge my assumption of a social network. Instead of simply identifying one woman leader I was referred to others who qualified to be part of the sample. While networks seemed to be part of the women's lived experience, how they experienced the world around them differed, and because schools have different cultures, and "each school is distinctive and unique in some almost indefinable yet powerful way" (Owens 2003).

3.5.2 Data gathering

The main data-gathering tool in phenomenological research is the in-depth, semi-structured interview (Van der Mescht 2004). My guiding question for the investigation was, *What are the women principals' lived experiences as educational leaders?* To provide a framework for discussion, topics of interest that I hoped to cover were designed to facilitate continuity descriptions of the women principals as they reflected on their lived experiences. The inquiry was initiated through open discussions and conversations, with questions flowing from the dialogue as it unfolded. In this way, as noted by Pollio, Henley and Thompson (1997:33),

> ...a phenomenological interview cannot (and should not) be conceived as a rule-drive.... . For the interview to be a path or way for understanding the life-world of a co-participant, it must be allowed to emerge freely rather than to be constrained by predetermined injunctions

This means that the interview became more of a human dialogue which had a flow and coherence. The nature of interviews highlighted in this study facilitated rapport between the researcher and the participant. I had to create a situation in which the participant felt relaxed during the interview process, and I guaranteed anonymity and confidentiality at this stage. I gave the participants choice of venue where each one of them would feel more comfortable. All of them except for one chose their own offices. One went on leave soon after the introductory visits and so she chose to be interviewed at home.

3.5.3 Interview procedure

The use of in-depth open-ended and semi-structured questions allowed the participants to explore their lived experiences. I encouraged the participants to speak freely about the research topic. This helped me to obtain the fullest descriptions of their experiences. I also withheld all my personal views, and the purpose of that was to grasp the *life-worlds* that the participants regarded as real. The interviews were conducted in an informal and non-directive manner. The advantage of the non-directive or semi-structured interview is its flexibility, which allows the researcher to grasp more fully the participant's experience (Stones, 1988). Another important aspect about open-ended, in-depth interviews is that the researcher can make use of responses to adjust some of the questions. In addition, there is room for questions to be repeated and meanings explained. By adopting a phenomenological approach I was able to understand the concrete lived experiences of women principals. While in phenomenological studies analysis of data is an on-going process I tried to maintain the process as detailed below.

3.6 Data analysis

Data analysis is a process of unlocking information hidden in the raw data and transforming it in something useful and meaningful. Phenomenological analysis has something to do with meanings in contexts and emerging of themes from research participants' descriptions of their lived experiences. Data analysis was an on-going

process using some of the guidelines by Hycner (1985); Stones (1988); Moustakas (1994); Williamson and Pollio (1999) and Giorgi (2004).

While the guidelines for analysis should not be taken as a rigid prescription of what was done, I tried to retain flexibility in this application, since the highlighted writers had more similarities than differences. Having written the descriptions of the women principals' lived experiences I produced a detailed script of each conversation that included verbal and non-verbal cues as well as the actual context of the conversations. This was the initial stage and the critical aspect of my analysis phase. If I had used a tape recorder this phase of analysis would have been the equivalent of the transcription stage (Hycner 1985).

Giorgi's (1985) procedure reminds us to identify meaning units, specifying their central themes and then articulating the structural coherence of those themes. The interview protocols were therefore reduced to Natural Meaning Units, which formed the basis of general and situated descriptions of the participant's experience of the phenomenon. As terminology can be misleading, let me take this opportunity to elaborate on meaning units.

A meaning unit is a statement made by a participant. After achieving a holistic sense of the protocol, I had to re-read it again with a more reflective attitude, in preparation for the next phase in accordance with Stone's guideline that the protocols should be:

> ...broken down into naturally occurring units – each conveying a particular meaning – which emerge spontaneously from the reading. Each unit, termed a Natural Meaning Unit (NMU), may be defined as 'a statement made by [the subject] which is self-definable and self-delimiting in the expression of a single, recognisable aspects of [the subject's] experience ... Each meaning unit exists in the context of the other inter-related meanings of the protocol so that, regardless of how clearly meanings are conceptually differentiated from each other, ... there is an inseparable relatedness of all these meaning units in their lived sense (Stones 1988:153).

The purpose of this phase is to articulate the central themes that characterise the respective unfolding scenes of each protocol, and in the process the richness of the data is exposed for further explication.

3.6.1 Transcript analysis

The data were analysed by reading and re-reading the text in depth, to search for patterns in the participant's experiences regarding their leadership. Each analysis consisted of examining the descriptions until patterns of women's leadership experience could be discerned. After each individual experience had been analysed, all individual experiences were examined to ascertain the essence of the women's lived experiences as educational leaders.

3.6.1.1 Obtaining a sense of the whole

Before further analysis was conducted, it was important to read the transcript in order to get a sense of the entire interview within the context. I read each interview three or four times before proceeding further with analysis.

3.5.1.2 Identifying meaning units

This step consisted of identifying meaning units by re-reading the interview transcript and identifying experienced shifts in meaning. Each shift in meaning was marked by underlining the transcribed manuscript.

3.6.1.3 Clustering and thematising the invariant constituents

At this point, meaning units were examined for relevancy to the investigation of women's leadership experience. Irrelevant meaning units were discarded, as were some of the

redundant meaning units that could be identified at this point. Each meaning unit was grammatically rephrased.

3.6.1.4 Integration of Meaning Units

An important element of the analysis was to understand the temporal sequence of the events described in the interview, as suggested by Wertz (in Moustakas 1994). Since an interview does not typically proceed along a linear thought process, it was important to organise the interview data within a logical and contextual relationship. Meaning units were placed into a first-person narrative allowing the women to engage in retelling of their leadership experience.

3.6.1.5 Articulating the Meaning Units

This step consisted of translating the participant's naïve (that is unanalysed) descriptions of their experience into psychologically relevant meanings bearing on their experience as women educational leaders. Thus the participant responses were examined with the intent of understanding expressed and implied meanings. These meanings were put into terminology that expressed the meanings in more direct psychological language. This process consisted of moving back and forth from data to meanings. Derived meanings were, in essence, tested against the raw interview data to determine whether they were supported by data. This movement from concrete data to abstraction of meaning produced the articulated meanings.

3.6.1.6 The situated meaning structure

From the articulated meaning units arrived at through step five I derived meanings were integrated in a third-person narrative retelling of the events expressed in more psychologically explicit language. The result was a meaningful description of the

experience of women principals as educational leaders. The term situated refers to meaning derived from the context of a specific situation or experience.

3.6.1.7 The essence of experience

A final step in the individual analyses of the transcribed interviews consisted of refining the description into its most distilled and concise form. This was accomplished in the form of questions like, "what is essential for this experience of women primary school principals?"

3.6.1.8 Description

Finally a composite summary with a global meaning will be produced through the use of hermeneutic interpretation. Hermeneutic interpretation "involves an on-going attempt to relate parts of the text to its overall meaning" (Williamson and Pollio 1999:206). This process is important in that it will improve the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon as experienced in different contexts (Williamson and Pollio 1999). The world as experienced by the women school principals will thus be described through a composite summary (Hycner 1985). This composite summary for this study has culminated in the production of this thesis.

3.7 Hermeneutics

The hermeneutics circle refers to an interpretive procedure in which there is a continuous process of relating a part of the text to the whole of the text (Pollio *et al.* 1997). Interpretation, according to Moustakas (1994), is the basic structure of experience, which unmasks what is hidden. Hermeneutics involves the art of reading a text so that the intention and meaning is understood (Moustakas 1994).

While the text or interview protocol provides an important description of conscious experience, Gadamer, (1976: xviii) suggested that there is need for a reflective

interpretation of the text in order to "achieve a fuller and more meaningful understanding". Reflective interpretation includes not only the description of the experience as it appears in consciousness, but also an analysis of the underlying conditions, historically and aesthetically, that account for the experience. Van der Mescht (1996:44) acknowledges that

> the role of reflective experience has significant implications for the researcher. Since the researcher is essentially investigating the meaning, which the individual makes of his or her world, it goes without saying that the individual's schemata will themselves become the focus of such investigation.

Van der Mescht seems to highlight that there is a paradox. This is so possibly because reflective experience is open to measurement. However, any conscious act, according to Spinelli (1989), falls under the scrutiny of phenomenological investigation.

In hermeneutic circles the third stage involves broadening the whole interpretation to include all interviews on the same topic. Each interview was be interpreted in the context of all the others, and the rationale for doing that was not to establish generalisability, rather it was to improve the researcher's interpretive vision (Pollio *et al.* 1997). These themes were described as experiential patterns exhibited in diverse situations. Since themes describe experiential commonalities, a thematic structure was only modified when an experiential uniqueness emerges in a specific protocol. Thematic interpretation is a continuous process of going back and forth among various parts of the text in which earlier and later parts are continuously being re-thematised.

The next stage was to produce a summary of each research participant, incorporating the themes that would have been elicited from the data. To be able to write this summary I revisited the initial detailed script of each conversation (the first phase in the analysis) as suggested by Giorgi (2003:8). Using this summary and themes I then revisit the women principals to cross check whether I had accurately and fully captured the essence of their

experience. With the data emerging from the follow-up visit I was able to modify and/or add themes if necessary. This was followed by the stage of identifying themes common to all and those that were unique to each research participant, in preparation of conceptualisation of those themes.

Finally a composite summary with a global meaning will be produced through the use of hermeneutic interpretation. Hermeneutic interpretation "involves an on-going attempt to relate parts of the text to its overall meaning" (Williamson and Pollio 1999:206). This process is important in that it improves the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon as experienced in different contexts (Williamson and Pollio 1999). The world as experienced by the women principals of schools will thus be described through a composite summary (Hycner 1985). This composite summary for this study culminated in the production of this thesis.

3.8 Limitations of phenomenology

I am aware of possible limitations that could be encountered in this study. For instance women school principals, in describing their lived experience, might have adopted a critical voice in presenting their situations. Phenomenology however does not go beyond interpretation, and therefore it does not become emancipatory. Campbell (2004) believed that phenomenology does offer ways of understanding not offered by other research methodologies. By describing their lived experiences, women might uncover issues, which call for further researches. Instead of being a limitation, the experience could be part of the study's strength as this means more avenues for further research will have been opened.

In the process of developing the research design I was trying to consider and anticipate the kinds of arguments that would lend credibility to the study as well as the kinds of arguments that might be used to attack the findings. With both purposeful and snowball

sampling I managed to capture data, which later, was analysed and with the use of phenomenology central themes as well as common themes were identified and those that were unique to each research participant highlighted as well.

I am also aware of validity threats that might impact negatively on the quality of the research. In the case of this study, the question of triangulation might be one of the validity threats. Hycner (1985) suggests that a member check be practiced, that is cross checking the data collected with the participant to make sure data has been accurately captured. On the same note, for purposes of phenomenological interpretation, Pollio *et al.* (1997:53) indicate that:

The criterion of validity becomes whether a reader, adopting the world view articulated by the researcher, would be able to see textual evidence supporting the interpretation, and whether the goal of providing a first-person understanding was attained ... validity is placed in the human practice, where absolute certainty is not a requirement

3.9 Ethical guidelines for the study

In order to proceed into the field of research, I had to get permission from the Ministry of Education and the Mashonaland East Regional Office of Education. Neuman (1997) suggests that a researcher should seek clearance to conduct research from competent authorities. Getting permission is only a step; it is not a guarantee that one can simply proceed with interviews. I still had to get the agreement of women principals to participate in the study. I proceeded in each case to get the principals' informed consent before carrying out conversations with them. A copy of the consent letter I used is attached as Appendix B.

In any research including mine it is important to reflect on ethical issues. Ethical issues concern the problems and dilemmas that may arise as a result of matters taken for granted

in any research including educational research (Cohen and Manion 1995), for instance in this study the ideal process would have been to use a tape recorder. However, the political climate in Zimbabwe today is sensitive, some participants might not have been comfortable or feel safe being tape recorded as this information might be misused by security agents. Furthermore by using a tape recorder I as a researcher might have been mistaken for a journalist in this politically charged environment, thereby jeopardise my research, and the safety of research participants. It is important that one is always sensitive to issues that might endanger the well being of research participants and hence the decision to avoid the use of a tape recorder in this study makes sense. Ethics is "a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others" (Cavan 1977, cited in Cohen and Manion 1995:359).

Before starting on the conversations I had to reassure them on matters concerning privacy, confidentiality and that the results of the study will be reported in a way that guarantees anonymity. The participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

3.10 Time-frame for the study

The data collection for the study extended from April 2004 to July 2004 spilled over to 2005 with follow up visits. I first visited the schools just to familiarise myself with the participants, leaving behind informed consent forms. Women principals voluntarily engaged in the research process. Several visits to schools were made during the four months phase of data collection. Follow-up visits were in November/December 2004 and January 2005. This was consistent with Patton (2002:342) who indicated informal conversational interviews work particularly well where the researcher does not depend on a single interview opportunity, and that conversational interviews offer "maximum flexibility to pursue information". I had more than one visit. This means that I interviewed

each participant on three different occasions. The write up of the thesis continued up to December 2005.

CHAPTER FOUR

DESCRIPTIONS OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to highlight descriptions presented by participants with regard to their experience as educational leaders. The information I obtained from the five interviews conducted are rich, given the nature and characteristic of qualitative research tool I used. I used in-depth semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions as the data gathering tool in a phenomenological research context.

My aim was to obtain coherent sense of the meaning that could be attached to each woman head's lived experience. The repeated reading of the protocols assisted me in retaining a sense of the wholeness of data. On my first attempt, I was very tentative and hesitant to discard any meaning unit, since there was a possibility of destroying the wholeness of each protocol I had obtained. Instead of producing the situated descriptions I produced a summary. As I mentioned before, this was a result of my desire not to disturb the wholeness of the protocols, yet there was no way I could get to the meanings without following this process. The summary was informative but unable to capture a full understanding of the woman heads' lived experiences. The process required reading and re-reading, in order to examine the meaning units for relevancy to the investigation of women's leadership experiences and to enable one to discard irrelevant materials.

Although the process was time-consuming, there was no other way I could have obtained the rich sense of 'wholeness' in the data without repeated readings. The complexity of the process reminded me of Moustakas (1994) on horizontalisation, because I came to realise that the process is cyclic and involved going back and forth. I examined the participants' responses with the intent to fully understand the implied meanings. It was not until I

started discarding irrelevant units that I began to articulate and express the meanings of their lived experiences in an orderly manner and make sense of the collected data.

I had to continually ask myself what it was that I was looking for: what is the meaning of their experience to these female school heads? I had to find a way to discover what was important. I used the phenomenological process of *epoché*, which in Wolf's (2002) view allows the experience of the phenomenon to be explained in its own intrinsic system of meaning. I followed the process of constructing meaning from the women's standpoint. I tried to break down the protocols into naturally occurring units (see Chapter Three). Each unit conveyed a particular meaning which emerged as I was reading. I tried to stick to the operative word in phenomenological research which is "describe" (Giorgi 1986).

In my descriptions I considered Stones's (1988:153) suggestion that: "Whenever possible, the subjects' own phraseology should be adhered to in order that the data may 'speak for itself'". Phenomenology insists on remaining faithful to the data. Through this process, I was bound to return to the essence of the experience to articulate the essential structure of each protocol. "Structure" in this sense should be understood as referring to "in-depth unified meaning that comprehends and relates the disparate lived meanings" (Giorgi cited in Kruger, 1984:25). This was accomplished through looking at what was essential for the particular experience of women primary school principals. This is how I managed to produce first individual accounts, and later moved to global, meaningful description of women's experience as educational leaders.

In some instances, I retained the exact words used by the women principals and coded each quotation. For example, in A1, A refers to the first participant, and 1 to the first meaning unit. This helped me to arrange my data in an orderly manner without distorting the sense of the original information. I tried to remain faithful to the data and avoided omitting of important points. In this way I attempted to be "... more aware of the actual total context and more 'concrete' in its application" (Stones 1988:221). Because

biographical data was the last to be collected, I included the information at the end of the meaning units.

4.2 Description of Enita's leadership

Enita's leadership is relationship-oriented and risk taking. She is one of the first women to be promoted to headship positions in primary schools in Zimbabwe. Excited to get the post, she thought it was an achievement. She received a great deal of resistance and that was a big challenge for her. She arrived the school as a substantive deputy head but the acting deputy and the head did not like it, as she puts it:

> I was more of a rubber stamp. The head and the so-called deputy head ... discuss school issues without telling me or consulting me. The head could lock the office... give the keys to an ordinary teacher without even telling you that he will be away (A2).

The head did not accept Enita as his deputy. Enita succeeded the retired head at the same school. She experienced fewer problems. She started a garden project, and her story goes:

> Parents were very supportive. I first planned how the budget was to be used. I presented the budget to the parents. When I asked for money, there was no problem... We worked well and there was good relationship. The garden project was successful and both the community and the school benefited from it (A3).

Enita used the proceeds from the project in this way:

> The money we got ... we used it for improving the school. We bought textbooks and stationery for the pupils. Other improvements were fencing the school with the fence donated (A4).

She left the school on promotion to head a boarding school, bigger than the previous. Most of the kids were bullies. Her experience was:

> ... I had to play a mother role... What I managed to improve was to reduce the bullying of other kids. (A6) What I experienced is 'children need love' Even if kids make mistakes, 'give them love', 'that motherly love', they need it and I had to provide (A7).

Enita worked hard to improve the situation. It was difficult and she emphasised: "When I say I worked hard I mean working with the whole community ... teachers ... parents and pupils" (A9). She held meetings with teachers. "I ... encouraged them to contribute" (10). The teachers were supportive although, initially others were ambivalent. She continued talking to them and she describes it thus, "Dialogue continued and I interacted with them formally and informally until everyone was involved" (A11).

Her strategy was "to create for the children a pleasant homely environment" that would provide "a conducive educational atmosphere" (A12). Enita created groups called houses for the children. The purpose of these houses was to "let the pupils have a sense of belonging" and for the teachers easy monitoring and that they would also" have a sense of ownership" (A13). Enita's pupils were identified according to the houses they belonged to and she noticed: "Both the teachers and the pupils were motivated to improve their houses and there was a big change hence the progress of the school" (A16).

She continued communicating: "I interacted with every group and encouraged teachers to talk to their pupils as much as possible (A14) ... We worked as a team, shared ideas and communicated with parents and guardians" (A17).

Enita was then promoted to her present school, a post senior to the previous one. Her first problem was having no mentor to induct her into the system. What guided her was a brief account of the problems she was likely to face, and the school environment she was going into. That information was "an equipment" (a tool) for Enita:

> I am not sure but the issue was all about gender. The school has been undergoing different kinds of problems and one of them was resistance to women leadership... Both teachers and the community were not supportive of events and whatever was for the progress of the school (A20).

Enita had experienced similar problems with previous schools. That gave her confidence to meet this challenge. She called the senior teachers and discussed with them the way forward. Enita interacted with both teachers and parents: "I hold meetings and discuss with the S.D.A. I ... involve the community as much as possible. We work as a team together with parents and teachers" (A23). She feels that the role is quite challenging because she needs to play different leadership roles:

> Sometimes though I can say my leadership is democratic, at times I use autocratic style of leadership. I use autocratic style to the teacher who is lazy and does not want to do what others do. I have to use rules and sometimes we are governed by rules. ... in most cases we talk, we share ideas (A25)... encourage them to participate so that they feel included (A26)... be flexible in order to handle different situations, more importantly, to have good working relationships with staff and the community (A27).

Enita experienced that a leader needs to be more informed to be able to assist people accordingly depending with the type of problem:

> Sometimes a teacher comes in crying, my husband took my child from me. You are already a legal advisor. You need to be supportive. You cannot chase

her away. One needs to be well informed and that means ... keep on researching (A29).

Enita feels her role is important:

> I just feel that my role is important because you need to have a shared vision ... to maintain relationships with both staff and parents even with pupils ... exercise good moral behaviour (A31) ...You need to develop a sense of ownership in others so that they are motivated (A30).

Enita works as a team:

> I see myself working as a team with my community, teachers and parents. I see myself as someone who shares power because when you delegate duties you actually are sharing responsibilities and letting somebody be accountable. I see myself as a facilitator, a team builder and also a learner. I am a role model for others.

4.2.1 Brief biographical sketch of Enita

Enita a widow is a head teacher of a big primary school in Marondera town, Mashonaland East Province in Zimbabwe. She completed her O levels in 1972 and first worked as an untrained teacher for six years. She enrolled in a three year teacher's training programme in 1978 and completed her training in 1980. Six years after training she was appointed deputy head at a small rural school and in 1996 she was promoted to position of a head at the same school on retirement of the male head. Enita came from a very poor background. "My parents were very poor and I grew up from a very poor background, but anyway, I got my inspiration from my father" (A34). Initially Enita's father was a drunkard and unemployed. Her father converted from being a drunkard to a decent scholar. She had been taught by her father at infant level after he had completed standard six, and she was now a head. She had actually grown up not interested in school and she ran away from school when she was sent to boarding school. She did not participate in any school activities except drama and public speaking. Her mother was very supportive, however.

She used to be told how her mother sponsored her father at school. "My father was accepted at a mission school because of my mother's strong Christian background."

4.3 Description of Linda's leadership

What characterises Linda's communication with her world is the notion of challenge and risk taking. She experiences that being a school head is not easy. She discovers that most of the children who come to school have no parents. They stay with either a guardian or grandparents and most of the time these children are absent from school either baby sitting or working in the farm fields. She calls the parents to discuss; some do not turn up. Linda thus describes her experience:

> My experience is that you cannot impose strict rules . . .the issue of school fees and school uniforms; it is not all among the few children who come to school who do pay fees. If you become strict and send them away, you will remain with no one and they would not turn up (B2).

Linda finds it difficult. Some children come to school with torn clothes, some barefoot and still she cannot send them back because they cannot afford better clothing and once they leave they would not return. She feels that it is not worth reprimanding them about the issue since they cannot avoid it. So she asks for assistance from organisations: "the Red Cross gives us food and money. They promised to give us uniforms and we are still waiting" (B4).

She works with the teachers and consults them. She gives priority to things that need urgent attention then distributes the food and money accordingly: "I delegate duties so that the sports master and the deputy head are accountable" (B6). Linda lets everyone work on an area comfortable to them or that they are good at, and she always communicates with them: "I try to involve all the staff in the discussions on how we can

improve the school" (B7). Because of her school's size, all teachers are automatically involved in school activities. She uses her professional knowledge to assist teachers and:

> I lead by example. I make sure I do not divide the teachers. Favouritism! If you do that teachers see, they are not 'bricks', these are people. (Nhai mai Muzvidziwa, munoti zvidhinha here zvisingafungi?) They need to be treated as humans! (B9).

Linda describes how she treats her subordinates:

> When a teacher comes with a problem ...discuss. Assist them. Do not ignore their plight. Assess the problem but before that, first talk to the person. Ask the teacher, what do you think about your problem? If the child is sick ask her, do you want to take your child to hospital? Give them emotional support. Sympathise with the teacher and take into consideration their individual differences. By so doing you are already someone acting like a mother. You are a counsellor. You are a mentor (10).

She encourages openness and not gossip. Linda uses authority and she keeps the teachers informed of the code of conduct so that they do not operate in the dark. She leads by example and feels that by so doing people put their trust in her. She feels leadership is not a joke: "It needs monitoring ...clear goals ... work together and share ideas" (B14).

For Linda learning involves accepting criticisms. When she wants assistance at school, she does not ask for money. She presents her problem to different organisations to seek for assistance:

First of all I talk to the responsible authority that assists me in identifying the donors. Then I approach the donors with my problem ... I invite them to school on a prize giving days, they came once and saw for themselves how the kids were dressed and this is how they assist us (B16).

When she first arrived her problems with the community were severe: "They uprooted the plants and flowers from the school yard and used the school property without permission" (B17). The problems need parents' intervention but she struggles without their support: "they do not want voluntary but paid work yet they do not pay fees to cover even the little costs incurred" (B18). She has always wondered how she progresses. She feels parents are not supporting the school. They are not willing to be involved in representing the S.D.A: "I sometimes plan drama to try and educate them, still [only] a few attend" (B19).

Linda struggled to convince them to change their behaviour because they had no respect for the school property:

> It was through continuous dialogue and interaction with them that they came to understand I am sure even the drama they watched was partly useful. They now respect the school property (B20).

When Linda arrived the school premises were like the bush

> ...with no flowers, no classroom furniture and books. I worked hard to source funds, build another school block, furnish the office and classrooms. I also fenced the school (B21).

She employed a security guard after fencing the school. Her next plan is to build a staff room. Linda communicates with higher offices to get advice. She is a good communicator and used close monitoring to improve the grade seven results. She maintains:

> ...good working relationships with both teachers and parents (B23). I plan together with my deputy all activities of the school. We agree on what to do. I supervise the teachers according to agreed work plans (B27).

Linda has her own class to teach: "when we discuss some of the problems ...its not like I am talking theory. They find it easy to join ... as such we share ideas on how we can improve" (B27). She uses the work plan from the Education Office as a guide from which she makes her master plan: "I ...discuss the work plan with teachers" (B28). Linda sees communication as twofold: "we interact, I delegate power to the deputy and she takes full control of the school when I am not there" (B29).

Linda communicates through circulars, meetings and sometimes informal talks and she "works as a team" (B30). She cannot handle everything: "I delegate duties to other teachers. The school has no bursar so I assign someone to handle finances" (B32). She does the auditing to make sure the money is recorded accordingly.

Her major challenge is to try and be fair, firm and friendly and have the school function smoothly despite problems: "You should have a shared vision, create a good climate and good tone of the school" (B34). Linda interacts with the teachers and encourages them to interact among themselves: "There should be sharing of ideas" (B34). She feels that teachers should feel included and have a sense of ownership. Though her work is important, Linda does not work alone: "I have to consult others. I need to be both democratic and to follow a hierarchy where there is need" (B36).

Because of the progress Linda has made, the community refers to her as a man, meaning that she performs better than the man who was heading before: "I always refer to the knowledge that I got from the Bachelor's degree of Educational Administration Planning and Policy Studies (BEd EAPPS)" (B38). It has helped her and contributes to her success as a leader. She thinks the previous head (a man) did not perform well because he did not have the knowledge she has. Linda feels satisfied with the progress she has made at the school and in her working environment.

4.3.1 Brief biographical sketch of Linda

Linda is married, with four children, and is a head teacher of a small school (farm school) outside Marondera. She completed a teacher's training [(PTH) primary teacher' high] certificate after form two in 1966. She managed to advance herself through part-time studies and by 1989 she had completed O level studies. She upgraded her professional qualifications through in-service training and completed the diploma in teaching in 1992. She got promoted to a deputy head post in 1997. She has managed to combine running a school with professional pursuits. She completed a degree in educational administration in 2000. Linda was born in a family of eleven and is the third born. "We were five girls and six boys" (B41). Her father wanted her to go to school and gave maximum support: "he trained us to be responsible by giving us duties, delegating different responsibilities to each child and rotating the duties" (B42). Linda was once a class monitor, a prefect and a leader at church. She feels that she is a role model for her relatives: "they look at me as a big aunt with leadership skills" (B44) Linda thinks that she was born clever. She has always wanted to be a leader: "I emulated a lady, Mrs Mashengele, who was a principal" (B44).

4.4 Description of Shelly's leadership

What characterises Shelly's leadership is her ability to involve the community in decision making and work towards improvement without coercion. Shelly is one of the first women teachers to be promoted to administrative posts (deputy head) through affirmative action: "we were sent to rural areas trying to find out how well we can manage ...we were an experimental group" (C1). When she got to the schools she received a warm welcome and was inducted into the system. Shelly's major turning point emerges as she starts transferring.

Shelly applied for a lateral transfer. She was asked to occupy the post of a school head two, an equivalent post to deputy head two post. She became a head of a smaller school. Shelly thought that the only challenge would be of decision-making. She did not receive any hand-over take-over:

> Everything was in shambles (C6). The school was dysfunctional everything in disorder (C8). The water taps were locked, electricity disconnected and the buildings were falling because there was no renovation. I worked very hard. The responsible authority was very supportive ...the water was unlocked and the electricity reconnected (C9).

There were no financial records. It was a difficult situation for Shelly. She asked for permission from the responsible authority to start her own new records and was authorised. Children at this school came from surrounding farms. They were not contributing anything to the school including paying fees: Shelly tried to find out what exactly was happening: "I ... talked to the farm owner first being the owner of the school, I then moved on to farmers surrounding the school" (C10). The first time Shelly approached her story goes:

> I talked to them individually introducing myself and highlighting the problems that we were facing as a school... It then became easy for me to call the parents from these farms to discuss with them what we had agreed with the farm owners (C11).

Both the farmers and the parents indicated that there was no communication with the school, and that things were not transparent that was why they were quiet and not supportive. From there Shelly communicated: "I involved the 'feeder farmers' (the surrounding farm owners) and the parents" (C12). The parents could not afford to pay for their children:

> ...approaching the farmers was like speaking on behalf of the parents so that the farmers pay the fees and uniforms for the children and hold back part of the parents' money every month until the bill is over (C13). I discussed with the parents that the money be paid by the farmers so that the farmer take the money monthly from their salary until it is all paid up (14).

Parents came up with their children's names for uniforms:

> I ... took names and the number of children to the farmers. I requested that the farmers order the uniforms and stock them in their shops so that the parents ... buy from them and pay by instalments (C17).

This happened and the parents were very happy. Although it involved a lot of movements and interaction, everyone was supportive and co-operative. Parents were taking the children to work in the farm fields leading to frequent absenting of children from school. She continued to investigate and found that some were baby-sitting while parents go to work:

> I had to approach the farmers again to discuss the issue of child labour ...they employed these small kids leaving them no time to go to school (C17). I ... planned to introduce a pre-school to cater for the under five so that this could solve the issue of baby-sitting (C18).

She approached the farmers and they agreed. The school used to have 'hot sitting' because there were not enough classes. She made a proposal for material to improve the school. When she left the school, she had built enough classrooms and there was no more 'hot sitting'. She stayed there for three years, and then applied for a head grade one post. That was a higher post, at an urban school bigger than the previous one.

Another challenge for Shelly was that the acting head had written letters to all responsible authorities and offices influencing them not to accept her: "The first problem I

experienced was resistance" (C23). The Ministry of Education showed her a copy with signatures from the S.D.C members indicating that they do not want a woman head. They wanted the man who was acting:

> ...when they showed me the letter they said they just wanted me to be aware of the environment that I was going into ... I was told to 'pretend' not to know anything about that (C26

She did not mind, but the 'knowledge' that the previously acting head was not in favour of her coming, helped her to think of a strategy for her way forward. "I called the school development committee members and introduced myself to them" (C27). They thought Shelly was not informed about their attempt to reject her, and they gave her a warm welcome as if everything was normal. She approached the chairman of the school development committee who showed her the school premises, but there was no hand-over. Shelly had to investigate on her own the records of an incomplete project of building a school *durawall*. She discovered that the *durawall* was built without the SDC approval. The money used was supposed to build the classroom block: "So I negotiated with the SDC to pay for the classroom block ...they no longer have hot-sitting because the classrooms are enough" (C30).

Shelly feels she has an important role which needs commitment:

> It needs patience ...sometimes...to be calm ...when I was given a letter of rejection from the S.D.C. I held my anger down (C33)... I discovered is that the role needs transparency and talking to people. The more people understand what is going on, the more they become supportive (C34).

Shelly believes that sometimes teachers do not open directly to the head: "we ask senior teachers to listen to their concerns" (C36). Working with senior teachers makes communication easy (networking). She sees openness and frankness as important aspects that contribute to her progress in heading the schools: "Even the teachers adopted that

frankness" (C37). When Shelly makes proposals for projects, she involves teachers in the contributions and suggestions. She incorporates their ideas and learns from them. Teachers feel free to discuss personal problems with her:

> I listen to pupils' problems as a mother (C40). Sometimes teachers come and close the door to discuss their personal problems. Mothers come in and sit down and tell me what exactly the problem she is encountering. Sometimes I feel that the respect I get is due to the motherly role that I offer, even with the pupils. We fight, but calm down and talk as a mother and child (C41). I do mentoring and counselling (C42).

She feels she is someone who is caring, and able

> ...to create an environment that is welcoming (C43). I need to understand the people whom I work with ...to know how to handle their problems C44) ... work together... apply flexible approaches to my work...encourage others to participate freely in ... school activities (C45). I should facilitate a sense of ownership in their work, and share power. I also feel I am a role model (C46).

She discusses with teachers the advantages and disadvantages of adult learning and encourages them to apply for promotion. In this way she feels she interacts with them freely. She encourages teachers to wear their gowns on prize giving days to motivate others. She feels that one of her biggest challenges has been to work with no clue of the previous records.

4.4.1 Brief biographical sketch of Shelly

Shelly is a head-teacher of a big school in Marondera town, Mashonaland East Province in Zimbabwe. She was born in 1958 and did seven years of primary education. She completed O-level in 1975. Shelly went to teacher's training college in 1976 and completed in 1978. She started teaching in 1979 after completing her training. She has never been married: "I have one daughter and one grandchild, so I have two dependants because my daughter is also not married and she stays with me" (C51). Ten years later, in 1989, she was promoted to the post of deputy head one. Shelly upgraded herself professionally through part-time studies and obtained a degree in educational administration. Much of her leadership has been influenced by the knowledge she got from the administration degree programme and her personal experiences as a teacher and an educational leader.

4.5 Description of Lonkina's leadership

The life-view of Lonkina's leadership is teamwork. She believes in working together. Unfortunately, her world has been full of ups and downs, and fraught with tensions. Lonkina being part of the first group of women promoted to educational leadership positions as deputy head one, had a warm welcome and received most of her experience of running a school in that position:

> The head just gave me the keys. I did all the head's work. I was actually running the school because most of the time the head was not there and I benefited a lot. I... worked well until I transferred to another school (D1).

At the next school she went to, she experienced resentment. The head had a reputation of not entertaining deputies more educated that him: "He used to harass me, saying you have come to take over, I am the mouthpiece" (D3). It was not long before he went on leave but

before he left they had formed a fund raising committee in which Lonkina was the chairperson: "In this committee everyone was contributing" (D4). They came up with suggestions on how they could raise the money:

> We suggested that there be a civic day when children deliberately dress in their own personal clothes and not school uniform, and then they pay a fee for not putting on uniforms (D4). The head wanted to dismiss me for implementing the idea" (D5).

The head moved around telling people that she should go. While he was on leave Lonkina did a lot of improvements at the school. She "built a toilet from the money donated and bought uniforms for the school choir. I bought school equipment and garden tools" (D7). Each time she used the money she liaised with the school committee, who authorised her to use the money.

When the head came back from leave, Lonkina gave a report back. The head was upset about the report and accused her of the developments: "he wrote an allegation against me saying I misused the funds. I had to go to court to defend the allegation" (D12). Lonkina never handled money because the treasurer did that. When she wanted to use money she would go through the committee: "I had the records of all transactions. I had to prove that I did not misuse the money" (D14).

Lonkina wanted to complete her project of toilet building before transferring. She asked for a lateral transfer when she completed building the toilet: "I was tired of being tormented" (D15). She transferred as head two. The only difference is that as a head she is an independent leader.

Lonkina arrived at the present school: "I regret why I had applied for leadership post. I did not know there are some people who are there to destroy others" (D16). Teachers at the

present school had been misinformed about her from the previous school, so they had a negative impression. They already had a bias.

In this new office Lonkina could not follow anything because the records and papers were not clear and not in order. Teachers were dismissing early. They must have been reducing lesson periods and so she had to start afresh: "I made my new timetable. I consulted them on how we should work towards improving pupils' performance, because the grade seven, pass rate was just too low (D20). She initiated change slowly and it took time for them to adjust.

Lonkina now works with them as a team. She feels that people come to work with problems already. She feels she needs to know each individual's interests and problems in order to understand them: "I interacts with them more often and make sure that anyone with problems we discuss, agree and find a way forward, discuss and find a way forward" (D23).

She encourages teachers to work hard. She believes that as a leader she should not assume that teachers know the importance of their contribution to a child's success. She believes communication helps to prevent unnecessary misunderstanding:

> I communicate with teachers. I use both formal and informal forms of communication... interact with teachers and parents. With parents I make announcements at assembly for children to pass on the message followed up by letters to the parents.

Lonkina holds parent meetings, consultation days and prize giving days: "At prize giving days we used to call responsible authorities from the ministry, these days we invite people who give them donations" (D26). Enita has goals:

> We came up with school policies, a school vision and we have our own targets to accomplish. When I came here the pass rate was 56%. We managed to raise it to a range of between 80-90%. (D27).

Many of Lonkina's school children are orphans: "kids ...come to school hungry, they travel a long distance, and sleep in class because of tiredness and hunger. ...we thought of a feeding scheme at the school (D28). She introduced a feeding scheme for the poor children.

Lonkina sees herself as an interactive leader though she sometimes she uses authority:

> My leadership ...is that of interacting with others. I discuss with staff whatever we want to do before we implement it. I communicate with both the community and the teachers. I try to accommodate everyone... and work as a team. We have circulars and teachers have to abide by those rules (D31).

Lonkina feels:

> There is always room for adjustments, but if the teacher is lost, you guide and counsel the teacher before you write or implement the regulations on circulars (D32).

She leads by example: "I have my own class; I make sure the pupils enjoy their work and improve their performance" (D33). She has obtained good results but still maintains good working relations. She maintains discipline and creates an enabling environment for teachers:

> I delegate, supervise and make sure that the work is done... there should be good tone... It is like the hands, feet and legs. They should all work towards one goal. What I mean is good atmosphere, open climate so that teachers experience job satisfaction (D34).

She feels teachers become motivated to overcome difficulties and frustrations when they get job satisfaction. She adopts a flexible approach and facilitates the teachers' accomplishments of their tasks. She feels teachers are proud to be associated with their school when the school has a good 'tone': "open channels of communication, and where the head listens to the subordinates' problems and gives them a voice" (D36).

She feels that her role is important though there was a time when she learned nothing but being traumatised: "Now I enjoy my work. My children are grown ups and when I am home I forget that I am a manager" (38).

4.5.1 Brief biographical sketch of Lonkina

Lonkina is head of a small school (farm school) about ten kilometres southeast of Marondera town. She is married and has six children. Lonkina is last born in a family of eight – four girls and four boys. "I was born at a rural hospital. My father passed away when I was two months in my mother's womb (my mother was two months pregnant)" (D39). Her father had no brother. She was brought up by her mother and she learned at a mission school: "I was active in sports, but I cannot remember being a prefect" (D40). She did a secretarial course before undertaking a teacher's training course. Her work as a secretary was quite confidential. Lonkina feels that she learned to be responsible from that experience. She did a certificate in teacher training and started teaching in 1976. She continued upgrading herself professionally and by 1991 she had completed a diploma in education. She was promoted to deputy head two in 1993. Initially Lonkina wanted to be nurse (D42). She was influenced by the environment: "...most missionaries were nurses". She also wanted to help the sick, and was coached on how to help pregnant women when they deliver: "The experience that I got from the nursing aid duties made me hate the nursing profession" (D43) and this is how she came to teaching.

4.6 Description of Ivy's leadership

Ivy was happy when she got the promotion to a deputy head. She did not know there were consequences ahead:

> My first promotion, as a deputy of a male head was a nasty experience for me. The head was not happy about having a female deputy. The hatred was so open to the extent that he would allocate the duties of a deputy to the senior teacher whilst I was there and he would just ignore me (E2).

Ivy used to cry and blamed her husband for encouraging her to take up the position. She spent only two terms at that school and had to seek for a lateral transfer to another school. Ivy had fear for the first two months. She thought the head's office was for the deputy to be scolded:

> ...but this time the office was different (E4). I was actually inducted into the system. Each time she called me into her office, she would discuss with me freely so much that I felt welcomed. Each time we met we would discuss business first but ended up talking general issues. I liked her approach ... I ended up feeling free to work (E6).

She worked with teachers at sports and project planning. She had a chicken-raising project. She opened an account from the sales and used the money for buying books for the children. She was promoted to a school where an acting head tried to influence the community to say: "How can you be led by a woman?" (E9). Ivy had experienced resistance before: "I just thought it was the men's culture (E10). At first it was not easy for Ivy: "the man refused to leave the office. He just could not hand over the keys" (E11). Ivy had to share the small office for some time:

> He finally adjusted to the new situation of a woman head" (EII). I used to move around, pass on good comments on the work that he did, as if to say he was better than myself. I had to promote him through praise (E12).

Sometimes Ivy would ask him how he did certain things and so he felt supported and ended up talking to her sharing duties freely and that is how she managed to work together: "I started by making a new timetable because theirs was ending the day at 12 noon. I asked them to send representatives so that we can draft the master timetable together" (E13). Teachers were used to being allocated duties Ivy gave them the opportunity to volunteer and choose areas in extra-curricular activities that interest them or are comfortable for them. She used to negotiate privately if there was an unoccupied area because another area has more interest. Ivy continued to transfer to get closer to her family:

> Through discussion with the teachers and the community of the school I found that that there was a problem of teacher transferring to schools with better accommodation. So her first priority at this school was to improve teacher's accommodation in order to retain staff (E15).

Funds were not enough to facilitate school improvement:

> We talked to the parents and they were able to raise a certain amount towards that. They were supportive and organised, some volunteered to mould bricks others to build the toilets. We had donations from UNICEF (United Nations Children's Educational Fund). We managed to electrify the school including the teacher's houses (E17).

Some of her challenges were that some teachers tried to see whether she was strong enough, and would just disappear before classes ended and others would just not turn up for work:

> Truancy for example. Some people come and just disappear before classes dismiss and others just don't turn up for work (E20). Some...want to prove that they know, any suggestion by someone especially a woman they just dismiss it arguing that they have done it before and it didn't work. Some just make unproductive arguments (E21).

She used her authority:

> I used power. When you use rules you are using power. For example absenteeism ...you should fill in the form. Sometimes we would negotiate. I would look at the personal records of behaviours and it will guide me whether to negotiate or implement the rules (E22)

Ivy finally transferred to her current school: "there was reluctance, which was serious ... it would worry me and make me feel that pain. Teachers were not serious about work" (E14). Teachers leave their classes unattended while they talk in pairs outside, or spend another thirty minutes after break. She thought of speaking to them one by one after a time. Meanwhile: "I would just go and say let's go into the class" (E25). She holds meetings together:

> I encourage them to talk about any problem (E26). I encourage them to participate in the discussions that we make and let them to suggest what we can do to improve and how they want us to operate as a school. We draft our own school rules (E27).

Ivy feels because of: "continuous interaction I managed to overcome the situation" (E28). When she arrived at this school the pass rate was 50%: "my aim is to improve the pass rate to a higher percentage" (E29). She works together with her deputy who sometimes is reluctant to be involved. Ivy's perception is that she should be:

> Actively involved in the process of school improvement ... involve the teachers and parents and encourage them to participate in school activities (E33)...energise them through continuous interaction, and have open communication (E34).
>
> Listen to their problems as well and maintain good relationships with both parents and teachers (E35).
>
> Let them have a say in what is going on at the school and have pride to maintain that this is our school. Incorporate their ideas (E36).

Ivy thinks that a flexible approach to work, and open communication helps a lot. She feels that her role is important:

> You are a mother – socially- you are trying to solve other people's problems you are also a father – handling issues of a 'man' – fatherly issues. You care for kids, you do counselling and you are a mentor. You are a manager, a leader. In fact you are everything (E39).

4.6.1 Brief biographical sketch of Ivy

Ivy, married, with three children, is head of a small school in Mashonaland East Province. She is the firstborn in a family of six, two boys and four girls. Her father was a driver and her mother a housewife. She grew up in a village where she did her primary education. She became a head girl at form three. She completed O-level studies in 1979 and did temporary teaching for two years before training. Initially she wanted to be a dietician. She does not know why she wanted to be that but she is sure she was influenced by the types of subjects because she was studying food and nutrition. By 1985 she had completed her training. She managed to combine working and advancing herself through part-time studies. In 1996 she completed a degree in educational administration and was promoted to a deputy headship post the same year.

CHAPTER FIVE

SITUATED DESCRIPTIONS

5.1 Introduction

Further to my descriptions presented in Chapter four, I would like to provide a sense of the participants' 'being-in-the-world'. Human beings are related to the contexts in which they live and therefore should be understood as 'being-in-the-world'. This chapter focuses on each woman's view of what leadership is and in accordance with phenomenological perspective, their understanding of the world around them. In Spinelli's (1989:19) view:

> Phenomenologists argue that if we are to embark on any worthwhile attempt to make sense of the gigantic jigsaw puzzle that is our mental experience of the world, we must avoid making immediate misleading hierarchically based judgements.

While one of the aims of this study was to try and understand the social meaning of the women school heads' lived experiences based on the analysis of their own accounts, the phenomenological approach enabled me to unveil the women's stories as I have already indicated in chapter three. What is important with this stance is that values and subjectivity are regarded as integral to the inquiry. Meaning is tied to the concept of 'intentionality' as highlighted in my previous chapter, and "depends on how it has been constituted" in a subjective attitude (Karlsson 1993:69).

Although the women's stories were reduced to descriptions in chapter four, I felt that there was need for a more general approach in order to capture the descriptive insights of each participant more fully. This was made possible through *Verstehen*-based understanding, that is, "an understanding based on empathetic identification in which another's experience is re-lived by the interpreter (Pollio *et al.* 1997:45). My decision to follow this stance stemmed from an understanding that "phenomenological research

methods place a primacy on *Verstehen* in seeking to describe phenomena from the perspective of the participant in the study" (Pollio *et al.* 1997:45). In view of the above statement I conceded that (see Chapter three) instead of giving an abstract explanatory account, my approach to this study is guided by the goal of phenomenology, which is "to describe phenomena as they are lived" (Pollio *et al.* 1997:46).

I undertook this second description of the world of women considering also my research interest and the key issues raised in my research question, that is, the women's perceptions of themselves as educational leaders and how they relate them to their environments, their contexts, (experiences of venturing into previously male dominated domain), their leadership style, the challenges they face as school principals and how they have dealt with those challenges.

I proceeded to reflect on the natural meaning units expressed in the concrete everyday language of the participant. In transforming their language I followed Stones' (1988:154) suggestion that "the researcher reflects on the imagined possibilities inherent in each central theme ... to arrive at a psychological statement which accurately expresses the subject's intended meaning".

5.2 Enita

Enita, having been received with resentment in the field of leadership, perceives her world as an environment that needs transforming. She feels she has to face the challenge to take risks, interact with the community and try to turn around things without creating tensions among subordinates or the community. She feels this is a process of change, and she realises that change is a journey full of uncertainties.

Her exposure to different types of schools has broadened and influenced her leadership thinking. Enita sees her working context as changing all the time. What guides her in this change process rests upon herself as a leader, her approach to leadership, and her concept of power as sharing. Enita argues: "the process of leadership is challenging, you need to be flexible and more importantly, to have good working relationships with staff and the community" (A27).

Enita's past experiences influence her perception of leadership and how she interacts with her environment. When she was young, Enita never thought she could be a leader one day. "I grew up not interested in schooling" (A31). She did not dream of making any significant progress in life. "I used to run away from school" (A31). Enita continued to run away from school until she was transferred to another school where she describes the sisters at the mission school as providing "*motherly care* to the pupils" (A31). Enita acknowledges getting settled after transferring to another boarding school because she received *motherly care*. She appreciates the sisters' approach to leadership.

As a leader, Enita emphasises love for the children, creating a pleasant environment for the children and good relationships with the community. Her past experience has a positive impact on Enita's present world. Enita's experience influences her to be nurturing and caring as she exercises this in her leadership approach: "I experienced that children need love. Even if kids make mistakes, give them love, that *motherly lov*e, they need it, and I had to provide it" (A7). She recognises the importance of the nurturing and caring approach the sisters at her boarding school provided, and she uses that experience as an opportunity to make a breakthrough in handling her challenges as a head. She adopts a similar approach to leadership as the one followed by the sisters.

Enita's promotion to the post of head has made a big difference in her life as a leader. It has made it possible for her to exercise her nurturing approach to leadership. Her caring quality is seen in her patterns of interaction with pupils (see Chapter Four) and her

emphasis on love for the children, a point that she repeats: "children need love" (A7). Her effort to create a pleasant environment for the children at the school is an indication of her caring attitude. As described in Chapter Four, Enita makes use of her communication skills to negotiate and share ideas in order to have progress at school. Enita believes in the inclusiveness of others. She demonstrates great creativity in putting this into expression, as when she introduced houses for the children, creating a family-like or home-like environment at school. To a large extend empowerment of the community characterises her view of leadership.

The world of Enita, in her initial period of promotion to leadership was full of uncertainties and tensions. What is apparent from her experience of her first position as a deputy school head (see Chapter Four) is a clear indication of why Enita talks of the environment needing transforming. Her discomfort and uneasiness as a deputy head is the essence of her experience of venturing into previously male dominated domain characterised by power over others. This type of power does not match her view of leadership and power. She believes in power sharing: "...when you delegate, you are actually sharing responsibility" (A32). Furthermore, her emphasis on having "good relationships with the school community" (A27) reflects the type of leadership she enjoys. She works *with* <u>others</u>. Enita's approach is humanistic. She is both people and goal oriented. She is an interactive leader who dialogues, encourages and informs. She feels this type of approach also enables her to handle the challenges she faces.

Enita's strategy to create a pleasant homely environment for the children as well as provide a positive educational learning atmosphere has resulted from synergistic thinking. She involves teachers and the community. She uses a *holistic* approach to enable the community to have a *sense of ownership*. Her commitment to the community illustrates her connectedness, and power with others to turn things around.

5.3 Linda

Linda perceives her world as shaped by the environment and she approaches it with a nurturing and caring mind. She feels that heading a school is more challenging than she had expected. Her school is located in a farm: "most children have no parents" and they are always absent from school" (see Chapter Four). She struggles with guardians to educate them about the importance of pupils' education but to no avail: "if you call parents...some...don't even turn up" (B1). These challenges have taught Linda to be less authoritarian and more flexible in her approach: "you cannot impose strict rules ...you remain with no one and they will not turn up" (B2). Linda learns that without co-operation with the community, there is no progress. Linda also believes in following and using policy in her leadership. In this way her leadership is shaped by both immediate and wider environmental influences, such as national and provincial policy.

Linda does not use power over her community. What characterises her view of leadership is how she intervenes in the issue of the poor pupils and parents. She looks for ways to improve the situation as she presents her story: "we ask for assistance from organisations such as the Red Cross (B3)...I do not ask for money. I take my problem to different organisations ... I invite them to school on prize giving days." (B16)

Linda's concern about the children's social well-being, the functioning of the school and how she responds to community problems is a reflection of a caring leader committed to improving the well-being of people in her environment. How she agonises with parents over lack of resources and her ability to move beyond nurturance and go an extra mile to assist the children is the essence of her experience and view of leadership.

Her belief in leading by example is exhibited in her approach to discussions and the decision-making process. She does not separate followers from herself as a leader:

> I have my own class to teach. ... when we discuss some of the problems that we encounter its not like I am talking theory... we share ideas on how we can improve (B27).

In her approach Linda regards herself as both a leader and a learner. She believes that learning involves accepting criticisms. "You have to accept criticisms if you are to learn (B15). This articulates well her notion of sharing, where ideas are initiated, discussed, analysed and then accepted or criticised.

The way Linda interacts with her community strengthens her point of leading by example. She feels that communication is twofold: "We interact, I delegate...we work as a team" (B30). She believes that working inclusively with others promotes progress. Within teams she believes that everyone should work on an area that he/she "is more comfortable at" (B7). She believes that with this approach teachers perform better. Part of her strength in leading comes from reciprocity and interaction with teachers. She feels that when she involves staff she builds in them a sense of ownership. Linda feels that she is a role model and was born clever. Her thinking stems from her childhood experience:

> ...a class monitor ... a prefect... a leader at girl guides and at church (B43). I am a role model for my relatives in the family ... they look at me as a big aunt with leadership skills. I was just born clever and I have always wanted to be a leader (B44).

Linda believes that her family has played a significant role in her development as a leader though she often refers to her professional experience. Her father groomed her to be responsible at an early age. She has learnt to work with brothers and sisters. She has since adopted the spirit of togetherness and caring.

Linda perceives herself as both people and goal-oriented. "I plan together with my deputy and senior teacher" (B27) "the pass rate is good because of close monitoring" (B26). She feels happy about her progress as a school head. She finds peace in teamwork, which is a

result of sharing of duties. Her belief in communication as twofold is seen in her use of reciprocal approach when leading the school. Linda's approach to dealing with challenges symbolises her use of power not as command and control, but rather as capacity and efficacy. Linda sees her leadership as democratic and sometimes draws on formative authority, depending on the circumstances.

5.4 Shelly

Shelly perceives her world as an environment full of uncertainties. Like most of the women in this study, Shelly's promotion to deputy has been on an experimental base. She received a warm welcome on her first arrival. Moving from the position of deputy to a school head has been a major change for her as a leader. Transferring from one school to another changed her life-world and introduced many challenges to Shelly's leadership (see Chapter Four). She adopts an interactive approach to her leadership. When she arrived as a head, the school where she had been deployed was "dysfunctional" (C8) "...everything in shambles" (C6). She sensed the need to interact with almost everyone in the community to get to know what has been going on and thus her description of this experience is rooted in her lived experience. "Children...were not paying fees. I had to talk to the farm owner ...then to farmers surrounding the school" (C10) "high-lighting the problems that we were facing... then ... call the parents ... to discuss ...what we ... agree" on (C11) "... Approaching the farmers ...speaking on behalf of the parents" (C13).

She learnt to brainstorm and strategise on how to proceed. Shelly agonises with parents over lack of resources and uses negotiating skills to turn things around: many times approaching the farmers speaking on behalf of parents. Her ability to involve the whole community, and to develop a network of influence and improve the school situation is the essence of her experience and her view of leadership. Her vision is of development and empowerment of the community: "the parents were very happy" (C15) "... everyone was supportive and co-operative, so it eased up my progress" (C16).

The approach to leadership Shelly uses is that of a facilitator. Confirmed in her practice of integrity and power sharing is her strength in helping subordinates to elevate their personal potential. Shelly believes in shared decision-making. This has become part of her, such that parents and subordinates developed a sense of ownership. She enjoys working as a team and believes in exercising professionalism: "When I arrived at the school, teachers pushed me to take sides but failed" (39). Her approach to leadership drawing on the strengths of teamwork is that a win-win scenario where everybody is a winner and thus identifies with outcomes.

One of the elements visible in Shelly's approach is that of a caring leader. She is always sensitive to pupils' problems and gives them emotional support: "I listen to pupil's problems as a mother" (C40). She encourages senior teachers to interact with other teachers listening to their concerns. Much of her credibility stems from her human connectedness and her emphasis on nurturance of subordinates: "teachers come and close the door to discuss their personal problems. Mothers...sit down to tell me exactly the problem..." (C41).

Shelly is closely linked to her environment. She sees shifting from one school to another as part of her learning experience. How she relates to and interacts with the environment enabled her to communicate in a positive manner. Transferring from one school to another convinced Shelly to believe that each school has a different culture and to understand that challenges differ from one school to another:

> Before I came here... an acting head ... was busy writing letters to all responsible authorities ... influencing them not to accept me (C23)
>
> I was shown the copy...which had signatures of the S.D.C members saying that they do not want a woman head; they want a man who was acting (C24)
>
> ... I was told to pretend not to know anything about it (C26).

However, these challenging circumstances served to motivate rather than discourage her:

"I did not mind [it] but the knowledge that the previously acting head was not in favour of my coming helped me to think of a strategy for my way forward" (C27).

She feels that going through different challenges as a leader empowered her to take risks and have confidence in her work: "I was not given records ...I had to investigate" (30). Shelly feels that there is no progress without effective communication and believes that transparency breeds trust in both parents and the community.

Shelly negotiates and uses an interactive approach to solving problems. Her working context is that of connectedness and commitment to the community as reflected in her descriptions. What guides her in this context is her sense as a leader, of her view of leadership and her approach to it. Shelly believes reciprocity can produce intended effects and transform the community. This perception extends to parents, colleagues, the community or other recipients of the services she renders.

5.5 Lonkina

Lonkina perceives her world as a site of struggle. She has learned that leadership views differ from one environment to another. However, Lonkina believes in shared leadership. She enjoys the fruits of this approach (see Chapter Four) as a novice deputy and feels welcomed into the field of leadership. She was received with resentment.

> The head had a bad reputation of not accepting deputies more educated than him and it became true as I personally experienced that (D2). He used to harass me saying 'you have come to take over, I am the mouthpiece' (D3).

The essence of Lonkina's experience of venturing into previously male areas is her feeling of discomfort. Lonkina feels that the power used at this particular school was that of dominance and control and it created tensions within the school: "He wrote an allegation ... I had to go to court" (D12) "... I had to prove that I did not misuse money" (D14). She expresses discomfort with the command and control type of leadership. This view of power contradicts Lonkina's concept of leadership. Her leadership is rooted in shared power.

Lonkina's childhood experience influences her perception of others and how she relates to them. She grew up at a mission school: "missionaries... used to give and share with the poor ... I also wanted to help" (D42). Lonkina tries to make her interactions positive for everyone: "You need to know each individual's needs, problems and interests" (D22). Her belief that people come to work with their problems influences her to take a more flexible approach: "I interact ... more often ... anyone with problems we discuss, agree and find a way forward" (D23). Her caring quality is what characterises her view of leadership and is visible in her concern about catering for individual differences. This is the essence of Lonkina's experience of leadership. By providing open channels of communication and listening to subordinates' problems Lonkina's view of others is that there should be mutual respect.

Lonkina regards herself as an interactive leader. She views power as a sharing activity: "We came up with school policies, and developed a shared vision. I work together with them in an effort to build a broad-based sense of ownership". She believes in: "leading by example" (D33) and she has demonstrated this through her own class by: "improving pupils' performance" (D33). How Lonkina communicates with her teachers and the community is a reflection of her approach, which is inclusive in orientation. She observes, "If you want the school to have progress you have to involve people" (D29).

Although Lonkina does not necessarily stick to one style of leadership she feels she is a democratic leader. She believes in giving subordinates a voice. She believes that teachers take pride of their school when leadership is interactive, dialectic and reciprocal.

5.6 Ivy

Ivy experiences her world as full of frustrations and often confusing. Her working context has been constantly shifting. She has never been settled. Her experience of moving from one school to another has influenced her thinking and led her to believe that differences in the way women and men lead are gender related.

Her first promotion to the post of deputy of a male head was "a nasty experience" (E2). She was received with resentment: the head "allocated ...duties ...to the senior teacher... [he] ignored me" (E2). Her life-world has been one of discomfort and uneasiness – thus the essence of her experience of working in previously male environments: "I used to cry". As she transferred from one environment to another, the experience of entering previously male dominated areas broadened her thinking about the issue of power, but left her more confused: in one instance "... the acting head ... mobilised the community and influenced them to say 'how can you be led by a woman'?" (E9). She associates this type of thinking with the resentment she experienced at her first school.

Ivy gained confidence because she feels she is experienced enough to handle such challenges, and now that she arrived as a head she assumes that she would have no problem: yet "the man refused to leave the office" (E11). She feels that her presence as a leader is perceived as a threat. Ivy remembers the type of thinking that dominated previously – a culture that looks at men as the public holders of power and regarded women as mostly followers.

Ivy believes in professionalism. Her leadership potential and hope emerged when she worked with a woman head and was actually inducted into the system. When she left she had gained experience and with her professional knowledge she was motivated and empowered to take risks. In yet another experience Ivy's assumption that teachers behave with integrity was greatly challenged when she experienced a different school culture, with teachers neglecting their classes.

How Ivy handles challenges reflects her view of power and how she perceives leadership. Her creativity with reference how she dealt with an undermining and uncooperative male deputy head subordinate – "I had to promote him through praise" (E12) – and the use of transactions that fostered a sense of security – "I move around, pass on good comments … as if to say he is better than me" (E12) – this strategy enabled her to turn things around by using a different theory of power. Ivy sees power as capacity and efficacy not as a stumbling block. She sees power as sharing, not as dominance and control. She managed to overcome challenges and was able to work together with others. She believes in talking to subordinates.

Ivy relates well with her community. She sees herself as an interactive leader who involves teachers in decision-making. Ivy's notion of flexibility is visible in the way she allocates sports duties and activities: "were used to being allocated… we agreed that they volunteer/choose areas of their interest" (E14). How she discovers problem areas needing attention is an art in itself. She sees herself as a leader who is caring: "Through discussions … I found that there was a problem" (E15). Her caring quality is seen in the outcomes of her discussions and interactions: "worked hard to improve the teacher's accommodation". The uniqueness of her approach is apparent in her ability to produce intended effects without coercion. This constitutes the essence of her view of leadership and how she experiences it: "Some volunteered to mould bricks, others to build the toilets" (E17).

> ...speaking to them (E25)... encouraged them to participate in the discussions ...let them suggest what we can do to improve ... and ... operate as a school. We drafted our own school rules" (27).

How Ivy interacts with her environment makes a difference in the attitudes of both the school community and her subordinates. Her strategy of managing tensions within the school community and work together to improve school outcomes is a result of her creativity. What characterises Ivy's leadership is her concern for people's well-being. She sees herself as an interactive leader, one who listens to people's problems, involves subordinates in decision-making and develops a sense of ownership in others. She feels that people get motivated to work when their individual needs are catered for. Her commitment to the community is symbolic of a leader who is both task and people oriented. Ivy feels that her role is important. She sees herself acting like a mother, a nurturer and a mentor. Ivy felt overwhelmed when called upon to reflect on her past.

CHAPTER SIX

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

6.1 Introduction

In Chapters Four and Five I presented descriptions at a situated level. I tried initially to remain focused on my immediate and concrete impressions, thereby maintaining a level of analysis with regard to the experiences based on "descriptions", rather than theoretical "explanations" (Stones, 1988:221). To obtain the descriptions in Chapter Four, my descriptive statements were rooted in the original protocol data. In following this approach, I was able to carry out a concrete based, descriptive examination of the subjective variables. Descriptions in Chapter Five were added in order to contextualise each participant more strongly, and in essence, following Stones (1988:149):

> Phenomenological praxis in psychology is concerned with the rigorous description of phenomena contextualised in the *Lebenswelt.* While the researcher strives to achieve 'consistency of meaning...' (Giorgi, 1976; 315), his primary mandate is 'to listen to what the incidents, the phenomena, tell him' (Van den Berg, 1972:77) and hence remain faithful to the concrete dimensions of 'the phenomenon as it appears' (Giorgi, 1976:331).

The descriptions in Chapter Five were thus even more situated than in Chapter Four. While individual structural description provides a vivid account of the underlying dynamics of the women's experiences, reflecting the essence of what leadership entails for each participant, there also emerges the uniqueness of the phenomenon as experienced by each woman head. While in Chapter Five I contextualised and transformed meaning units into statements which express the participants' intended meaning, in this chapter, I need to "synthesize the insights attained by taking into account all expressed intentions

derived from the natural meaning units" (Stones, 1988:154). I need to communicate this phenomenological synthesis as a general description of a situated structure.

A general description is one which communicates the meaning structure of a phenomenon in general and which attempts to overcome the limitations imposed by any specific context (Stones 1988:154).

Distinguishing between the process and structure, also discussed in Chapter Three, Karlsson (1993:106), indicated that "the process describes 'how' the phenomenon is lived – the noetic side – while the structure focuses on what the phenomenon is – the noematic side. These two depend on each other and their relationship in Moustakas (1994) view, constitute intentionality of consciousness. To put it more clearly, it is the uncovering and explication, the unfolding and becoming distinct of the phenomenon as presented in consciousness. From the above statements one is able to understand better Aanstoos' (2003) suggestion that protocols should not be perceived as bits of behavioural responses, but understood as descriptions of the relational. In a similar note, Van der Mescht (1996:99) also suggested that a general description is viewed "not as discrete and independent statement, but as the culmination of the descriptive stage of the research process..."

A general statement brings together the significant themes that have been uncovered through a rigorous process of identifying meaning units and creating situated descriptions. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the process is cyclic, and to obtain an understanding of the essence of phenomenon, I had to continuously go back to the research data.

The analysis in this chapter therefore, is based on the five protocols described earlier and the results are presented in terms of different themes. Themes reflect "particular aspects of experience" and "attempt to capture each [participant's] unique mode of experiencing" of

the phenomenon (Pollio *et al.* 1997:76) These themes describe experiential patterns exhibited in diverse situations.

Following Pollio *et al.* (1997:51) "the situational diversity necessary for identifying thematic patterns is often provided by three to five interviews transcripts", my five transcripts form the basis of developing a sense of descriptive patterns and relations characterising the phenomenon. With this approach I was able to consider a more diverse set of experiences and by looking across interviews to recognise ways in which one situation bears an experiential similarity to another. The rationale for looking across interviews was not to establish a way of generalising, but to improve the researcher's interpretive vision. It allows one to obtain a richer picture across different contexts and experiences.

While it seems true that any given passage of the text is understood in terms of its relation to the whole, the part-to-whole procedure characteristic of a hermeneutic description was in this study undertaken to yield a more inclusive thematic structure. It is however, important to note, from Pollio *et al.*'s view that: "Although themes are regularly presented ... they should be viewed neither as objective entities intrinsic to the text nor as projections from an interpretive personal world. Rather, the theme seems better construed as a perceptual entity, a pattern afforded by the data... Such patterns emerge in the continuing hermeneutic act of attempting to understand the interview from the point of view of the participant" (Pollio *et al.* 1997:52).

In achieving a thematic description, the researcher does not attempt to thematise on the basis of formal or abstract principles, but rather, to capture what the experience was like for the participant... Although the theme is tied to the protocol, its task is to make the meaning of the protocol clear as to the way (or ways) in which the events described in the protocols were experienced and lived by the person. (Pollio *et al.*1997: 52).

This process is however not a simple one. The theme cannot assume a life of its own, but serves only to reflect the lived experiences in an orderly and understandable way. In Chapter Three, I argued for the importance of phenomenology and its insistence on the uniqueness of individual experiences. Looking at this phenomenological assertion from Spinelli's (1989:14) view, "all experiences are at best only partially sharable". However, this still means that experiences have some commonalities that can be shared. In this study this is not the criterion for selection of statements. While the researcher takes on the burden of exploring uniqueness, I tend to agree with Spinelli who further commented that:

> Although phenomenologists stress the unique and un-sharable differences in each individual's experience of the world, this stance should not be seen to be either explicitly or implicitly minimising or invalidating the great number of important studies dealing with the shared features of human experience... It is simply because experimental research in science (and in psychology in particular) has tended to focus upon the study of shared features and has either dismissed or diminished the importance of unshared variables in experience that phenomenologists emphasised the latter in their studies (Spinelli 1989:14).

The above comment tries to justify what I highlighted in Chapter Two in relation to theory, that "phenomenologists are ...redressing the balance, and increasing the adequacy of our theories" (Spinelli 1989:14). In other words, Spinelli has a reasonable assessment and justification of the approach to clustering and thematising that allows for an emergence of the themes which are common to all participants' protocols.

However, the paradox comes when for instance commonality seems to suggest frequency, which implies more of a quantitative approach, with the idea of frequency, subject to measurement. Phenomenologists and qualitative researchers need to adopt less measurable criteria, so that a theme tallies with what the researcher knows to be generally valid/significant in terms of the phenomenon, regardless of the number of times it occurs. To achieve this however, the researcher needs to attain a certain level of expertise and knowledge. This is why for instance Pollio *et al.* (1997:53) suggested:

> For the purposes of phenomenological interpretation, the criterion of validity becomes whether the reader, adopting the world view articulated by the researcher, would be able to see textual evidence supporting the interpretation, and whether the goal of providing a first person understanding was attained.

As highlighted in Chapter Three, phenomenology seeks a descriptive understanding of participants' experience from the participants' perspective. While clarification of insight can be assessed in terms of plausibility and illumination, Pollio *et al.* indicated that:

> The more rigorous and appropriate the methodology, the more plausible and illumination the results are likely to be. Conversely, if a study generates highly plausible and illuminating results, the more disposed the reader will be to judge the method as appropriate and, perhaps, rigorous... Both methodological and experiential concerns are relevant to phenomenological validity. Well executed qualitative procedures that do not generate meaningful results are technique without soul... Only when both criteria are met does phenomenological description attain the rigor and insight that it aspires to attain (Pollio *et al.*1997: 55).

In light of the above statements and referring back to the issue of commonality as describing the kinds of themes that constitute a general description, regardless of frequency, a theme might hold an integrated element in the participant's *lebenswelt,* which makes it significant: For this reason, instead of 'common', I would rather use significant.

6.2 Significant themes

6.2.1 Importance of their role as leaders

All the women in this study see their roles as important and describe what they mean by this.

Enita feels that her role is important because she needs to have a shared vision, exercise good moral behaviour and maintain good relationships with staff, parents and pupils

(A31). She acknowledges experiencing "resistance" and resentment during her early period of promotion but puts emphasis on the importance of her role (A28). She feels that although the work is too much and quite challenging, "it's enjoyable" and for Enita "others do aspire" to her job (A28).

Linda feels that she cannot work alone and she sees that as an important aspect of her role. She has to consult others. For Linda working with others is something she gives weight because she has to be inclusive of others:

> I try to involve the staff in discussions on how we can improve the school... What we try to do is let everyone work on an area that he/she is comfortable... (B7).

She also feels that: "to be both democratic and follow a hierarchy" is something that makes her role "important" (B36).

Shelly feels that as a head, she has an important role which needs "commitment" (C3). Something she attributes to the importance of her role is the need for patience, and sometime calmness. She remembers when she was given a letter of rejection from the S.D.C and: "I held my anger down" (C33). The pride Shelly has for having "won the merit award for good result and improvement of buildings" shows how she feels about her role as a leader (A31).

Lonkina does not give much credit to the importance of her role. She feels that there was a time she "regretted" why she had applied for leadership because at that time as she describes: "I learnt nothing except being traumatised" (A37). She however acknowledges that the role is important since: "I now enjoy my work" (A38).

Ivy believes that her role is important and she sees herself as what I would call 'all in one', but she is the best person to describe how she feels:

> ... important. You are a mother – socially – you are trying to solve other people's problems you are also a father – handling issues of a 'man' fatherly issues. You care for kids, you do counselling and you are a mentor. You are a manager, a leader – in fact you are everything (E39).

6.2.2 Motherly Care

Of all the five women participants only one did not mention anything about playing a motherly role, yet acting like a mother emerges as a theme in the other four protocols.

Enita emphasises giving "love" to the children and sees herself "playing a mother role" and managing to control undisciplined children using this approach (A5). When she says, "That motherly love, they need it" (A7), Enita associates mothers with a special kind of love which children need and that is what she feels she provided:

> What I experienced is that children need love. Even if kids make mistakes, give them love, that motherly love, they need it, and I had to provide (A7).

From Enita's description: "even if kids make mistakes, give them love", her thinking about mothers with unconditional love and associating herself likewise is what characterises her leadership.

Linda feels that she assists teachers with personal problems in a motherly way. She talks to them without ignoring their problems and "sympathises" with teachers (B10). She feels that by giving emotional support and considering their individual differences, she actually is acting like a mother.

Shelly attributes her respect to the motherly role that she offers to the pupils, teachers and parents:

> I listen to the pupils' problems as a mother but I have also become attached to teachers (C40). Sometimes teachers come and close the door to discuss their personal problems. Mothers come in and sit down and tell me what exactly the problem she is encountering. Sometimes I feel that the respect I get is due to the motherly role that I offer, even with the pupils, we fight, but calm down and talk as a mother and child (C41.

Shelly raises a similar point to Enita. When she says "even with pupils we fight, but calm down and talk as a mother and child" it's a sign of motherly love for Shelly.

Ivy associates her role with "motherly care" because she feels that by trying to solve people's social problems, she is already "wearing a motherhood cap" (E39). She feels mothers handle problems in a special way and that is how she perceives herself as a leader.

6.2.3 Resistance to women leadership

The women leaders' descriptions reflect the essence of their experience of venturing into male dominated domain. Except for one, participants in this study experienced resistance and resentment at one point or another in one or more school environments.

Enita experienced strong resistance on her first arrival as substantive deputy head. She was over-ruled and by-passed and describing it she feels she was "more of a rubber stamp" She was not accepted as a deputy, and she never practiced like one until she succeeded the head who was retiring (A2).

Shelly received a warm welcome in her early promotions but experiences resistance at the current school and did not receive any hand-over of authority:

> The first problem I experienced was resistance. Before I came here ...acting head pretended to be good when he heard that I was coming to head the school. Yet he was busy writing letters to all responsible authorities and offices influencing them not to accept me (C23). I was not given records of what had been going on for instance there was an incomplete project of building a school *durawall.* I had to investigate on my own which company was working on it and how far they had gone with payments (C28)

Shelly remembers holding her anger down after being "shown" the letter with "signatures". She feels that some schools value a masculine image more than a feminine in leadership.

Lonkina sees herself experiencing harassment for a long period since she was promoted and reached a point when she "regretted" applying for leadership position. The description of Lonkina's experience in various incidences is best provided by herself:

> He used to harass me saying you have come to take over, I am the mouthpiece (D3) ...wanted to dismiss me for implementing the proposed idea (D6)... He moved around telling people that she should go... He wrote an allegation against me saying I misused funds. I had to go to court to defend the allegation (D12).

Lonkina expresses discomfort with her experience.

Ivy describes her first promotion to deputy head as:

> ... a nasty experience. The head was not happy about having a female deputy. The hatred was so open to the extent that he allocated the duties of a deputy to the senior teacher whilst I was there and he would just ignore me.

Ivy used to cry and blame her husband who encouraged her to apply for the post. She experienced resistance in a number of schools and in another incident:

> ...acting head that wanted to mobilise the community and influence them to say, How can you be led by a woman? (A9) I had experienced resistance before, so I just thought it was the men's culture (A10).

Ivy's thinking was that the story would end there, only to find that: "the man refused to leave the office. He just could not hand over the keys" (E11).

6.2.4 Interactive leadership

All the participants talk of either working as a team, working together, sharing ideas involving the community or interacting. The women leaders in this study therefore communicate with their subordinates and the community and consult each other. This shows their approach to leadership.

Enita believes in working with the community towards a common goal. She feels that progress can only be achieved if everyone is actively involved. She describes how she managed to address the problem of children's in-discipline:

> I held meetings with the teachers... (A10) Dialogue continued and I interacted with ... until everyone was actively involved. (A11) ... these meetings were particularly targeted for improving discipline problems and in the process student performance.

Linda's decision comes as a result of shared ideas. She enjoys working collectively sharing knowledge. Linda has become so used to "working as a team" that she does not

see herself as separate from others (B4). She feels she cannot work alone (B36). "I plan together with ...deputy and senior teacher all activities" (B27).

Success in Shelly's work comes with the blessing of others. She makes sure she gets support for whatever she does. She involves the community and the teachers, and hence her progress. She describes how she succeeded re-opening a school that she found closed because of community problems:

> I discussed with parents... (C14) Parents could not afford to pay for their children (C13). I made sure I involved the feeder farmers (C12). I continued talking to the kids... I then approached the farmers... (C18) Approaching the farmers was like speaking on behalf of parents... (C13).

Shelly attributes her success to the process she went through, communicating with, discussing with and coming up with agreed decisions. Shelly went through a process that involved a lot of interaction, movement, discussions and time, but the approach eased Shelly' progress.

Ivy believes in talking to subordinates and interacting with them. She has managed to address many school issues using this approach. She sees her success in solving the problem of accommodation as a result of communication, discussions, involving the parents and working together. She discusses how this approach worked for her:

Through discussions with teachers and the community of the school I transferred to, I found that there was a problem of teachers transferring to schools with better accommodation. So my first priority was to make sure teachers' accommodation improved in order to retain the staff (E15). The source of funds was mainly school fees but that would not be enough to facilitate school improvement (16). We talked to the

parents and they were able to raise a certain amount towards that. ... Some volunteered to mould bricks others to build the toilets (E17).

6.2.5 Sharing power

Enita believes in sharing power. She feels that when she "delegates duties" to other staff members "sharing" with them the "responsibilities and letting somebody be accountable" then she is sharing the power (A32). She feels that she uses power when a teacher does not does not do his/her work:

I use autocratic style to the teacher who is lazy and does not want to do what others do. I have to use the regulations, rules and sometimes we are governed by rules. However, in most cases we talk, we share ideas (A25).

Linda feels that she needs to be both "democratic and follow a hierarchy where there is need" (B36). She perceives power as sharing and most of her school activities she "consults" (B28, 36). She also believes that delegating duties is a form of sharing power:

> Communication is twofold. We interact, I delegate power to the deputy and she takes full control of the school when I am not there (B29). It's difficult for me to handle everything. So I delegate the duties to fellow teachers. The school for instance has no bursar. I assign someone to handle the finance and my work is to audit the books and make sure the money is being recorded accordingly (B32).

Shelly like other participants, believes in power sharing:

> I should facilitate a sense of ownership in their work, and share power (C46). I apply flexible approaches to my work. This will encourage others to participate freely in most of the school activities (C45).

> Shelly wants to motivate others to have a sense of ownership. She feels that flexibility encourages subordinates to participate freely. The notion of wanting others to participate without force reflects how she perceives power.

Lonkina delegates (D34) and also applies a "flexible approach to work". She feels teachers should experience job satisfaction so that they get motivated to overcome difficulties. Without mention of how she perceives power, Shelly sees herself guided by rules and teachers "abiding by rules", yet she says: "There is always room for adjustments, but if the teacher is lost, you guide and counsel the teacher before you write or implement the regulations on circulars" (D32). Shelly's perception of power seems to be her ability to make progress without creating tensions: "We have to obtain good results but still maintain good relationships" (D 33).

Ivy sees power as something to be used only when there is a need. She describes incidents when she used power as control:

Some teachers try to see whether you are strong enough. Truancy, for example, some people come and just disappear before classes dismiss and others just don't turn up (E20). I used power. When you use rules you are using power...for example absenteeism – you should fill [in] the form (E22).

She does not always implement rules:

Sometimes we would negotiate. I would look at the personal records of behaviour and it will guide me whether to negotiate or implement the rules (E22).

She "encourages" her subordinates to "participate" in discussions on "how to improve" and how they "want to operate as a school" (E27). Her perception of power is the ability to "improve the school" and "maintain good working relationships" (E33).

6.2.6 Involving Community

All participants emphasised the issue of working together with both parents and teachers and maintain good working relationships.

Enita interacts with the parents, teachers and the pupils themselves. She feels that she needs to be "flexible in order to handle different situations, more importantly, to have good working relationships with staff and the community" (E27). Enita sees the importance of the community and as such she tries to "involve the community as much as possible" (A23) and "encourage them to participate so that they feel included" (A26). She believes that when the community feels they are part of the school then they "develop a sense of ownership" (A30).

Linda feels that she maintained "good relationships with both staff and parents, though it's sometimes not easy to do so" (B23). She believes in "creating a good atmosphere" and "good environment" through "shared vision" (B34).

Shelly feels that it is important to work together with the community. She has managed to make progress because she involved the community in the school issues and they were supportive. She experienced that transparency is important in leadership especially when working with the community:

> The important thing that I discovered is that the role needs transparency and talking to people. The more people understand what is going on, the more they become supportive (C34).

Shelly sees the way she interacts with her environment as contributing to the creation of a "school environment that is welcoming" (C43):

> I listen to pupils' problems... I have become attached to teachers... I feel that the respect I get is due to the motherly role that I offer... (C41). After helping that teacher I discovered that her respect for me increased (C44).

She also believes that when she relates well with her community she is able to facilitate a sense of ownership in others (C46).

Lonkina believes that: "working with people is not easy" (D29), yet she feels that "to have progress you have to involve people" (D29). She "interacts with both parents and teachers" (D26) and "maintains good working relationships" (D33).

Ivy sees the need to maintain good relationship with the community. She managed to handle some of the school problems through parents' support:

> Listen to their problems as well and maintain good relationships with both parents and teachers (E35). Involve the teachers and parents and encourage them to participate in school activities (E33). Energise them through continuous interaction, and have open communication (E34)

6.3 Summary

The main themes that emerged from the participants were linked to their roles as educational leaders. How they perceived their role emerged as one of the themes after rigorously reflecting on their experiences. Another theme which appeared to be important as each participant described her style of getting the job done was how they approached their work as leaders. The way the women school principals listened to people's problems

emerged as a significant theme, with everyone believing that she acted like a mother. They considered peoples individual differences in such a way that their relationship extended and the theme emerged as maintaining relationship with the community. How they managed to do that is evidenced in their descriptions of how they interacted with their community. From their interactions another theme emerged of how they perceived power. Finally, their concerns and issues around leadership and power emerged strongly, as they raised great concern about the type of power they experienced before they were substantive principals and some even when they had been appointed to that level. The discussion of these concerns and issues and other themes will be continued in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

DISCUSSION

7. 1 Introduction

In my review of literature in Chapter Two, I argued that what other researchers have found could, to some extent, link with my research findings. I also indicated that this study of Zimbabwean women principals of schools seeks to unveil previously unexplored aspects of leadership relating to women in educational leadership. This chapter therefore discusses themes and issues that have emerged from the study of five women school principals in Mashonaland East Region of Zimbabwe. Findings are discussed in light of issues raised by other researchers discussed in Chapter Two. In this way the literature to some extent provides a framework for interpreting the data. Before proceeding with the discussion, let me present a brief overview of my study.

My argument in Chapter Two was about the issue of power prevalence in previously male dominated school organisations and the absence of theory that would offer new ways of understanding and perceiving power in educational leadership. The data presentation chapter four, five and six mostly focus on the lived experience and perceptions of five Zimbabwean women principals of schools. The main thrust of my argument emerging from the data is the problematic nature of a gendered construction of school leadership and management (invariably male) drawing mainly on perspectives concerning interests of only one sex but represented as general and natural. The absence of the personal element in leadership research is also a major cause of concern.

I argue that simply placing women into positions of power is not the solution because women still have many hurdles to overcome, even though increasingly many women have taken positions previously held by men. By assuming headship positions, the women in my study gained access to previously male dominated arenas. These women are "forced to operate in a terrain they did not create, negotiating the tensions between their professional and personal selves" (Enomoto, 2000:376). One important aspect of my findings after examining women's leadership in traditionally male contexts has been to ascertain whether women who attain leadership positions transform themselves to fit into pre-conceived roles or redefine their leadership in terms of their own experiences and ways of thinking and knowing. This emerges clearly in the themes and issues discussed in this chapter.

I have also noted that the traditional view of leadership, the trait approach, has not been of much use and as a result has been largely discredited because of its many flaws, as it concentrated on behavioural, physical and psychological traits commonly observed in a leader. The structural functional theory also known as consensus model, is concerned with explaining law and order and ignores conflict and coercion in society and organisations and hence is of limited use when applied to really life lived experiences of women school heads. The Weberian perspective is a bureaucratic model, and because of its emphasis on the issue of power, exploitation and contradiction is subject to criticism by alternative views which seek to empower rather than use power over others.

In a similar vein the contingency approach also attempts to predict which type of leaders will be effective in different situations. Since leadership style is considered to be a personality characteristic, the contingency approach lacks the aspect of social interaction most visible in current leadership thinking. Transformational leadership theory with its emphasis on follower empowerment, resting on essentially human values, seemed promising but does not address the holistic context of leadership – the organisation.

In Chapter Three I have described how a phenomenological view helped me to answer my central research question, "What are the women school heads' lived experiences as

educational leaders?" The phenomenological orientation, which is both a method and a view, "sees organisations not as structures subject to universal laws but as cultural artefacts subject to meaning and intentions of people within them" (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993:4). From this perspective, reality for leaders is the reality they construct in their day-to-day interaction with other people. The women's lived experiences would therefore be understood more fully from this alternative view – phenomenology.

From the interview protocols that were later reduced to meaning units, I was able to write situated descriptions of each woman head's experience of her world and to probe each of the woman head's unique meaning construction. The descriptions recorded in Chapter Four and Chapter Five are the ones from which I produced a general statement capturing the essence of how the women principals perceive their roles and their environments. These were in the form of themes recorded in Chapter Six. The women in my study had different experiences of their worlds and as such different views of leadership.

Although from general descriptions significant themes might appear as if participants have similar perceptions of their roles as leaders, their differences are quite visible in the way they interacted with their environments as reflected in the situated descriptions in Chapters Four and Five. Some of the unique differences are discussed later in this chapter. Here I present major themes that have emerged from Chapters Five and Six. In Chapter Six they appear as significant themes. These major themes can be categorised into two key themes as follows:

- Factors constraining women's leadership, which include, resistance to women leaders, and mentoring; and
- Responding to leadership challenges, which include: reshaping school culture/creativity/developing other's expertise; interactive leadership; motherly care; involving the community (decision making); and sharing power (decision making).

7.2 Constraining factors to women's leadership

My discussion of themes in this chapter will first focus on the constraining factors experienced by participants, then move on to examine how the women responded to the challenges in leadership. The last section of this chapter is a reflection /overview and a summary that ties up the whole chapter. The women in this study experienced resistance when they first entered the field of leadership either as substantive deputy principals or even later when they were promoted to become substantive school heads. Since a "phenomenological view begins with the individual and seeks to understand the interpretations of the world around" the individual experiencing the phenomenon (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993), it is not surprising that in this discussion I focus on particular individual case descriptions and interpretations.

7.2.1 Resistance to women leaders

Enita was 'by-passed' and 'over-ruled' when she first became a deputy. The head of her school had strong feelings of resentment, reflected in his behaviour. The extent to which this behaviour affected Enita's self-esteem is noticed in how she describes her feelings when she said, she was "more of a rubber stamp" and her indication that she was not given the opportunity to act as a deputy leader. Other researchers (McFadden 1997; Enomoto 2000; Eisler 1994) have found that "men feel threatened when a woman moves up to a position of power" (Mumba 1997:13). The participants' descriptions show that they believed their initial entry in schools as women school leaders was a challenge and change of culture, resulting in what I may call a culture shock.

Rutherford (2001:372) suggests that "cultures embody systems of meaning" and at times "people form great attachments to their cultures, which explains why there is always a lot of resistance to culture change". Muddock (1999:192) suggests that "male cultures vary from organization to organization but there are common themes one of which is that . . . men continue to underrate and undervalue women in general". Enita's remark: "we were

the first group of women to be in headship positions and as a result, we received a great deal of resistance" suggest that the women were at first not considered suitable and/or maybe were simply not used to be perceived as leaders.

Focusing on organizational cultures, women managers and exclusion, Sarah Rutherford (2001:371-372) observed that; "cultures exclude as well as include", thereby providing evidence of "the gendered nature of cultures". The women's entry into headship positions was simply a change of culture and as Rutherford (2001) observed, change is a process inevitable in both human life and organizations, but if personal relationships and power are threatened, people tend to offer stiff resistance like that experienced by the women in this study. Rutherford (2001:371) however, indicated that; "most of the managerial literature on culture, refers to its inclusive properties, the intangible part of an organization which gives it cohesiveness".

Fennell (2001) explored women principals' experiences with power relations in schools during times of decentralisation. She looked at the concept of power from a structuralist perspective, which emphasises "control", "order" and "avoidance of conflict". Fennell (2001:100) argued that a structuralist view of power "creates tensions" in schools. Societal values at times influence people's attitudes and behaviour, which leads to similar kinds of negative thinking. In Zimbabwe where the study is focused, McFadden (1997) observed that, just like in South Africa (Mathur-Helm 2005), parents value sons more than daughters, positioning males and females according to gender roles, with males as breadwinners and females as housewives. A similar trend has also been observed in China. Hau-Siu Chow (2005: 218) for instance conceded: "the Chinese cultural heritage rigidly defined gender roles and behaviours and placed women in secondary and subordinate roles to men". This positioning, however, is what the Ministry of Education and Culture in association with UNICEF (1998:8) in Zimbabwe saw as: "mainly the values and attitudes that we inculcate and foster from birth to adulthood that are behind some of the so-called 'natural' male-female differences". This appears to be the reason why for instance Ford (2005:242) suggested:

> We need to look at the social and cultural context into which we assume theories are inserted. Accepting someone as a leader or recognising leadership characteristics is as much about what we call the social and cultural context. .

This study focused on the experiences of women educational leaders in male dominated societal and organisational structures. Looking at the same issue from a different view, some researchers (Addi-Raccah and Ayalon 2002; Eisler 1994; Okin 1989; Soobrayan 1998; Blackmore 1998; Appelbaum *et al.* 2003) believe that other challenges arise often as a result of socialisation and historical dominance of men over women. Addi-Raccah and Ayalon (2002:160), for instance, examined gender differences in appointments to leadership positions in schools and observed that:

> ...the prevalence of patriarchal norms ... emphasises gender difference ... men endeavour to preserve their status by restricting women's opportunities to senior positions...

This suggests that resistance may stem from conservatism. This suggests the unwillingness on the part of individuals or groups of people to give up existing beliefs and practices. To give up existing beliefs and practices is like changing ones' culture and in many ways it explains why the woman principals in the study experienced so much resistance and resentment when first appointed to positions of school deputy principals and school heads.

As a phenomenologist my guiding theme is: "to go back to the things themselves" and as Giorgi (2003:9) believes; it is to return to the "everyday world where people are living with various phenomenon in actual situations". I attempt to reflect on the women's descriptions of their experience; Ivy and Shelly had similar cases in which they experienced their worlds differently. The found that the acting principals of school where they were appointed to as substantive school heads, had mobilised the community members around their schools to reject the coming of Shelly and Ivy in their respective environments.

The acting head of the school to which Shelly was appointed managed to have the SDC members sign a document noting their rejection of her appointment, and Shelly was shown the letter with those signatures of SDC members by the authorities at head office. Ivy, on the other hand, although the acting head did not convince his community members to the extent of appending their signatures, he refused to leave the office or hand over the keys to her. When this happened, Ivy simply thought it was the men's culture. In this sense Okin (1989) thinking about the importance of the family on the moral development of individuals, especially the development of a sense of justice and appreciation of others (Okin 1989:18) seem to be meaningful. In addition Giligan's (in Helgesen 1995) study of female psychology, (discussed in chapter two) gives a much clearer picture of the impact of childhood experiences when it comes to the kind of personal values people hold as they grow into adults and leaders –"male children learn to put winning ahead of personal relationships or growth; to feel comfortable with rule, boundaries and procedures, and to submerge their individuality for the greater goal of the game". If from childhood, the culture was that of respecting others, despite gender difference as Rawls' (2003) point of a just well ordered society, being stable only if its members continue to develop a sense of justice and Okin's (1989) view of structures and practices of the family paralleling those of the larger society if the sense of justice is to be fostered and maintained, then the problem of resistance to women leadership in this study would have been a thing of the past. Yet this was not the case.

The discussion above has outlined the essence of women's experiences and the complexity of the phenomena. The concept of culture from a sociological view relates to the beliefs and values people have about societies and/or a particular society. Hall cited in Billington, Strawbridge, Greensides and Fitzsimons (1991:28) see culture as: "lived practices which characterise a peculiar society, class or group at a particular historical period". The lived practices from the women school heads' early experiences were that male leadership was perceived as the norm and hence their experience of resistance when they were promoted to positions of leadership in schools. Durkheim however, suggests "culture is functional for the continuation of society ... people behave as they are

expected to in a given situation because they have internalised the norms and values – that is the culture of society" (cited in Billington *et al.* 1991:5). This definition seems to suggest that people could be influenced to behave in a certain way, in an attempt to conform to the values of society.

When looking at organisations, the concept of culture is "complex and dynamic". However, Duignan (1988:209) argues that "the study of organisational culture adds a new dimension to the analysis of organisations" it follows that one cannot hope to "understand the culture of an organisation without studying these dynamics of organisational life". While culture is not easily defined, Smircich highlights the usual elements of most definitions applying to organisations and depicts it as the:

> ... social or normative glue that holds an organisation together ... it expresses the values or social ideals and the beliefs that organisation members come to share ... (in Duignan 1988:209)

Looking at the two definitions the societal and the organisational, one would find it difficult to differentiate between them. However, despite the variations in beliefs, norms and values, every school has a culture full of meanings. Culture gives meaning to whatever people do. This suggests that the women's lived experiences as educational leaders in this study have symbolic meanings. On the same note, Sergiovanni (1984) pointed out that differences in leadership style and communication patterns contribute to variation in school culture. These are only highlights of the concept of culture to draw us close to what I have just discussed. This concept will be raised again when I discuss how women handled the leadership challenges.

Approaching the phenomenon of organisation from a phenomenological view, the debate would be: "Is it organisations which oppress and harass people or is it fallible people who fail to carry out the well-intentioned aim of organisations?" (Greenfield and Ribbins (1993:1). Generally what women in my study experienced is in line with Owens' observation that:

> the behaviour of people at work in an educational organisation – individually as well as in a group – is not merely a reflection of their idiosyncratic personalities but is influenced, if not defined, by social norms and expectations of the culture that prevails in the organisation (Owens, 2001: xvii).

Taking the issue further, the argument about organisations and people is whether it is better to "abolish organisations or reshape them along more human lines, or to train people to recognise the goals of organisations more clearly and to serve them more faithfully?" (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993:1). There is a paradox as far as organisational phenomenon under study is concerned. Reshaping schools suggests changing the organisational or school culture. Bates (1986:10) argued that "learning a culture, living a culture, changing a culture is therefore, to take part in the process of history. In this process there are both possibilities and constraints".

However, from the women's experiences and how they describe their perception of leadership, they seem to have shaped the cultures of their schools in different ways. Greenfield's argument is looked at in detail in the last section of this chapter under reflections. My next focus is on mentoring a theme, which emerged from the women's situated descriptions as lack of induction into the system and in this chapter it is discussed under mentoring.

7.2.2 Lack of mentoring

The women school leaders highlighted lack of induction into the system as a major problem. The first time Shelly experienced this kind of problem is when she found the school in "shambles" as she describes it, and there was "no hand-over take-over process". While mentoring takes the form of peer support provided by experienced principals for their less experienced colleagues (Daresh & Playko 1994; Southworth 1995), Shelly and

Ivy believed that they could not get that kind of assistance. Shelly concedes: "I was not given any records". In another school, Shelly had to investigate on her own the project of an uncompleted durawall, and she acknowledged that: "working with no clue of the previous school records" was one of her biggest challenges.

The mentor's work is to assist the new head teacher to build up an understanding of the nature of management tasks and its impact on the school (Pocklington and Weindling 1996). If the women could not be inducted into the system, how then did they operate? One of my questions, regarding the women's experiences as educational leaders, is: do they fit themselves into pre-conceived roles or re-define leadership in terms of their own experience and ways of knowing? To have a meaningful understanding of the women's lived experiences, I need to look at themes that emerged as a way of responding to leadership challenges.

7.3 Responding to leadership challenges

The women's descriptions of their experience of handling challenges were like shaping the school's culture in another way, though they did not mention it that way. Two of the points raised that are going to be discussed under the theme reshaping organisational culture are: creativity and learning, otherwise the rest of the themes will be discussed independently as lived by the women. This suggests that I have to recapture the concept of school culture so that the discussion on reshaping it would make sense. Seeking for an "understanding of meanings and essences of experience", Moustakas (1994:84) argued, is at the heart of phenomenology. How can culture in schools be changed? How can it be reshaped? The women's lived experiences and their descriptions seem to reflect elements of shaping a culture of a school differently.

7.3.1 Re-shaping organisational culture

My last comment from the previous highlights on school culture was on variations in school culture. As I have not expanded on the idea, it may be meaningful to continue from there and explore how cultures can be reshaped giving examples. Variations in school culture can be related to historical and political contexts, for instance in Zimbabwe, prior to independence in 1980, colonial ideology structured school culture and climate along racial lines. More resources were given to White schools where the teacher pupil ratio was quite low (1 to 20) as compared to schools for the Black Africans where the teacher pupil ratio was 1 to 40, with mainly unqualified teachers.

At independence in 1980, the Zimbabwean Government established an open education system that allows every child irrespective of race to be in school for at least up to O-level (Mlahleki 1995). However, glaring differences in school cultures still exist between rural and urban schools, day and boarding schools in terms of resources and parental involvement. The women in this study describe how they struggled to get parents to support the school. Political, historical and socio-economic factors have had a strong influence on the various school cultures in Zimbabwe. Children from middle class backgrounds have access to more expensive schools characterised by better learning facilities, material resources, qualified competent teachers and an ethos that emphasises both academic success and a positive school climate (Mlahleki 1995).

Going back to the phenomenon under study Sergiovanni (1987:116) argued that: "leadership reality for all groups is the reality they create for themselves". As already indicated in preceding discussions, differences in leadership approach and communication patterns contribute to variations in school culture. What is reflected in my findings shows that the women's approach had influenced positive thinking in subordinates about themselves and their school environments through:

7.3.2 Creativity

Ivy, for instance, instead of following a hierarchy, approaching the education officers and the SDC, or writing a charge when the acting head would not surrender the keys, designed a strategy that could be seen as less hierarchical, less authoritative, that's creating what Jamali *et al.* (2006) would call a post-bureaucratic school or organisation. Moving around, "passing on good comments" and sharing information on how the acting head did some of his work must have enhanced the acting head's perception of himself. Ivy believes that the man felt encouraged and honoured since he finally relocated himself, without anyone's command or order (authority). In this case, culture could indeed be said, "is built through the every-day interactions" of members of the organisation (Saphier and King 1985:72). What Ivy did could be perceived as creating a positive atmosphere within the school, and this can be perceived as part of a given school culture. Enita's belief in the creation of a conducive atmosphere for the children at her school was being creative. The culture of her school could be seen as changed from one where bullying was tolerated to one where children show respect for others.

7.3.3 Learning

Linda believed in both leading and learning. She believed that by accepting "criticism" one is able to learn. By taking this position Linda believed she was leading by example. Linda's approach is associated with transformational leadership in that she believed: "everyone is an expert at something and everyone is a learner and a leader" as expressed by Barth, (cited in Diron 1994:6). In Linda's approach, Jamali's (2006:1) view of schools as organisations also features with people continually expanding their capacity and where "new patterns of thinking are nurtured". This can also be perceived as re-shaping the culture of a school from dominating ideas to sharing ideas. However, the women's descriptions tended to reflect a holistic approach – a phenomenological view which links the organisation with its people and respects the values of others.

Both Ivy and Enita's approach to the challenges could be perceived as a weakness in that they both could have used authority – punishments, charges and other forms of implementing rules and regulations. Literature shows that (Blackmore 1998; Shakeshaft 1999; Kark 2004; Soobrayan 1998; Drake and Owen1998) "female styles tend to be judged as deficient." (Irby *et al.* 2002:307) From the findings it could be said what is perceived as deficient has tended to be their strengths since it shows that they achieved their goals using those approaches and that is how they perceived leadership and lived.

The uniqueness of the women's perceptions described in this study is their consideration of authority, described by themselves as being less authoritative and applying meaningful and positive interactions. My next focus is on communication patterns used by women that have emerged as interactive.

7.3.4 Interactive leadership

The women perceived themselves as interactive leaders. This suggests open channels of communication with subordinates, teachers, pupils and their environment. My findings show that Shelly interacted with her environment in an effort to improve the school situation, which she found at a standstill. Shelly demonstrated her respect for the community through listening to their problem as in Russell's (2001) thinking, that listening is a key way which leaders show their appreciation of others. Enita interacted with both the school members and the parents in handling the pupils' discipline problem. In Rosener's (1990:120) study of women managers, interactive leadership meant women who "actively work to make their interactions with subordinates positive for everyone involved". Both Shelly and Enita's leadership reflect Wilkes (1996) concept of servant leaders multiplying their leadership by empowering others to lead. When the communities were involved as the participants highlighted, they became committed.

Women leaders in this study engaged themselves in participatory styles of leadership. They perceived their staff and communities as having developed new feelings about themselves towards supporting their schools. The women experienced that through participation people become involved and in most cases, committed to their work. Several authors (Helgesen 1990; Hurty 1995; Rosener 1990) acknowledge the importance of interactive leadership.

Interactive leadership is reciprocal, that is, it involves two-way communication: talking with and listening to other people. According to Hurty (1995:102), reciprocal talk implies "turn-talking, both answering and asking questions, listening and responding to what is said". Shelly committed herself to a process of discussions that required her to revisit the same people more than once, clarifying her goals to both parents and farmers. She highlighted the fact that she tried to be transparent. She believed that in leadership, transparency is important in that it breeds mutual trust. Rosener (1990:123) found that when subordinates' ideas are respected it enhances the information flow and "increases the odds" that leaders will hear about a "problem" before it "explodes". In the case of this study, Shelly respected the parents by listening and responding to their concerns about the fees. She facilitated the information flow when she approached the farmers on behalf of parents. The result was positive because she was open to discuss with her community – her leadership was transparent. Literature shows that leadership that involves others is empowering (Appelbaum *et al.* 2003; Hoy and Tarter 2004; Jamali *et al.* 2006; Timberley 2005; Lambert 2003; Russell 2001; Rinehart 1998; Fairholm 1998 Melrose 1997; Pollard 1996; Wilkes 1996'). Ivy was also open to talking both formally and informally with her subordinates. Rowling (2003) acknowledged that setting a good example at work meant being prepared to make sacrifices in pursuit of the goals one talks about. Through that she was able to articulate the problem of accommodation before teachers started leaving her school to look for schools with better accommodation. This involves a caring spirit, the theme I am going to look at next.

7.3.5 Motherly care

How women in my study perceived themselves, and how they described mother's care seemed more than just nurturing growth. Shelly believed that she listened to other people's social problems in a motherly way. Linda had a feeling that by trying not to ignore the teachers' problems, by giving them emotional support, she was responding to her subordinates' needs in a motherly way.

I tried to think about these women's descriptions of their lived experiences, trying to grasp the essence of their early experiences. In considering the idea of "motherly care", I found it difficult to understand Enita in particular. She did not like schooling during her early childhood; she used to run away and was never either a prefect or head girl. But now as a leader she talks of providing a motherly care to problem kids. I could not understand this until I read Hurty's article on Gilman's study, elaborated in Chapter Two. Gilman's findings seem to have some link with Enita's description of her early experience continually running away from school even when she was taken back. It may suggest two possibilities: that Enita felt insecure or was aggressive.

The fact that Enita settled only when she was transferred to a school where she feels she was given motherly care may also mean that through love, she felt secure. The women in Gilman's study perceived "aggression as the fracture of human connection, while the activities of care are those, which make the social world a safer community" (cited in Hurty 1995:396). Human connection in this case can be taken to mean that the relations between people are strained by aggression.

In trying to make sense of Gilman's findings and Enita's situation, a question that came into my mind was, does this mean that a mother's love is a cure or that it assures security? A reflection on Enita's scenario again might draw us closer to a better understanding of Enita's lived experience. When Enita became a leader, she happened to be at a boarding

school where children were from different backgrounds and had diverse characters, and from Enita's description: "most of these kids were bullies". Enita's description of how she dealt with the children's discipline was 'love, children need love, that motherly love, they need it and I had to provide". In her case, as a boarding pupil, when she was running back home to her parents, maybe she missed that love. When she became a school head, she encouraged teachers to talk to the children more often, so that they can have that feeling of closeness, of love and connectedness. The vocabulary of connectedness is that which Hurty (1995:395) refers to as "the importance of relationships and the web of human interactions" and this kind of connectedness is evident in the women's descriptions of their lived experiences as educational leaders.

Enita believed in letting the pupils have a "sense of belonging". She perceived herself as having managed to, what I may call restore peace within the school environment which had become violent, because of the children's behaviour. This experience may be linked to activities of care, with some elements of producing a safe environment as reflected in Enita's description, and a cure for the behaviour of bullies. This suggests that motherly care gives children a sense of security. Her provision of love might have nurtured the children's growth so that they become responsible pupils who no longer fought others. Drake and Owen (1998:1) indicated that women, traditionally, were seen as: "main nurturers of the young" and from this role follows their "natural involvement with education". What is unique with Enita's approach is that she perceived problems as part of growing and as a leader she felt she nurtured that growth.

How the women in this study approached their leadership can be linked to Gilman's 1911:183) consideration of a woman as a mother, being "the first co-ordinator, legislator, administrator and executive" (cited in Hurty 1995:399). Gilman considers the mother as a guardian, guiding her children and extending that to management of youth. Gilman believes that the woman is the first to "consider group interests and correlate them". This suggests that Gilman gives credit to the role of a woman as a mother and extends that role of the educative aspects of motherhood to educational leadership. Gilman's thinking fits

well with what is reflected in the women's approach to leadership. Enita treated the children with respect and dignity. Instead of punishing, she felt that children must be missing something (thinking like a mother) and she provided them with love and it worked well. She was sensitive to their needs as reflected in her creation of houses to make sure every child received attention from the "family members" (the group and the teachers responsible). She nurtured their growth. By giving teachers responsibility for specific groups of children, Enita felt it was a way of involving everyone in the actual process of solving the problem, to participate. Teachers "owned" the groups, and they must have developed a sense of ownership, while the pupils had a sense of belonging. Rosener (1990) highlighted the importance of participation and the notion of subordinates feeling important when they feel their views are being respected. Through the described process both pupils and the teachers must have been empowered because it meant being closely connected to the pupils and to the head of the school.

7.3.6 Involving the community

The participants in my study perceived themselves as people who work tirelessly, encouraging parent participation in the school's activities. This can be illustrated using the case of Shelly, who communicated with parents who could not afford to pay fees for their children. The process Shelly was involved in reflects the likelihood of Hurty's (1995:389) idea that the establishment of "trust" involves talking with people in informal ways, being available to people, being willing to talk things over, give advice if requested to, and "honour confidentiality". Trust contributes to "a positive working environment" characterised by "honest", and "supportive relationships" (Moye and Henkin 2005:260).

The women's emphasis was on maintaining good working relationships with their community. Hornby (1980:248) found that when the community is involved in school programmes through collaboration, "parents are able to contribute more than just information". Hornby's observation resonates with Ivy's case, when she wanted to

improve the teachers' accommodation and discovered that funds were not enough. Ivy talked to parents and from her description they were able to raise a certain amount towards building. Some parents volunteered to mould bricks, and others to build the toilets.

Ivy's description of how the money was raised and the language of volunteering tie up with Bass's (1985) description of a transformational leader who motivates followers to perform beyond their expectations. Geijsel, Sleegers, Leithwood and Jantzi (2003:234) take the issue of transformational leadership further, suggesting that it stimulates the "extra effort" often needed to bring about "significant organisational change".

While this study is not about change, school improvement or school effectiveness, it is difficult to talk about leadership without a mention of these concepts, particularly in the case of the women in this study. Although literature shows that the definition of leadership is "arbitrary and very subjective" (Yukl 2004:4-5), from the women's descriptions of their accounts, it is about influencing others to bring about change for the better.

My point can best be understood in light of the context in which the women in this study have been situated. From the women's descriptions, the schools were under restructuring. As highlighted in Chapter One, soon after independence in Zimbabwe, the expansion of education created shortages in staff accommodation, classrooms, school furniture and all kinds of resources, including human resources. Chikomba (1988:25) acknowledged that: "many new schools have had to operate under trees and/or under the 'blazing sun' (which was termed *hot sitting*).

To improve the situation, the women suggested that they had to involve the community and work together for the better functioning of the school. In a similar vein, Hornby (1990) observed that parental involvement in schools has been the focus of attention in the

1980s for several reasons. Women school principals in this study described situations in which they involved their communities in either building more classrooms, staff accommodation, toilets, or buying school equipment such as furniture. Participants, who managed to achieve one of the above, perceived themselves, as having succeeded, improved the school, and/or transformed the community depending on the approach she used to encourage parents' participation. Although not possible with every school, Dimmock's (2003:7) thinking that leadership is seen as an "empowering process enabling others" can be applied to the women in this study.

The women experienced that involving parents facilitates a sense of ownership. They seemed to have recognised that a school is "a world in which people live and work" (Owens 2001: xvii). They believed in creating a good environment with an atmosphere conducive to learning. The women's approach seems to fit well with one of Kretner's (1983) identified benefits of shared decision, that if people are involved they will have an understanding of the purpose behind, and that after the final decision they will feel included. This also has been seen as a form of power sharing and a way of reducing conflict (Rosener 1990).

7.3.7 Sharing power

The women in this study emphasised the issue of sharing ideas, sharing information and power. Rosener (1990:123) indicated that, "information is a source of power". This theme shares common features with the other themes discussed above such as interaction, and reshaping school culture. Women in this study believed in sharing a common purpose. Linda perceived herself as someone who cannot do without consulting her staff. In a similar view Rowling (2003:5) indicated that, "the essence of all power to influence lies in getting the other person to participate".

To be able to influence others, to motivate subordinates and bring together the community, to work towards improving their schools, the women believed in good

communication, a network of influence and as the findings reflect, what I may refer to as coaching skills such as those mentioned by Starr (2004). By coaching, Starr meant creating opportunities for someone to deal with his/her problem by purposeful questioning. Linda, for instance, seems to have a similar approach. The power sharing strategies that feature in the women's descriptions may be linked to Starr's (2004:10) idea of coaching conversation:

When I learned the principles of coaching conversations, I naturally gained an increased level of self-awareness. That is great for me, and also great for people around me.

Self-awareness in this context seems to suggest, "refraining" from "asserting ones' own superiority, which asserts the inferiority of others" Rosener (1990:123). To make sense of Starr's principles of coaching conversation in relation to the women's concept of sharing power, and the issue of refraining from ones' superiority by Rosener, I use Linda's description to illustrate the point further. Linda believed that:

> When a teacher comes with a problem ...discuss. Assist them. Do not ignore their plight. Assess the problem but before that first talk to the person. Ask the teacher, what do you think about your problem? If the child is sick ask... do you want to take your child to hospital? Give them emotional support. Sympathise with the teacher and take into consideration their individual differences. By so doing you are already someone acting like a mother. You are a counsellor. You are a mentor.

Linda's description is in line with Russell (2001) on the servant leadership concept (discussed in chapter two) and meeting the needs of others, focusing on leadership with a desire to serve. Linda's description does not seem to show superiority, inferiority difference between the leader and the subordinate. Starr suggests that: "to coach people, I must give up my tendency to control conversations, or try to 'fix' other people ... when my partner comes to me with a problem, I do not jump all over him or her with unwarranted instructions. Coaching skills becomes life skills" (Starr 2004: 10). Looking at Starr's definition of life skills, it seems to suggest adoption of skills that would naturally become your lived experience. Linda's approach as shown above does not seem to have that disruptive style of jumping in with solutions but gives the subordinate time to think

about a problem while she sympathises through asking constructive questions. Coaching seems to be a kind of sharing which empowers someone through posing questions. This is what is reflected in Linda's example and how she perceives her role as a leader.

My findings show that women in this study found ways of achieving their goals using less authority, which is in line with Crogan and Roberson's (2002) suggestion that principals should not concentrate only on controlling events but should share power. In a similar vein, Rosener (1990) challenged the command and control seen in a more authoritative type of leadership. With an authoritarian leadership, the followers are not given the opportunity for creativity; all activities are strictly structured and rigid. Information flows from one direction. It then becomes difficult for subordinates to be motivated and to be fully committed.

Although sharing power and information has its own risks – for instance people may reject, criticise or otherwise challenge what the leader has to say – in this study, Linda acknowledged that "if you are to learn you have to accept criticisms". That is a big challenge, however. Women in this study experienced some of these downsides but perceived them as challenges and on the other hand found the positives overwhelming. However, as Tombaugh (2005:16) observed: "successful leaders have ... the ability to understand and deal with their emotions as well as the emotions of others."

One "by-product of sharing information" and encouraging participants is that subordinates "feel important" (Rosener 1990:123) and when they feel included they develop a sense of ownership. From their descriptions sharing power includes vision sharing. A shared vision is important in leadership and in fact it is the first step "in allowing people ... to begin to work together" (Senge: 1990:208). It is one that everyone has had a hand in developing and reflects the school's culture and climate. Drawing from Senge and the women's descriptions, it can be said that shared vision comes from everyone's participation.

Although McFadden ((1997) points out that power has tended to be represented in essentially male models which emphasise control and dominance, this view contrasts with the ways women in my study perceive power. As reflected in their approach to working with others, women's views in this study and their experiences of power have gone beyond "theories" with "dominant views of power" Fennell (2002) – moving away from exercising power over subordinates to working together as colleagues. The descriptions moved beyond transformation. They seemed to link well with the new perspective theory of organisations, which reflects a phenomenological view.

7.4 Tying up the loose ends: In conclusion?

In my introduction to this chapter, I highlighted that a phenomenological view, sees reality as constructed by people in their daily interactions. This section will therefore reflect on the women's experiences, and how they related with their pupils, subordinates and school organisations in constructing their reality. But before that, I will critically reflect on the flawed nature of the traditional view of theory. I will finally present an overview of what has been discussed thus tying up the loose ends and then present a summary of the discussion.

7.4.1 Reflection on organisation theory and the women's lived experience

The placing of meaning upon experience is of great importance in research, especially in a study like this, which seeks to understand human experience. A phenomenological study according to Mirriam (2002:7) focuses on the "essence" or "structure of an experience". The women in my study indicated that they were the "first" group of "women" to be "in headship positions". In order to understand the subjective worlds of women's experiences and to retain the integrity of the phenomenon under study, Cohen and Manion (2003) suggest that efforts should be made to get inside the person and to understand from within. Going back to the participants' descriptions Enita stated: "as a result we received a great

deal of resistance". The essence of the experience of women could be more meaningful viewing it from all angles as I have indicated. Since I have examined the phenomenon looking at culture and society, I now tie up the loose ends, focusing on theory and organisation as indicated above.

7.4.1.1 Structural functionalist perspective

The phenomenon under study and the women's lived experience seem to be historically linked, as reflected in my findings, to power shifting – changing from males to females. The fact that schools or formal education is a structure, which the ruling class controls, means it is shaped by the dominant rules. There seems to be a number of issues involved in this. In my previous discussion I highlighted two things, which maybe linked to the women's experiences and the theory in question – functionalism per se that is the issue of culture and conservatism. Merton (cited in Ritzer 1992) observed that this particular theory does not adequately deal with the processes of social change because of its notion of accepting inequalities in society as necessary for the maintenance of order in society.

To understand the phenomenon more fully and to clarify what I am saying about women's lived experience let me illustrate it using the case of the Zimbabwe education system soon after independence. The introduction of multi-racial integration in the education system in 1981, threatened the white community. In order for them to prevent black children from enrolling in former white schools and to maintain their upper class status and values, the School Development Associations (SDAs) – the governing school bodies – raised levies which black parents could not afford. As a result, black children took time to enrol in private schools. As illustrated in my example the structural functional theory, because of it conservatism, reinforces the status quo. When referring to this study it would mean reinforcing the dominant male group values in educational settings in as far as educational leadership is concerned. This is why, for instance, Leach (1998:50) argued that despite the national governments' intentions of achieving gender equity in education, the system of

education has "served largely to maintain the status quo". This tends to explain the actions of male principals that found it easy to mobilise the School Development Committees (SDCs) to support them in their intentions of not integrating women into the system.

To elaborate further on the women's experience, Cohen (cited in Ritzer 1992:120) is useful in demonstrating how flawed this theory is in addressing conflict. Cohen sees a traditional conservative bias in the theory that can be attributed not only to what the theory ignores (historical changes) such as the given example, but also to what it chooses to focus on like culture, norms and value. In this case I refer to Merton's (1968) concept of culture – that "organised set of normative values governing behaviour" (Ritzer: 1992:118). The argument is on the structural functionalist's focus on normative elements that focus on cultural and societal factors, and what leads to the theory's conservative orientation, of "a passive sense of the individual actor" (Ritzer 1992:121). That is to say, human beings may pursue their intentions using the social system, and when people are seen as constrained by the organisation, culture and social forces, it would not necessarily be like that.

My findings show that the women were victimised or oppressed by an individual school leader that took advantage of those normative elements to pursue his/her own agenda or will in the name of culture or organisation. Referring back to the women's lived experience, Ivy was quick to link the man's behaviour to culture although it was an individual action, but because of what used to be the norm, she was forced to think in that direction. I have already highlighted that in such cases the question is whether it is organisations that oppress or the individual. The structural functionalists therefore "lack a dynamic, creative sense of the actor" (Ritzer 1992:121). The theory could therefore be considered unsuitable for addressing the conflicts as those experienced by women in this study.

On the other hand, the consensus model tends to be representative of the dominant ideology, and as Eisler (1994:38) observed the way leadership has been conceptualised ... "associated with a particular kind of power: the *power to give orders* and *to be obeyed*". This particular kind of power stressed the need for objectivity and separation of leader from follower. To reflect on one of my questions again: do women who attain leadership positions transform themselves in previously male domains? Or do they redefine leadership in terms of their own experiences and ways of thinking and knowing? This discussion seems to have clearly highlighted the complexity of the theory and the essence of the women's lived experiences.

From the women's descriptions, my findings show that the women had to be creative, interact with their community and share ideas – a concept different from that which emphasises individualism.

7.4.1.2 Transformational conception

What characterised the women's leadership in this study was "love and nurturance" (mostly Enita and Shelly), human relations and good communication (Linda), and mentoring or counselling of subordinates. All these qualities can be linked to transformational leadership but they also present a concept of leadership associated with stereotypes of women (Kark 2004). Transformational leadership cannot however, be seen as the domain of women only, but its association with women has come about mostly because of its moving beyond the bureaucratic models, with much emphasis on order and control – a notion that features most in traditional (male dominated) leadership theory.

The women's lived experience was that of being creative and sharing power with subordinates through encouraging them to participate. The essence of their experience seemed to be that they had a lesser choice of applying other approaches, because of the context in which they found themselves. In this particular note I refer to Linda, who

perceived herself as observing the provincial/school policy. In one of Linda's descriptions she clearly indicated that when she wanted to be strict with rules, the school could not function, because she would have remained with no one at school and she acknowledged that "they would not turn up" (see Chapter Four on findings). This means that the only option she had was to be somehow flexible, to find her way out. What it shows is that initially Linda wanted to abide by the school policy, to dismiss students who do not pay fees. Linda in this case might have found Starr's (2004) observation applying to her, that traditional approaches at times do not work.

It is interesting to note that Linda is the one who also talks of accepting criticisms as a leader and learning from others as important in leadership. Her comment on leading and learning shows that her perception and her leadership reality were partly shaped by the events within her school environment. What was important in her experience was her ability to adapt to her environmental needs, in context. She did not remain rigid with rules, but paved her way through other means. The above experience seems to link with literature, which suggest that women leaders who have "broken the glass ceiling" in non-traditional organisations observed that being forceful or too rigid when leading others, is not the only way to succeed (Rosener 1990). Leadership reality is the reality that people make. The type of leadership Ivy presents is what Bass (1990:53) sees as a:

> Leadership process that is systemic, consisting of purposeful and organised search for changes...and the capacity to move resources from areas lesser to greater productivity.

Linda utilised human resources to cover costs that could not be afforded because of the scarcity of cash. The uniqueness of the phenomenological method is to: "reach and grasp the essences of things appearing in consciousness" (Misiak and Sexton 1973:7). The uniqueness of how the women in this study succeeded in their agony with resources and progressed in improving their school environments is the essence of experience of their leadership and what characterises them as leaders.

Shelly and Ivy demonstrated in unique ways, leadership qualities that are in line with Bass and Avolio's (1994) dimensions of transformational leadership, in which leaders put their followers' needs first. The descriptions of the women, however, show that their leadership went further than just being transformational, as they believed in relating to their environment and acknowledged its inputs. From a phenomenological orientation, the women's approach could be related to Schutz's ideas of the "dialectical relationships between the way people construct social reality ... in the social world" (Ritzer 1992:76). I therefore wish to move on to reflect on the women's experience from a phenomenological view of organisations.

7.4.1.3 Phenomenological theory

The participants' lived leadership experiences suggest that schools are a "social invention" and that the people in them have their own thinking, beliefs and values, different from one another. The notion of sharing information and interacting with their environments reflects a shift from the notion of organisations as entities or basic structures. Shelly's view of an organisation, reflected on how she interacted with the community when she found the school not functioning, resonates with the views of Greenfield and Ribbins (1993:53), who see "organisations" coming into "existence" when people start talking and acting with others. This kind of link could possibly be perceived as the existential reality. In Shelly's case, the school came to life again when interaction was going on, with people giving their own views and feelings about their children, their work and the school. Shelly did not impose action on them. She agonised with parents over lack of resources until they finally came to an agreed solution. When Greenfield and Ribbins (1993:55) point to an alternative view of leadership as one which "accepts ... people" as "inherently part of organisations" it becomes meaningful considering how women in this study have been relating to their environment.

The phenomenological orientation is both a theory and a methodology. The uniqueness of this research approach is that "theory arises out of the process of inquiry" (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993:17-18) and aims at dealing with the "experience of people in specific situations". Shelly and Linda are confronted with exact cases, but because each experienced it in a different context, each lived and experienced it differently. How the women approached their leadership resonates with Greenfield and Ribbins (1993:5), who suggest that: "our concepts of organisations must therefore rest upon the views of people ... any effort to understand them in terms of a single set of ... laws must be doomed to failure". In Linda's case the idea that "practitioners tend to be dismissive "of organisation theories and concepts" for their allegedly "remoteness from the real school situations" could be deemed true (Bush (2004:22). However this issue is again addressed in the last chapter.

Consistent with Burns and Stalker' (1961) model of multiple organisational forms in which instead of hierarchical authority, organic organisations had a network structure of control and instead of hierarchical supervision, a communication context involving information and advice the findings reflect diverse views of how women perceived themselves as leaders. The way they related to their communities, how they interacted and responded to challenges suggests that their thinking of organisations accepts the notion that each individual experiences the world differently and hence their respect for individual differences. Jamali *et al.* (2006) suggest that management in the twenty-first century has taken new orientation, capitalising on a fundamentally different approach to managing employees than traditional disciplinarian, command and control philosophies. People in the new context are seen as "a natural resource and capital assets of the organisation" in which "the post bureaucratic" type of "organisations" which "include empowerment, teams, trust, communication, commitment and flexibility" thrive Jamali (2006:2).

On the other hand, how women in this study approached similar cases in completely different ways suggests that the research focus was not able to yield universal truth but unique experiences. This is the focus of the next section.

7.5 Overview

Early in this chapter I indicated that my findings show the women school leaders as having similar perceptions of their roles and their environments and yet there are some unique differences that also emerge from the findings.

7.5.1 Uniqueness of experiences

Tying up loose ends simply means bringing together and weaving together the points that have already been raised. What is unique with Enita's experience is that, as a child, she was not involved in leadership roles and nether did she participate in any school activities except drama and public speaking. However, her interest in these two activities seemed to indicate her potential skills to communicate, address and lead.

Unlike Linda, who had been taking leadership roles from her early age, and believed herself to have been born a leader, Enita did not dream of being one In fact, she used to be what I can call deviant and played truancy at school. But still this experience became a strong foundation for her future world – now her lived world as a leader. What is unique about Enita's experience is that instead of having a negative impact on her future world, it gave her more experience in handling cases of discipline in school settings.

Linda's early experience influenced her leadership thinking in a completely different way. Because she was involved in leadership roles since her primary education, she thinks that she was born clever and believes in leading by example. Her feeling of being a role model

also stems from her experience of leading her sisters and at church because she acknowledges that her relatives perceive her as a "big aunt with leadership skills". Thus now that she is a school leader she feels she is a role model.

Enita's early experiences had strong impact on her later lived world. These experiences however if they can be wisely utilised, reflects the importance of linking the past and the present. The connectedness of the women with their environments and their ways of doing things shows this research has managed to portray what goes on in schools and what the women are experiencing.

7.5.2 Complexities and ambiguities

The women's experiences leave me with more questions than answers. However, it seems clear from my findings that patriarchy and gender inequity negatively impact on women's lives in Zimbabwe in terms of their career path and their advancement to positions of authority and in relation to their welfare at work. Although much of the debate in recent literature has been about the under-representation of women in leadership (Dorsey 1996: Blackmore 1996: Wilson 1997) my study shows that even "placing the women in positions of power is not the solution. These women still have more hurdles to overcome" Soobrayan (1998:34). Those 'hurdles' are the taken-for-granted issues that this study has managed to unveil.

Even the women's calls for alternative views of perceiving leadership do not seem to solve the problem of gender and power in educational leadership. My study shows that the experiences of women in educational leadership are complex. My thinking has also focused on whether these women would ever win this battle of being devalued in their workplaces as leaders. It goes back to the values of society. If the people in society receive change as a culture shock what are the implications?

The claim that Leach (1998) makes referring to education and how it serves to maintain the 'status quo' in gender relations reflecting inequalities and perpetuating stereotype of male roles and female roles is supported by Butson (2004:1) who argued that "education is not the social equalizer it is claimed to be: in fact it may well operate as an agent of social in equality rather than for social justice". The point I want to raise from Leach's claim is that of 'maintaining'. You maintain something which already exists, but from which direction?

In Zimbabwe, like other countries, socialisation starts at home. I mentioned this in Chapter Two. Why education is now seen as an agent of society is that it transmits what the society values, which is what makes it difficult at the level of leadership to try and remove a branch of a deep rooted 'culture tree'. I see the sense in Fennell's (2002) belief in a post-structuralist thinking of de-constructing, though in this case it would be of a different form.

If I can go back to the women's ways of approaching leadership, the leaders in my study emphasised acting like a mother. They believed in the way they were socialised, and in the same way men were socialised to be holders of power from early childhood and they could learn from their parents. And everyone in society starts life in a family of some sort. Despite the varied forms Okin (1989:18) argues that

> The family in which a child is raised especially in the earliest years is a crucial place for early moral development and for the formation of our basic attitudes to others... It is important for the development of a sense of justice that grows from sharing the experiences of others and becoming aware of the points of views of others who are different in some respects from us. But with whom we clearly have some interests in common.

The family is seen as playing a fundamental role in how a sense of justice is acquired as it stems from the parent's love for the child, which comes to be reciprocated, and later develops the child's sense of his/her own values and the desire to become like them. This

makes sense, especially when I look at my findings and the way the women interacted with their environments. I tend to believe that it is the quality of socialisation that has been given to the men that leads to their behaviour. "It's not their fault", as one of my participants, suggested.

If the family values boys more that girls, those are the values they grow up with. If parents teach them the basic skills in the same way and give them equal respect, and if they can learn to respect each other's opinions as children they would not lose that socialisation when they become responsible citizens and in the end society would not be worrying about moral behaviour at work. Thus leadership and gender problems would be a thing of the past.

I am convinced, like Okin, that the family is "the first of that series of 'associations' in which we participate from which we acquire the capacity crucial for the sense of justice, to see things from the perspective of others ... the capacity for empathy is essential for maintaining a sense of social justice (in Rawls sense). The perspective that is necessary for maintaining a sense of justice is not that of the egoistic or disembodied self, or of the dominant few ... but rather the perspective of every person in the society for whom the principles of justice are being arrived at" (Okin 1989:21).

Okin's argument is essential in the context of women in this study considering the essence of their experience as educational leaders. What Okin is suggesting might assist in understanding the primary source of this perpetuation of gender inequality and the men's frustrations when they see women in positions of authority. If the gap in this primary source can be filled maybe alternative views of leadership can be considered.

7.5.3 A different dimension

The challenge is that "unless there is the sharing of gender roles in the domestic spheres" (Mumba 1997:13) then women will continue to be perceived according to those socially defined responsibilities. In addition Rawls (2003:11) suggested that: "to establish equality between men and women in sharing the work of society ... special provisions are needed in family law". This should be the case because much of the construction of gender as discussed above takes place in the family and particularly in the institution of female parenting. This suggests that the family has a duty to play if meaningful change is to be sought in school organisations and school environments.

The paradox is that while the family is a crucial determinant of our opportunities in life, and of what we become, most of the theorists especially those of the past, which stressed the importance of the family and its practice for the wider world of moral and political life, never insisted on appropriateness of the structures or practice of the family and those of the outside world. Okin (1989:19) argued that theorists like Rousseau, Hegel and Tocqueville thought that:

the family was centrally important for the development of morality in citizens, but all defended the hierarchy of the marital structure while spurning such a degree of hierarchy in institutions and practices outside the household preferring instead to rely on love, altruism and generosity as the basis for the family relations, non of these theorists argued for *just* family structures as necessary for socialising children into citizenship in a *just* society

Clearly this shows the root cause of the problem the women in my study have been struggling with. On the other hand it shows the complexity of the whole issue and ambiguities about how the issue can be redressed. Okin (1989:16) conceded that: "those concerned with real equality of opportunity", acknowledged that, "the family presents a

problem". However, "these theorists have underestimated it ... they have seen only half of it". What this means is the theories of justice are not yet in a position to touch at the heart of the problems concerning the family.

If justice is fairness as in Rawl's (2003) thinking then theories of justice should at least apply to every person. If a society is said to be just, then the structure and practices of the family must enable "women to have the same opportunities" and equal respect as "men" in order to develop their capacities, to participate in positions of authority and still be "physically secure" (Okin 1989:15). Women in my study experienced a lot of harassment in their work environments. If for instance the thinking of theorists in this particular field were to be observed by every family, there might be some kind of order and respect for the women who enter into positions of authority.

It also follows that to be able to transform school organisations into just institutions children who are to develop into adults with a strong sense of justice and commitment to just institutions spent their earliest and most formative years in an environment in which they are loved. A clear example is Enita's early experience where she felt she was nurtured and provided with love, and as an adult leader she imparted that love to the children, even when they were bullies. She developed into a good moral being thorough socialisation. Motherly care tends to be important in Enita's view.

7.6 Summary

While a phenomenological approach allows the researcher to listen to stories in a way that seeks to understand the lived experience, the women's descriptions of how they related with their subordinates reflect a phenomenological way of viewing the school environments. They believe in interacting with their communities. Enita emphasised love for the children and nurturance. She believed that she took a motherly role. Linda talked about sympathising with children and giving them emotional support, and Shelly's

emphasis was on listening to mothers' problems in an empathetic way. What is important in the women's stance is that they did not separate themselves from the community. Secondly, they listened and responded to the needs of their subordinates and finally, they involved pupils, parents and teachers in school activities and encouraged them to participate also.

While administrative theory embraces the notion of organisation as a system responding to changes in its environment, the women in this study opted for an alternative view which sees organisations as coming into existence when people talk and act with others as they did in their schools. Greenfield and Ribbins (1993), as discussed previously, highlighted that at the heart of the phenomenological view there is no abstraction but only perceptions by people. These women leaders' interaction with their community defines their leadership role as motherly care.

In line with Owen's (2001) view, these participants' lived experience of leadership depicts/constructs the school as a socially constructed reality with people, buildings and a culture, which is in line with the phenomenological view. Greenfield and Ribbins (1993:5) argued that: "if people are inherently part of organisations, if organisations themselves are expressions of how people believe, they should relate to each other". Since I have already highlighted in Chapter Three that phenomenology is both a method and a theory, the fact that the women in this study perceived their environment as part of the school and interacted with their communities reflects a phenomenological way of viewing an organisation such as a school. While management thinking has progressed beyond the structural-functionalist and Taylor's simplistic notion of effectiveness towards a greater emphasis on human relations, the women in this study made a break-through – they were able to transcend traditional models of thinking and acting in their leadership. Formal models focus on the organisation as an entity and ignore or under-estimate the contributions of individuals. The women's approaches reflect a shift from the traditional way of looking at a school or organisation. My findings show that they have tried to

interact with their environments and to involve them, encouraging them to participate – a strong aspect in current leadership thinking that has also been reflected in literature.

Since I described the characteristics of the phenomenological method in Chapter Three, I will reflect on the appropriateness of applying the method to my study. In my research statement I indicated that, in Zimbabwe, women educational leaders' beliefs and experiences have largely been ignored and marginalized, as my findings show. I have also highlighted that "very little in-depth qualitative research on gender and education has been undertaken" (Gordon *et al.* 1998:92). With a phenomenological approach I managed to capture the women educational leaders' meaning of experience which would not have been possible with other methods, for instance from a positivistic approach.

All the descriptions by the women and the stories that led to the unveiling of some of the taken-for-granted situations they endured were made possible because of the approach that allowed the researcher to listen empathetically in order to capture the essences of the women heads' experiences and perceptions. What has been of great importance in the use of this approach to my study is that it is a design that reflects an interest in contextual meaning making rather than generalisation. There is a respect for individual experience and that shows a valuing of other peoples' beliefs, a missing factor in other types of research, as indicated already.

The issue of gender-neutrality in educational leadership, which received stiff contestation by women authors (for instance Soobrayan 1998; Enomoto 2000), flows from the unpacking of women's experiences rather than a search for generalisation. With the phenomenological approach, values and subjectivity are integral (Van Rensburg 2001:17) to the inquiry. This is why it is given much respect and as such my findings tend to be meaningful. Hansemark and Albinson (2004) indicated that the aim of phenomenology is to describe the structure of experiences and also find what is hidden in ordinary experience such as the expressions of school leadership as gender neutral: the women in

this study revealed that there is a gender difference, not theoretically but from the way they experienced their leadership and how they perceived themselves as acting like mothers.

The above discussion has clearly revealed how a gendered construction management, with perspectives concerning the interests of only one sex and represented as general and natural, creates tensions in educational leadership. How the women in this study perceived themselves as educational leaders; how they related with their environments; and the ways they managed to break through different challenges, as reflected in my findings discussed above, reflect approaches that are less authoritative, more flexible and more nurturing.

From this discussion, based on the findings of my study, it has become clear also that it is not enough simply to place women in positions of authority, drawing from what the participants in my study experienced it is clear that women have many hurdles to overcome. It is clear that when a society is committed to equal respect for all its members, it can hardly ignore the family. Nor can it accept practices and structures that violate its norms, as do current gender-biased structures and practices. The structures and practices of families should at least give women the same opportunities as men to develop their capacities, in order for them to participate in public spheres and be accorder the same degree of respect from society. Since the "family is the primary institution of formative moral development", its structures and practices should "parallel those of the larger society if the sense of justice is to be fostered and maintained" (Okin 1989:22). Many authors (Berreth and Berman 1997; Mckenzie and Scheurich 2004; Capper *et al.* 2006; Hoy and Tarter 2004) challenged both the society and organization to generate a sense of justice in all its members.

Both the findings and the discussion have shown that inequalities that continue to exist between men and women, both in the work environment and in society as a whole, emanate from the society, if I can put it that way, and have serious effects on the lives of

almost all women. The paradox is that those who try to "speak out against the traditional, gender- structured family", for instance the feminists, are often attacked for being "anti-family" Okin (1989:25). There is need for women to be fully included in "any satisfactory theory of Justice", for "equality of opportunity", not only for women but for children of both sexes and "black women", in the case of countries like Zimbabwe and similarly South Africa where "black women are the most disadvantaged group" (Marthur-Helm 2005:69).

In a similar vein, in Zimbabwe, where this study was based, "acquiring and keeping power is a struggle, especially among those who have been marginalized and excluded from sites of power for so long" (McFadden 1997:29. However, despite being devalued, the findings show that women school principals in this study were capable and determined to achieve their goals as educational leaders. The study shows that constraints imposed by a male dominated society were strong. However, in the case of the women in this study, all except one managed to overcome them.

It is through "phenomenology" that I was able to "discover and account for ... meanings in the stream of consciousness" (Giorgi 2003:6). The importance of meaning upon experience is its recognition of the interpretation of human experience. Basing on my findings and the descriptions of women in this study, approaching the phenomenon from a phenomenological view, makes my study more valuable as I could access the women's lived worlds in context, grasp the essences of their lived experiences.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

8.1 Introduction

This study focused on five women school heads' lived experiences and their perceptions as educational leaders in the Mashonaland East Province in Zimbabwe. Having done a thorough literature search in and outside Zimbabwe, I have come to believe and acknowledge other studies (Dorsey 1989; Gordon *et al.* 1998) on the paucity of literature on women and educational leadership in Zimbabwe. I consider my study to be of great importance in that, to my knowledge, no similar study has been carried out focusing on women school heads' lived experiences as educational leaders from the stance I have taken. This study is unique in terms of the application of a phenomenological approach to education leadership in the Zimbabwean education system. The research findings will therefore contribute to filling a gap in literature on women and educational leadership in Zimbabwe.

In this final chapter I begin by highlighting the main issues in each of the chapter. My first chapter detailed how I became interested in studying the lived experiences of women school heads. In describing the historical background of the education system in Zimbabwe, I highlighted the context in which the women in this study were positioned by political economic and societal forces, due to changes that happened soon after Independence in 1980. I indicated that through phenomenology I would be in a position to gain and present a better understanding of the essence of the experience of the women educational leaders.

In Chapter Two I looked at literature, focusing on leadership concepts and how theory developed from its traditional roots to transformational leadership in of the context of

phenomenological organisational theory. I also discussed literature on women's experiences of power in organisational settings and their views of leadership, as described by other researchers, and approaches to leadership that women use in handling challenges. I observed the conflicting values between traditional leadership theory and the women's views and experiences as educational leaders. More focus has been placed on the alternative view of organisational theory with its emphasis combining research and theory – theory emerging out of the process of research to facilitate explanation of action.

Chapter Three is an examination of the phenomenological research approach I employed. I reviewed the key concepts of its founder, Edmund Husserl, and the ideas of Schutz. The concepts included consciousness as a form of being, and epistemologically the return to 'the things' themselves. My guiding theme has been to go "back to the things themselves" (Giorgi 2003:8). As a researcher from a phenomenological orientation, I had to go to the women themselves and hear from them how they experience their everyday world. Since my research is on leadership, my interest was to obtain descriptions from the women who are experiencing various phenomena in actual situations. I focused on the phenomenological method of description, on which a further reflection shall be sought in this chapter.

Chapter Four described the situated structures of my research findings. Before coming up with a "structure of the experience" Giorgi (2003:8) reminds that one has to go through at least four important steps. What Giorgi means by 'structure of experience', in terms of a phenomenological approach, is a synthesis of all the "transformed meaning units into a consistent statement regarding the subject's experience" Giorgi (2003:10) For me to grasp a general sense of the whole statement, it was important to read the entire description of each woman school head and that became my first step. I discovered that the women experienced similar situations but lived them differently.

In Chapter Five I presented more concrete, situated descriptions of the protocols, which provided a sense of the participants' 'being-in-the-world'. My purpose in this study has been to gain a better understanding of what it means to be a woman educational leader in

male dominated environments and what leadership meant for the women, especially within the context of Zimbabwe. As indicated before, this was made possible through *Verstehen*-based understanding, that is to say a phenomenologist researcher seeks to describe phenomena from the perspective of the participant in the study and in accordance with phenomenology, I had "to describe the phenomena as they are lived" (Pollio *et al.* 1997:48).

Chapter Six presented general descriptions. These are synthesised insights attained by considering all expressed intentions derived from the natural meaning units. From a general statement, themes emerge. The uncovering of themes happens through a rigorous process of identifying meaning units and creating situated descriptions. In addressing the research questions, my discussion in Chapter Seven engaged in debate on both theory and methodology.

My main aim in this chapter is to reflect critically on the appropriateness of applying a phenomenological method to this field of study. In the process, the strengths, weaknesses and how well the method has worked for me in achieving the goals of my study will be reflected. My starting point in this last chapter is to reflect on how phenomenology as an orientation is both a theory and a methodology, and how this integration has assisted me in achieving my goal of understanding the women's lived experiences as educational leaders.

8.2 Theory

In my last section of the discussion of findings, I highlighted that the lived experiences of participants in this study reflect a departure from traditional leadership and organisation theory. I added that Bush's (2004) idea that practitioners tend to be dismissive of organisational theories and concepts for their allegedly *remoteness* from the *real school situations,* could be seen as happening and possibly taken to be true to a certain extent. If

people are seen as separate from organisations then that reflects back to the Weberian perspective where power resides solely in the leader who represents the organisation. The idea of separating the leader from follower makes it difficult for the practitioners to handle since leadership is about working with, and influencing people. For instance the participants in my study experienced a situated, in which school principals were required to work together with their communities in building classroom blocks so they needed to be close connected and to bend toward a common goal.

In such cases the reality becomes abstract in that theory emphasises instruments of order (that is relying on commands for the work to be done) in achieving the goal. My findings show that the participants a strong sense of connectedness with their school communities, and that seems to have contributed towards the creation of a positive school environment and team spirit within members of the school community. Mbizvo (2001:293) in his research on governance and management in Zimbabwe's colleges of technical and vocational Education similarly found that the use of authority and government regulations tended to create a gap between the principal, his staff and students. In practical terms it would appear that the more you give orders the less connected you become with your environment and hence the less effective you may be.

Considering the women's descriptions of how they managed to get the job done with scarce resources, one would argue for an alternative approach. The issue of universal truth would then be argued, in that these women had very similar case problems but handled them in completely different but unique ways. The alternative approach identifies organisations with "the will and imagination" of people, recognising that people have different values and ways of seeing and doing. There is no imposing of values. Linda tried to impose but it failed. People feel important by knowing that they are recognised especially when their values can be observed. In the case of women in this study they recognised that their communities had different values from experience and they applied the approach in accordance with their communities, they interacted.

8.2.1 How phenomenology tends to be a theory and a methodology

In phenomenology theory arises out of the process of inquiry (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993:17). That is to say from research based on a phenomenological orientation, theory should emerge on its own in the process of research. How this happens assimilates grounded theory. In grounded research, theory is also generated during research process from data being collected. In grounded theory researchers also recognise the importance of context and social structure (Moustakas 1994:4). However, the uniqueness of phenomenological approach is in its goal – to attain a first-person description of a specified domain of experience, such as in this study, the lived experiences of women educational leaders. The type of this enquiry is dialogical in that questions flow from the dialogue as it unfolds, unlike the naturalist approach in which questions are determined in advance. While there is need to distinguish a phenomenological approach from other qualitative approaches such as grounded theory and ethnographic research, the matter will be looked into later in this chapter. I need to first describe how phenomenology seemed to have generated a theory which worked for me in this study.

When the participants in this study were describing their lived experiences Enita in her threatening school environment with bullying children, Shelly in her dysfunctional school with an un-supportive community just like Linda's, their descriptions of how they handled the challenges reflect their perspectives of leadership. This is how as a phenomenologist yielded interpretable data that reflect the participant's perspective on her experience as it emerges in the context of interview. And *that tends to be how theory is* developed out of the enquiry. This approach seems to have worked well for me in this study. Greenfield and Ribbins (1993:12) pointed out that:

From the phenomenological perspective research, theory and methodology must be closely associated. Theory must arise out of the process of inquiry itself and be intimately connected with data under investigation. In this view the aim of theory should be explanation and clarification.

It is important to note that phenomenological reality is in the context of the social and natural world and, interpretations of the subjective meanings that individuals place upon their actions (Greenfield and Ribbins 1993). The sets of meaning which people make sense of their world and action therefore, reflects their perspective, and hence the uniqueness and importance of a phenomenological focus, which is my next attempt - to distinguish a phenomenological approach from other interpretive orientations and reflect on its uniqueness, and in the process reveal the strengths and limitations and challenges.

8.3 Methodological considerations: Strengths, weaknesses and limitations

While validity from an ethnographic study is sought by triangulation, phenomenology requires rigour. From this perspective validity is not determined by the degree of correspondence between description and reality. For the purposes of phenomenological interpretation, Pollio *et al.* (1997:49) indicated that:

> ...the criterion of validity becomes whether a reader, adopting the world view articulated by the researcher, would be able to see textual evidence supporting the interpretation, and whether the goal of providing first-person understanding was attained.

The process of validation can be done by looking at the methodological practice of phenomenology. In phenomenology Van der Mescht (2004:2) observed that "its methodological practice is perhaps most clearly articulated in Giorgi's work. In this regard I delight myself in relating to his work. Giorgi (1971:11) contends that: "it is phenomenologically unsound to establish a method that must be used that is prior to and independent of the phenomenon to be investigated". This suggests that when approaching the field of research there should be no prior theory that determines the research. Since I indicated before that I would distinguish a phenomenological approach from other qualitative approaches such as grounded theory and ethnographic research, as they share some of the features it seems appropriate at this stage to make such distinction.

Drawing on Van Rensburg (2001:16) on the above point, grounded theory has been adopted by many interpretivist researchers who did not wish to frame formulate theory in advance but to let the theory emerge from data, a feature which assimilates phenomenology. Such kind relatedness may cause confusion this is why it is important to clarify. While there can be more other features such as recognition of context and a focus on reality that assimilate the theory, what clearly distinguishes phenomenology from other interpretive theories is:

An insistence on description, rather than interpretation while the line between these – descriptions and interpretation – is thin and perhaps contestable, the drive to stay with description until a holistic picture of the issue emerges is fundamental to phenomenological research. It embraces the notion of bracketing (itself perhaps unattainable in its purist form) and works against the tendency to make early judgements calls based on pre-conceived notions Van der Mescht (2004:3).

From Van der Mescht's distinction, it should be clear what makes unique a phenomenological approach from other interpretive qualitative researches.

In seeking to understand the women's experiences as educational leaders in previously male contexts, and with Giorgi's conception in mind, I engaged myself in on-going dialogue with the participants. I tried to accept as relevant and real what ever was dialectical disclosed. The challenge of *epoché* is to be transparent to ourselves, in order to allow whatever is before us in consciousness to disclose, so that we may see in a naïve and completely open manner (Moustakas 1994:86.) I therefore tried to embrace life as it offered. While the operative word in phenomenological research is to 'describe' (Giorgi 1986), as a phenomenologist researcher I was aware that my aim is to describe as accurately as possible the phenomenon as it appears, rather than indulging myself in attempts to explain - within a pre-given framework.

In accordance with phenomenology, when the description of human experience is at issue, it is necessary to employ a method that is both appropriate to its topic and rigorous in its use (Pollio *et al.* 1997:28). I was aware that of the basic principle of phenomenology – to remain faithful and true to the facts as they appear (Van den Berg 1972 cited in Stones 1988:149). This study offered no judgement on what was appearing. While phenomenological interview is dialogical, one of the methodological issues concerns the potential for bias in the interview itself. On this understanding, my conscience "embraced the notion of *bracketing"* so as to avoid making "early judgements based on the pre-conceived notions" (Van der Mescht 2004:3).

In phenomenology, the type of inquiry (how rigorous it is) determines the richness of the study. A phenomenological interview is a *procedure* for accessing *rigorous* and *significant descriptions* of everyday human experience as it is lived, and described by the individual in specific contexts. The uniqueness of such dialogue is that it does not only allow the participant to describe experience, it also requires her to clarify its meaning to "an involved other" (Pollio *et al.* 1997:28). As the women in my study described their experiences of being school heads, because of the interactive nature of the interviews, I was able to probe on their experiences –to reach and grasp the essences of their stories appearing in consciousness.

In keeping with the phenomenological principles, and considering that the validity of the study relies on my ability as a researcher to "provide insights to the reader", of how rigorous - "plausible and illuminating the results" are, I am bound to continue to make visible my methodological consideration till the end of this study (Pollio *et al.* 1997:55).

Within the context of phenomenological research the dialogue is grounded in the participants' experiences of both the interview and the phenomenon. From a phenomenological dialogue, questions have a descriptive and facilitative purpose rather than one of assessing a pre-existing opinion, belief or knowledge – another unique feature of the approach which makes it valuable. The full meaning of a question emerges only

from the engagement of a researcher with the participant and vice versa (Pollio *et al.* 1997:35). It is however not as easy as it sounds.

Data produced by qualitative interviews could be chaotic. To deal with such volume needs some form of interpretive framework. While interpretive strategies may have different theoretical purposes, *Verstehen* seeks to understand the world as lived from the perspective of the person; thus a first-person understanding is explicitly sought. (Pollio *et al.* 1997:43). In phenomenological research methods while the primacy is on *Verstehen in* seeking to describe phenomenon from the perspective of the participants in the study, the problem remains how the interpreter is able to adopt the perspective or to relive the experience of the other (Valle and Halling 1989). It was also a difficult step for me as a researcher.

To re-live or to understanding the world as it is for another as suggested above, requires both a certain perspective and a level of critical distance *(bracketing)/epoché)* in which the researcher steps back to reflect on the phenomenon. This has been one of my biggest challenges in the process of interpretation. For the purposes of existential-phenomenological interpretation, *bracketing* is better described positively, as a way of seeing (Pollio *et al.* 1997:48). Rather than suspending world knowledge, the interpreter applies a worldly view such that a phenomenological understanding may emerge.

In order to avoid imposing personal meaning onto the interpretations of research dialogue, I managed to render interpretations in "terms used by participants" instead of the more "abstract language" common to some disciplines such as the social sciences seeing (Pollio *et al.* 1997:49). Since bracketing is an on-going process of suspending the natural attitude, after much effort I remained with essential rules of consciousness. This process led me back to the things themselves such that I was able to uncover the nature and meanings of each experience as the life-worlds of the participants emerged in clarity. I therefore engaged myself in the reflective phase targeted towards meaning – imagining senses, thus entering into the imaginative variations.

My next step in the process of research was that of imaginative variation. The purpose of this was to seek possible meanings. Through imaginative variation the researcher is able to see that: "there is not a single inroad to truth" (Moustakas 1994:99). This process enabled the emergence of various possibilities of meanings of an experience. I could see that the women in this study had almost identical situations but lived them differently. From the imaginative variation I was able to derived structural themes from the textural descriptions.

While the purpose of triangulation is on validating data, in phenomenology this is done in a unique way. One step in the process is through member checking. I requested each participant in this study to carefully examine the descriptions to either make additions or corrections. The participants acknowledged that the syntheses were accurate. However, the chief criterion for validity in phenomenological research, as in other genres of qualitative research, is not whether other readers agree with one's findings, but whether they agree that the findings derive *from the data alone.*

As evidenced by this study, the final product of an experiential phenomenological interpretation is the description of experiential patterns and interrelationships among themes. In achieving a thematic description, the researcher does not attempt to thematise on the basis of formal abstract principles but rather to capture what the experience was like for the participant, *what it really meant to that person* in the *particular situation* being discussed Pollio *et al.* (1997:52).

In concluding concerns on validity, I would like to stress this point once more that evidential support could be evaluated in two ways. The first is methodological - that means it focuses on *rigour* and the *appropriateness* for yielding the type of understanding claimed by the study. The second is experiential – this focuses on whether interpretations provide insights into the reader. To be more specific, methodological concerns focus on the procedural structure of the research whereas experiential focus more on the meaning and significance of the interpretive results Pollio *et al.* (1997:55).

For a phenomenological validity both methodological and experiential concerns are important. The study reflects unique features of phenomenology. Grant (2005:187) in her study also acknowledged the uniqueness of phenomenological approach which is its focus on the individual's unique interpretations of her *lived world*. In the case of an evaluator, given the criterion discussed above, instead of focusing on descriptions, would look for *convincing evidence* for believing that the *thematic description* affords *insights* into the *experiential world* of the participant.

A phenomenological perspective offers ways of understanding not offered by other orientations (Campbell 2004:5). However, the theory ignores the issue of power and emancipation. Referring to phenomenological method, Grant (2005:184) observed dissatisfaction expressed by individuals working from an emancipatory view, arguing against its failure to "*go beyond interpretation* to *empowering* participants to *confront* their own *oppression*". It is however not unusual that where there are advantages disadvantages also feature. Van Rensburg (2001:26) observed that the empowering ideal of critical research can be approached in naïve ways, and can ironically perpetuate unequal power relationships, as researchers facilitate others' empowerment against a mutual enemy. The point I want to highlight is that it is clear, those working from a critical framework have a different intention about their knowledge interest. The reason they want to do research is different from phenomenologists.

Phenomenology does not *per se* have a critical dimension, that is, it does not seek to emancipate or empower the research participants or the wider professional community. However, a phenomenological enquiry has the potential to *unveil power relations that are normally concealed*. Interpretivist researchers from a phenomenological orientation are not interested in taking action through or even after research; their focus is on unravelling the complexities of social life as they appear and as the research participants experience it Van Rensburg (2001:21).

This may therefore lead to renewed questioning as well as a validation of research participants' experiences. Working from a critical framework, the researchers describe

their work as empirical but do not strive to reduce bias. A phenomenologist's attention is on individual life experiences and meaning making that is done through the participant own perspective, unlike the critical researchers who need to guard against imposing meaning on situations Van Rensburg (2001:26).

Similarly, the positivist framework aim to discover "law-like regularities" about social life, believing in universal truth, their aim is to find "generalities" which apply to social life (Van Rensburg (2001:12). The ontological and epistemological assumptions of phenomenology are different from the positivist research. Based on Hegel's view that humans can only understand the world as it appears to them – not as it really is, phenomenologists researchers are interested in the meaning that people make of the phenomena (Van Rensburg (2001:26).

While this study provides valuable insights into the women's perception and their experiences of leadership its apparent shortcomings are also paradoxically its chief strengths. That I experienced difficulties in locating literature specifically on women and educational leadership in Zimbabwe shows the strength and importance of the study as gaps shall be filled in. The fact that the study was conducted with only a small sample suggests that it is not possible to generalise the findings as applicable to the whole population in the field of education in Zimbabwe. The opposite becomes the strength. In empirical phenomenology claims can never be true for more than the case, or situation (Van der Mescht 2004:2). Phenomenology focuses on the uniqueness of the individual and not the shared. Spinelli (1989:14) argued that phenomenologists' emphasis are on the "the unsharable variables in experience". The lack of generalisability that could be seen as a limitation in phenomenology can therefore be regarded as its strength.

Drawing on the on the women's experiences regarding the issue of uniqueness, some of the cases though similar how they were lived according to the descriptions were different and unique. Shelly and Ivy had similar situations but how they responded to their environments was different mainly because of the contexts with different values. In another description, Shelly and Linda had very similar cases, but experienced them

differently and all the experiences were meaningful to the participants and their environments. In keeping with phenomenological method, the knowledge interest is not to be technical. It is to develop a deeper understanding of a situation (Van Rensburg (2001:26). Phenomenology, with its emphasis on rich contextual detail and close attention to individual life experience and meaning making complements research conducted from different orientations (such positivism and critical theory), highlighting dimensions that may sometimes be overlooked.

[Generalisability - Against the framework of Cantrell's (1994) broad distinction between positivistic and interpretive research, I offer the following thoughts.

Kvale (1994:165), on sample size in qualitative research:

> In qualitative research the number of subjects tends to be either too small or too large: too small to make statistical generalizations if this is intended, and too large to make penetrating interpretations. The number of subjects necessary depends upon the purpose of the study. If the purpose is to understand the world as experienced by one specific person, this one subject is sufficient. To the common question "How many interview subjects do I need?" the answer is simply "Interview so many subjects that you find out what you need to know."

Kvale (1994:164-166) again, on generalising:

> To the critical question, "Why generalize?" the answer would probably be: in order to predict and control, or because science aims at universal knowledge.

(However), in recent approaches to the social sciences the quest for universal generalizations is being replaced by an emphasis on the contextuality of knowledge. ... In social constructivism, the focus is on the historical and social context of knowledge. In a

postmodern culture, the quest for universal knowledge is replaced by a focus on local knowledge, thus shifting from generalization to contextualization.

Not only is it impossible to generalise, in the usual "scientific" sense, from a study of three or five case, it is undesirable. In phenomenology, for example, the researcher is interested in the uniqueness of each case, moving from the assumption that "reality" is individually and differently constructed by different people. Thus the questions of how representative and generalisability become non-issues.

There is, however, a sense in which "generalisation" does indeed occur. Greene (1990:236) leads us into the argument:

> ...within interpretivist circles, the challenge of knowledge accumulation has been primarily addressed by the general concept of *transferability*. This concept shifts the inquirer's responsibility from one of demonstrating generalisability to one of providing sufficient description of the particular context studied (my emphasis) so that others may adequately judge the applicability or fit of the enquiry findings to their own context. The locus of judgement about transferability thus also shifts from the inquirer to potential users.

Elaborating on the notion of transferability, Smith (1994: 6) comments on what some have called "naturalistic generalization":

Case studies make a "drama of the commonplace" ... In making it vivid, even creating suspense (Van Manen 1988) the researcher appeals to more than one way of knowing, to more than one epistemology. From case reports we learn both propositional and experiential knowledge. The narrative provides opportunities for vicarious experience where the data feeds our most fundamental processes of awareness and understanding. The writer appeals to one's emotions but more than that provides a vicarious cognitive experience, one that the reader can identify with and can more easily integrate into his or her existing experience than a static quantitative record (Stake 1988:260). Stake and

Trumbull (1982) refer to this as "naturalistic generalisation" as opposed to "scientific" or statistical generalisation to a population. Most case studies contribute more to a naturalistic understanding than to a scientific understanding. "Thus the methods for casework actually used are to ... describe the case in sufficient descriptive narrative so that readers can vicariously experience these happenings, and draw their own conclusions" (Stake 1994:243).

8.3 Ethical considerations

Ethical problems are usually the result of conflicting values, therefore, informed consent must be sought and participants should know that their involvement is at all times voluntary (Cohen and Manion 1996). I made a thorough explanation of how the interviews will be conducted and handled and left a consent form for each participant before the actual day of interview, thus giving them more time to decide. I assured the participant of the confidentiality and anonymity of the exercise and hence the adoption of pseudonyms.

An inquiry conducted from an in-depth interactive dialogue may stimulate feelings of emotions such as self-doubt, anger, anxiety and/or discomfort. Van Manen (1998) advised human science researchers, to be aware of certain effects on both the participants and the organisations in which the research is being conducted, such as the moral values

8.4 Recommendations

As I embarked on this research study, my hope in documenting the experiences of women school principals has been to make visible their beliefs, values and attitudes, so that their work would be validated, heard and considered. The reality as the study reflects could be that women's beliefs and experiences are still not taken seriously or recognised in the field of educational leadership especially in Zimbabwe.

The study has highlighted the need for a number of strategies to be put in place in order to rectify the imbalances that affect negatively the spheres of education especially in the field of educational leadership. For instance:

The Zimbabwean educators should take active steps to incorporate women leadership views into education. Sterling and Davidoff (2000) indicated that people in leadership are often hampered by inaccurate perception of what effective leadership really means and how leadership can contribute school improvement. The fact that the participants in my study managed to describe situations in which they lead and tried to make sense of the contexts seems to reflect their perspective of leadership. Women leaders and feminist researchers (Blackmore 1998; Enomoto 2000; Kark 2004; Shakeshaft 1999) perceive the dominant discourse as denying individual differences, ignoring *context,* and little or no consideration given to the influence of diverse settings within managers, leaders, and subordinates operated (Ford 2005).

How they approach their environments could be linked to Greenfield and Ribbins' (1993) thinking who view schools as social inventions and that makes the above suggestion important and essential since my findings reflect a fundamental difference from the mainstream leadership research. To add on to that, in line with women's perception is the phenomenological view which identifies organisations with people's images and their distinctive ways in which they see the world around them. This model articulates well with the Post Colonial Zimbabwean Government's thinking of schooling (Education Act 1996) in which schools were decentralised, with locally controlled enterprise, and allowing for input from all stakeholders, that is from members of the SDC and SDA, and the community including the learners.

Leadership courses need to be introduced that target both male and female students/staff in Teacher's Colleges and Universities. This would pave the way and address the issue of

stereotyping in education leadership that contributed to constraining women. Consistent with Rawls (2003) (explored earlier in this chapter), who challenged society to develop a sense of justice in its members, Capper (2006:213) *et al.* suggested that; "school leaders need to embody a social justice consciousness within their beliefs systems or values. While Russell (2001) (discussed earlier in this chapter) perceived values as core beliefs that stimulate human behaviour, Capper *et al.*'s (2006:212) framework depicts on what "school leaders must believe, know and do to lead *socially just schools*". This is also in line with Okin's (1989:22) (discussed earlier in this chapter) thinking that leader preparation for social justice is essential "if a sense of justice and a commitment to just institutions is to be fostered and maintained.

Since Leach (1998:50) claimed that "education has served to maintain the 'status quo' in gender relations", portraying women in positions that disadvantage them (subordinate roles), it should be the duty of the education system to rectify that. There is a need therefore to ensure that the school curriculum is gender-sensitive and highlights women's achievements. Referring to issues of social justice at work and gender sensitivity, Brown (2004:93) also suggested that curriculum on consciousness needs to include an accurate history of schooling, including the "systemic nature of inequalities reproduced daily".

There is need for setting up gender-sensitive promotion boards with equal male/female representation. The consciousness, knowledge, and skills that leaders need to lead socially just schools is supported by Capper *et al.* (2006:219) who "were surprised in our review that many articles offered high quality empirical studies or cogent analysis of literature, with no suggestion for leadership preparation" suggesting that "content" for leadership preparation programmes "should include aspects of difference with particular attention to, sexual orientation/gender identity, disability, and language difference...(eg race ethnicity and poverty)"

Mckenzie and Scheurich (2004:609) suggest that "principals need the skills to facilitate their staff ...and their students' families and community on a personal level", and to "dignify the culture of their students", Okin's (1989:22) thinking continues to feature; as

she believes that; "the family is the primary institution of formative moral development", and that the "structures and practices of the family must parallel those of the larger society", Mckenzie and Scheurich (2004) links the school members with families and the community. Consistent with Mckenzie and Scheurich's (2004) thinking is Diane Berreth and Sheldon Berman's (1997:24) belief that "students and staff members, appreciate diversity of cultures and beliefs through both study and direct experience", suggesting that "we can help children develop social skills and moral values through modelling, direct instruction, experience, and continual practice". In building upon Mckenzie and Scheurich's (2004) idea of facilitation, Shield, Larocque, and Oberg, (2002) believe that leaders need the skills to lead dialogue that engages staffs about issues of race and ethnicity, and for people to re-examine their own perceptions and beliefs.

There is a need for dissemination of more information on women role models, especially those in the field of educational leadership. Weekly news and magazines need to be networked so as to feature issues that seek to highlight, promote and redress gender issues in educational leadership. Gordon *et al.* (1998:92) also expressed the need to redress this if better understanding of women's leadership is to be sought, as she conceded that in Zimbabwe "where gender concerns are raised, they form only one section of articles, papers and research reports on education, or, only one section of overviews of gender issues ..."

Journals that are gender-specific in terms of issues on educational leadership need to be sponsored. Both Non Governmental Organisations and Government need to set aside more resources for research activities focusing on gender inequalities in educational leadership and the field of education as a whole. This would serve to improve the shortage of literature on women and educational leadership and would promote positive thinking about gender issues in this field. In addition Gordon *et al.* (1998:92) acknowledged that "very little in-depth qualitative research on gender and education has been undertaken" leading to the perpetuation of male dominance and the stereotype of masculinity in educational leadership. Sue Olsson and Walker (2003) also observed that "mainstream

leadership research to date has been positivist and quantitative (Bryman 1996) rather than ideologically focused or interpretive." More case studies in interpretive-phenomenological oriented design need to be done.

There is need for providing both institutional and informal support for women academic staff in their struggle and appeal for increased social justice. Hoy and Tarter, (2004:250) argued that "matters of justice and fairness in the school workplace should not be taken lightly", indicating that "the topic of organisational justice is not new in the administrative literature . . . but is a neglected concept in educational administration."

However, despite the limitations of the research findings it is hoped that the rich descriptive accounts offer valuable insights into problems that confront women in educational leadership positions. It is my hope that policy makers, women teachers, administrators, and the community will gain, in terms of their understanding of women school heads' experiences, perceptions of their role as leaders, hopes and fears.

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Appendix A

Natural Meaning Units

Natural Meaning Units

Enita – Natural meaning units

A1: At first, I was excited and felt I had done a great achievement. Unfortunately, we were the first group of women to be in headship positions and as a result, we received a great deal of resistance and that was a big challenge.

Explications

She was excited to have achieved the promotion in school leadership. But her first experience of headship was negative: she experienced resistance and found it challenging.

A2: On our arrival as substantive deputy heads, both the acting deputy heads and the heads did not like it...In my case I was more of a rubber stamp. The head and the so-called deputy head would discuss school issues without telling me or consulting me. The head could lock the office when ever he wanted to go somewhere, and give the keys to an ordinary teacher without even telling you that he will be away. He didn't want to accept my presents as his deputy.

On her arrival as substantive deputy head, she received resentment from both the head and the acting deputy head. She was not accepted as his deputy. She was over ruled or by passed and school issues discussed without her being consulted. Hence she was essentially 'ignored' as a manager. This added to her frustration.

A3: When I was appointed head at his retirement, I experienced fewer problems. I started a garden project with the pupils. Parents were very supportive. I first planned how the budget was to be used. I presented the budget to the parents. When I asked for money there was no problem. What made life easier for me was that, auditing was done at the head office. We worked well, and there was good relationship. The garden project was successful and both the community the school benefited from it...

When she was appointed to succeed the retired head at the same school, she experienced fewer problems. She adopted a consultative approach. She introduced garden project which benefited both the community and the school. She would plan a budget, present it to the parents, and when she asked for money she had no problems. What made her life easier was that auditing was done at head office. With the parents' support and the head office she made progress.

A4: The money we got from the project we used it for improving the school. We bought text books and stationery for the pupils. Other improvements that we did were fencing the school with the fence donated by one farmer. I left the school on promotion. I was going to be heading a bigger school.

She used the proceeds from the project to buy stationary and books for the pupils. Other improvements she made included fencing the school. This she worked for improvement of the buildings, safety and learning.

A5: This school was a boarding school and I had to play a mother role.

Her next post was at a boarding school where she had to play a mother's role.

A6: Pupils who came to this school used to be street kids so you can imagine what behaviour to expect. Most of these kids were bullies. What I managed to improve was to reduce the bullying of other kids and finally eradicate it.

Pupils at this school came from different backgrounds. Most of the children were bullies. She worked hard in a pastoral role – she needed to improve their behaviour.

A7: What I experienced is that 'children need love'. Even if kids make mistakes, 'give them love', "that motherly love", they need it, and I had to provide.

She experienced that children need love. Her leadership role assumed a motherly dimension.

A8: I worked hard to try and improve the situation.

This post entailed very hard work – harder than the previous position.

A9: It was not easy. When I say I worked hard I mean working with the whole community starting with the teachers themselves, the parents and pupils. It was like changing the culture of the whole community, because almost every one had developed a negative attitude about the kids at this school because of their behaviour.

It was difficult for her. She worked to involve the whole community, teachers, parents and pupils. Her consultative approach was aimed at countering the negative attitudes the community has developed towards the children. She saw this as a 'culture' change, a deep level organisation change.

A10: I held meetings with the teachers and everyone was encouraged to contribute. These meetings were particularly targeted for improving discipline problem and in the process student performance. Most of the teachers were very co-operative and supportive although some at first, had a negative attitude, that disrespectful feeling to say 'you think you can make it when others have failed'.

She involved teachers and encouraged contribution and ownership. Her aim for holding these meetings was to improve discipline and in the process student performance. She had to work through scepticism and negative attitudes, but gained support and cooperation.

A11: Dialogue continued and I interacted with them formally and informally until everyone was actively involved.

She aimed at total involvement – she wanted commitment from everyone.

A12: Our starting point was trying to create for the children a pleasant homely environment that would provide a conducive educational learning atmosphere.

In line with her 'motherly' approach she aimed to create a homely environment, one in which people could learn.

A13: We decided to create groups which we called 'houses', and The purpose of these houses was to let the pupils have a sense of belonging, and for the teachers, it was for easy monitoring and would also have a sense of ownership.

The house system she introduced was an extension of her philosophy. The system improved monitoring and developed ownership.

A14: I interacted with every group and encouraged teachers to talk to their pupils as much as possible.	*Constant communication was the key: teachers were encouraged to talk to pupils.*
A15: Whatever event that took place at school, be it sports, or academic achievement, the student was identified as a pupil from say 'Sables house' 'Hyena's house' and so on.	*The house system was used to encourage pride and belonging.*
A16: Both the teachers and the pupil were motivated to improve their houses and there was a big change hence the progress of the school	*This created competition – houses were motivated to improve, and the school as a whole benefited.*
A17: We worked as a team, shared ideas and communicated with parents and guardians. From that time I did not experience many problems... From there, that is when I came to the present school as a head one which is senior post to the one I held before. It's a great achievement for me.	*Her strategy of involvement and communication bore fruit; problems were diminished.*
A18. My first problem was that the acting head went on leave before I came, before inducting me.	*In her new post her first problem at this school was that she was not mentored into the position.*
A19: What helped me was that I was equipped to face the problems. I had been briefed of the problems that I was likely to face and what problems the school used to face, so at least I was aware of the environment that I was coming into.	*What guided her was a brief account of the problems she was likely to face, and the school environment she was going into. She felt that the information helped to equip her.*
A20: I am not sure but the issue was all about gender. The school had been undergoing different kinds of problems and one of them was resistance to women leadership The story I got was that the previous head, a lady, passed away and one of the factors that contributed to her death, people had a feeling that it could be stress. Both teachers and the community were just not supportive of events and whatever was for the progress of the school.	*There seemed to be a gender issue at the new school. The previous head (also a woman) was believed to have died a stress related illness. The community seemed sceptical of accepting a woman head.*
A21: I just had confidence that I was going to make it since I had overcome challenges in the previous schools.	*Her previous success sustained her – she drew of past success in developing her own confidence.*

A22: When I came at this school, I called upon the senior teachers and discussed with them. I interacted with both teachers and parents.

She immediately implemented her proven strategy of broad consultation.

A23: I held meetings and discuss with the S.D.A. I tried to involve the community as much as possible. We work as a team together with parents and teachers.

She worked for involvement and team work.

A24: When we have problems we discuss. Even problems involving student discipline, for instance stealing has been a common issue when I joined this community. We called the parent and discussed together with the pupil. There has been a significant reduction of students stealing from each other.

She involved parents in the discussions of pupils' discipline problems. She improved the problem of petty theft by students. Again, her open approach led to improved pupil behaviour.

A25: The role of headship can be quite challenging. Sometimes though I can say my leadership is democratic, at times I use autocratic style of leadership. I use autocratic style to the teacher who is lazy and does not want to do what others do. I have to use the regulations rules and sometimes we are governed by rules. However, in most cases we talk, we share ideas.

She describes her leadership as both democratic and autocratic. She adopts her style to suit the context and the maturity level of the follower. She is adaptive and flexible.

A26: You need to encourage them to participate so that they feel included.

Participation leads to a sense of inclusion.

A27: The whole process of leadership is quite challenging, and you need to be flexible in order to be able to handle different situations, more importantly, to have good working relationships with staff and the community.

Thus flexibility is the key: this helps one to handle different situations, and especially helps to develop sound relations with staff and parents.

A28: It is an important role. The work is enjoyable although at the beginning we experienced resistance from people. Actually the role is challenging. Although the work is too much, but I feel others aspire. I even encourage them to read and upgrade themselves.

Although initially she experienced resistance, she feels that her role is important and she enjoys her work. The work seems daunting but her approach of involvement leads to others' improvement – she is committed to human resource development.

A29: As head you need to be equipped with information. Sometimes a teacher comes in crying, my husband took my child from me. You are already a legal adviser. You need to be supportive. You cannot chase her away. One needs to be well informed and that means that you need to keep on researching.

Being an effective leader means being well informed (through constant research) as well as being empathetic and supportive.

A30: The work also needs transparency with all stakeholders. One needs to be an effective communicator. You need to have good communication skills. You need to develop a sense of ownership in others so that they are motivated.

Her work needs transparency, effective communication, and good communication skills. She needed to develop a sense of ownership in others, and to motivate them.

A31: I just feel that my role is important, because you need to have a shared vision. You maintain relationships with both staff and parents even with pupils. You should exercise good moral behaviour

Sound moral behaviour is a key factor: the importance of a leader's role lies in its power to develop shared vision and ownership.

A32: I see myself working as a team with my community, teachers and parents. I see myself as someone who shares power because when you delegate duties you actually are sharing responsibilities and letting somebody be accountable. I see myself as a facilitator, a team builder and also a learner. I am a role model for others

The essential ingredients of her leadership are team work, team building, delegation, and role modelling. She is committed to sharing responsibility and accountability.

A33: My parents were very poor and I grew up from a very poor background, but anywhere, I got my inspiration from my father. My father was a drunkard, unemployed and it was only after a number of embarrassing incidents that he felt bad about his own behaviour and decided to change. The uncle decided to send my father to standard six. My father was accepted at a mission school because of my mother's strong Christian background.

Her father is an important role model for her. She got her inspiration from her father who showed the capacity for positive change. He was able to turn his life around. This is a strong them in her leadership since she works with children who need to change their lives for the better.

A34: I grew up not interested in schooling. I used to run away from school when I was taken to a boarding school. I would be taken back to school but continued to run away until I was transferred to another boarding school where there the sisters had a motherly care. I began enjoying my studies and I read and passed. I liked drama and public speaking. I was not active in sports.

Her own life is a living example of what she tries to achieve in her leadership. She was a problem child, until she encountered genuine care and love. This changed her life.

A35: My father was reading for RJC (Rhodesia Junior certificate) by that time. He did in-service training at Domboshawa for headship. I got my inspiration from my father.

The history of her father's progress and achievement helped her to aspire to be a head.

A36: My mother was very supportive; she told me that she fetched money for my father to go to school.

Her mother also epitomised care and compassion.

A37: Tired, but I have enjoyed it. It actually promoted my self-esteem. Reflecting on what you went through and trying to recall how you managed, makes you feel great and that I have done a great achievement.

The interview reminded her of what she had achieved – her sense of pride is tangible.

Linda- Meaning units	***Explications***
B1: My experience is that being a head is not easy. Children come from the farms surrounding the school are not many. Most of these children have no parents. They stay with either a guardian or grand parents. Most of the time the children are absent from school and when you ask the children why they did not come to school, they tell you that they have been baby sitting or have been working in the fields on the farm. If you call the parents to try and discuss with them, some of them don't even turn up.	*She experiences headship as challenging. The biggest challenge seems to be lack of parental support. Most of the children are orphans, and live with guardians and grandparents who do not see the value of schooling.*
B2. My experience is that you cannot impose strict rules. For instance the issue of school fees and school uniforms; it is not all among the few children who come to school who do pay fees. If you become strict and send them away, you will remain with no one and they would not turn up.	*Another challenge is that one needs to apply rules flexibly: one has to consider the local circumstances. Many parents cannot pay school fees, for example.*
B3: It is difficult. Some of the children come with torn clothes, they are supposed to put on uniforms but they don't have money to buy it. You can't send them back because once they go they won't come back. Some of the pupils come to school barefooted. Health wise they are at risk. Even educating them about the risks is not worth it, because they can't afford. So we ask for assistance from organisations such as the Red Cross.	*Other challenges include poverty and health problems. Poverty is a huge issue: parents cannot afford uniform or health care. She has to ask for assistance form other organisations.*
B4: I am used to working collectively sharing ideas with teachers, and that my decision comes as a result of shared ideas, unconsciously I tend to use the term 'we'. The Red Cross give us food and money. They promised to give us uniforms and we are still waiting.	*"WE" is very much part of how she leads. She is committed to sharing problems and solutions.*
B5: I prioritise things that need urgent attention, and then proceed to distribute the food and money on that basis.	*Basic needs – clothing and food – are prioritised.*
B6: I delegate duties so that the sports master and the deputy head are accountable	*She is committed to delegation and sharing accountability.*

B7: I try to involve all the staff in the discussions on how we can improve the school. Because of the size of the school, all the teachers are automatically involved in school activities. What we try to do is to let everyone work on an area that he or she is more comfortable/good at.

Her policy of sharing works well in a small school because everyone has some responsibility. She delegates according to expertise and interest.

B8: I always try to interact with them both formally and informally.

She interacts with them formally and informally.

B9: I exercise professionalism. I lead by example. I make sure I do not divide the teachers. Favouritism! If you do that teachers see, they are not 'bricks', these are people. (Nhai mai Muzvidziwa, munoti zvidhinha here zvisingafungi?) They need to be treated as humans.

Her leadership is characterised by person-centredness. She is guided by principles of justice, and works to keep her staff united.

B10: When a teacher comes with problems, you need to discuss. Assist them. Do not ignore their plight. Assess the problem but before that first talk to the person. Ask the teacher, what do you think about your problem? If the child is sick ask her, do you want to take your child to hospital? Give them emotional support. Sympathise with the teacher and take into consideration their individual differences. By so doing you are already someone acting like a mother. You are a counsellor. You are a mentor.

Motherly care, empathy, listening to others' point of view and giving others time are hallmarks of her leadership. Teachers need emotional support as well as professional support.

B11: Do not let your teachers gossip.

She recognises the divisiveness of gossip.

B12: We operate on policies. The teachers should read the guidelines booklet on acts of misconduct and they should understand it so that they do not operate in the dark

She believes in the power of knowledge. Teachers need to know rules and regulations.

B13: Lead by example and let people have trust in you.

Trust is a key concept in her leadership.

B14: Leadership is not a joke. It needs monitoring. Your goals should be clear. You should work together and share ideas

She takes leadership seriously: it needs clear goals and participative management.

B15: You have to accept criticism if you are to learn.

For her, learning involves accepting criticisms.

B16: I do not ask for money. I take my problem to different organisations to seek for assistance. First of all I talk to the responsible authority that assists me in identifying the donors. Then I approach the donors with my problem, for instance the Red Cross to give us porridge I presented the problem as it was, that children come from poor backgrounds and most of them without parents, they stay with guardians or grandparents. They travel a long distance to school having eaten nothing in the morning. They end up sleeping in class or faint at sports. I invite them to school on a prize giving days; they came once and saw for themselves how the kids were dressed. And this how they come to assist us.

In fundraising she presents her problem to different organisations to seek for assistance. She does not simply ask for money but draws on the power of the broader community by involving them in school events. When outsiders see the plight of the children they are willing to help.

B17: During my early days at this school problems with the community were worse than they are now. They used to uproot the plants and flowers from the schoolyard or even use school property without permission

Theft and vandalism used to be problems.

B18: The school also experienced a lot of vandalism because there was no security. When we got fence from the donors, asking volunteers to come and put on the fence was not successful. They wanted to do the job and be paid and yet there are no funds for that. They don't pay fees to cover up even the little costs incurred, yet for any small job they do at school, they want to be paid. So now how can we progress?

Again, lack of parental support is a huge challenge. Parents are unwilling to do voluntary work; yet the same parents do not pay school fees.

B19: Parents do not support the school. When we ask for volunteers to represent the S.D.A. those few who volunteer stay there for years without changing because no one wants to be involved. I sometimes plan dramas to educate them but still a few attend.

She plans events to draw parents in but few attend.

B20: I had to struggle because they really had no respect for the school property. It was through continuous dialogue and interaction with them that they came to understand and stop their behaviour. I am sure even the dramas they watched were partly useful. They now respect the school property. I have also employed a security guard after fencing the school.

Her policy of involvement and drawing parents in has paid off: respect for school property has increased.

B21: You have to work hard to improve the school. When I arrived at this school, it was just like buildings in the bush. There was nothing like flowers, no furniture in the classrooms and no books. So I worked hard to source funds, I managed to build another school block, furnish the classrooms and this office, and fence the school. My next plan is to build a staff room.

Her efforts have led to significant improvements, such as a new teaching block, furnishings for classrooms and her office, and the school fencing. She has to work on basic needs.

B22: I liaise with people in high offices to get advice.

Her communication is upward as well as downward – she communicates with the authorities.

B23: You need to maintain good relationships with both staff and parents though it's sometimes not easy to do so.

Sound relations are key.

B24: You need to support the activities that go on within the school. You need to be actively involved yourself.

Personal involvement (visibility) is part of her leadership.

B25: You should be a good communicator otherwise even the donors cannot feel comfortable dealing with you.

Good communication is key.

B26: The grade sevens are doing very well; the pass rate is good because of close monitoring.

She is proud of the grade 7s' achievements: she ascribes this to monitoring.

B27: I plan together with my deputy and senior teacher all activities of the school. We agree on what to do. I supervise the teachers according to agreed work plans.

Joint planning and transparency are part of her leadership. Teachers jointly own the planning and supervision process.

B28: I have my own class to teach. So when we discuss some of the problems that we encounter it's not like I am talking theory They find it easy to join in with their own problems and as such we share ideas on how we can improve.	*She believes in a hand-on approach; she insists on having her own class to teach in order to stay in touch with reality.*
B29: I follow the work plan from the Education Office. I find the work plan comfortable because it works as a guide from which I can make my master plan. I first of all discuss the work plan with teachers then draw my plan having consulted them.	*Her joint planning is based on the plan provided by the authorities. She is conscious of education governance channels and works with these.*
B30: Communication is twofold. We interact, I delegate power to the deputy and she takes full control of the school when I am not there.	*Her leadership includes the notion of delegation – she is happy to hand over full control to the deputy.*
B31: I use circulars I hold meetings and sometimes I just use informal talks. We work as a team.	*Communication in a variety of forms improves team work.*
B32: The teachers give maximum support. I have 9 teachers. Eight are women one male. There are a happy team to work with.	*She is clearly happy with her team of teachers.*
B33: It's difficult for me to handle everything. So I delegate the duties to fellow teachers. The school for instance has no bursar. I assign someone to handle the finance and my work is to audit the books and make sure the money is being recorded accordingly.	*An example of delegation is the school finances which she has assigned to a teacher.*
B34: The major challenge is that you have to be fair, firm and friendly and you should make sure that the school is operating well even with all the highlighted problems.	*Being fair to all, and also 'friendly' as well as firm is challenging. Leadership for her is a combination of these qualities.*
B35: You should have a shared vision. You should create a good climate and good tone of the school. Create good atmosphere, good environment and the school ticks.	*She believes in developing a shared vision; this leads to positive climate and tone. These qualities make the school 'tick'.*

B36: There should be interaction between you and your teachers and between the teachers themselves. There should be sharing of ideas and accommodating ideas from other teachers and welcoming of new ideas.	*In line with her communicative style she encourages interaction, and is not afraid to accommodate new ideas.*
B37: The teachers should feel included. They should have a sense of ownership as well. Do not ever say my school say our school.	*This lead to a sense of joint ownership. She refers to the school as 'our' school.*
B38: My role is important but at the same time I cannot work alone. I have to consult others. I need to be both democratic and to follow a hierarchy where there is need.	*The importance of her role as leader rests on her ability to share the workload. In doing so she has to be both open and participative as well as authoritarian.*
B39: Because of the progress I made here, the community refers to me as a man. They say that I perform better than the man who was heading this school before me.	*Gendered 'readings' of her success occur in the community who refer to her as a 'man' because of her success.*
B40: The knowledge that I got from my BEd helped me greatly, I always refer to the knowledge that I got.	*She feels strongly supported by her studies towards a Bachelor's degree of Educational Administration Planning and Policy Studies.*
B41: With reference to the comments made by people about my progress, comparing me with the man who was heading this school, I would like to think that maybe he did not perform well because he did not have the knowledge of what leadership entails as he had not under-taken the degree on educational administration that I did. I feel that the degree was of much use to my success as a leader of this school. For the males, I think that was not their fault. They did not learn what I learned since they had not done the B. Ed degree programme	*She herself does not ascribe her success to being a woman. The knowledge that she got from the degree contributed much to her success as a leader. She thinks the previous head (the man) did not perform well because he did not have the knowledge she had.*
B42: To a large extent I am satisfied with the progress the school has made and the working environment here.	*She is satisfied with the progress of the school and the working environment.*

B43: I was born in a family of 11 and I am the third born. We were five girls and six boys. My father was a farmer and my mother a house wife.

She is the third born in a family of 11. They were five girls and six boys. Her father was a farmer and the mother a house-wife.

B44: My father wanted us to go to school and he gave maximum supported on our school work. He trained us to be responsible by giving us duties, delegating different responsibilities to each child and rotating those duties.

Much of her leadership style seems to have been implanted by her father.

B45: At school I was once a class monitor and also a prefect. I was a leader at girl guides and at church. Even now I am a leader at church.

Leadership has always come naturally to her.

B46: I feel that I am a role model for my relatives in the family as they look at me as a big aunt with leadership skills. I was just born clever and I have always wanted to be a leader. I emulated a lady "Mrs Mashengele" who was a principal.

She believes she was born with leadership qualities and intelligence. She modelled herself on Mrs Mashengele who was a principal.

Shelly- Meaning units	***Explications***
C1: We were the first women teachers to be promoted to administrative posts through affirmative action so we were sent to rural areas trying to find out how well we can manage and whether we will make it. We were an experimental group.	*Shelley sees herself as a pioneer in the area of female leadership, part of an 'experimental' group of women principals.*
C2: As the first group, when we got to the schools we were not accepted. Fortunately as for myself I did not experience much trouble. My head was very protective and supportive.	*In spite of general opposition to women as leaders she experienced few problems because her head was very protective and supportive.*
C3: What I mean is that on my arrival, the head accepted me and so did not say anything bad about me. You know when you are still a novice, you definitely miss out on some of your functions, and when such a mistake happened he did correct me without harassing at me.	*Her head showed understanding; he pointed out errors without belittling her.*
C4: I was at a very remote area so after some time I applied for a lateral transfer. I was asked to take the post of head of a smaller school.	*She felt confident enough to apply for a headship and became a head of a smaller school.*
C5: The only challenge is that of decision-making, where as a head people look upon you as a final decision maker; as deputy in a large school you still have a head above you to look up for advice, direction and final say in difficult things.	*Being the head is challenging as one is the 'final' decision maker; she experienced the loneliness of leadership as challenging.*
C6: At this school there was no hand-over take-over process. Everything was in shambles. There were no financial records. It was a difficult situation.	*She was also not mentored in, and the post was not 'handed over'.*

C7: I asked for permission from the responsible authority who was a black farmer to start my own new records and he gave me a go ahead.	*She took the initiative and started her own financial systems.*
C8: The school was dysfunctional. There was no water at the school the taps were locked. There was no electricity and yet the school used to have electricity. They had to go outside the schoolyard to collect water from pumps. Buildings were falling no renovations were being made.	*The school lacked basic functionality and infrastructure.*
C9: I worked very hard. The responsible authority was very supportive. So with his support and the senior teacher, I worked my way out. The water was unlocked and the electricity reconnected.	*With the help of the responsible authority she was able to restore some of the basic infrastructure.*
C10: The school had children from surrounding farms but those children were not contributing anything to the school. They were not paying fees. I tried to find out what exactly was happening. I had to talk to the farm owner first, being the owner of the school, I then moved on to farmers surrounding the school.	*A huge challenge was the lack of income – school fees were not being paid. She had to investigate this issue through the responsible authority and parents.*
C11: The first time I approached them I talked to them individually introducing myself and highlighting the problems that we were facing as a school, as well as giving suggestions. It then became easy for me to call the parents from these farms to discuss with them what we had agreed with the farm owners.	*The personal contact she had with parents cleared the way for future negotiations. Personal communication is key ingredient of her leadership.*
C12: Both the farmers and the parents indicated that there was no communication with the school and that things were not transparent that was why they were quiet and not supportive. So from there we were communicating through meetings and what ever I did, I made sure I involved the 'feeder farmers' (the surrounding farm owners) and the parents.	*Community stakeholders indicated that communication with the school has been poor. This encouraged her to improve communication through meetings. She embarked on an 'involvement' drive.*

C13: The parents could not afford to pay for their children. So approaching the farmers was like speaking on behalf of the parents, so that the farmers pay the fees and uniforms for the children and hold back part of the parents' money every month until the bill is over.

Thus she was able to reach an agreement whereby the farmers retained part of the parents' wages for school fees.

C14: I discussed with the parents that the money be paid by the farmers, so that the farmer could take the money monthly from their salary until it is all paid up.

She consulted parents on this scheme.

C15: Parents came up with their children's names for uniforms; I then took names and the number of children to the farmers. I requested that the farmers order the uniforms and stock them in their shops so that the parents would buy from them and pay by instalments. This happened and the parents were very happy.

As a result, parents were happy to support the scheme. In this way the farmers, parents and the school could work together happily for the good of the school.

C16: Although it involved a lot of movements and interaction, everyone was supportive and co-operative, so it eased up my progress

People's support eased the burden of hard work.

C17: The parents were taking the children to work in the farm fields leading to frequent absenteeism from school. So I had to approach the farmers again to discuss the issue of child labour because they also were to blame since they employed these small kids leaving them no time to go to school.

Educating the community was also necessary to break the cycle of child labour. Farmers employed children, and this prevented them from attending school.

C18: I continued talking to the kids to find out why they were absenting themselves, and the reasons appeared to be more than what I thought. Some were baby-sitting while parents go to work. I had a strategy, I planned to introduce a pre-school to cater for the under five so that this could solve the issue of baby-sitting. I then approached the farmers and agreed that there was no more child labour and the guards were made sure that no child was working in the fields and pre-school was introduced.

The problem of absenteeism was addressed though consultation with farmers and parents. She gained the assistance and support of the farmers.

C19: I was asked to make a proposal for what we wanted for the progress of the school. So the school block was my priority. We used to have hot sitting because the classes were not enough. When I left this school enough classrooms had been built, there was no more hot sitting and other classroom blocks had been renovated.

She made a proposal for material to improve the school. The school block was her priority. The school used to have hot sitting because the classes were not enough. When she left, the school had enough classrooms buildings renovated and no more hot sitting,

C20: We also had introduced a garden and poultry projects. We had a big order to Marondera. When I left the school it had changed completely.

She introduced income generating projects. When she left, the school had improved.

C21: Progress academically was 98% pass rate at grade seven and we had one pupil who got a bursary. The school had seven teachers, three males and four females.

She had one pupil who got a bursary and progress academically was 98% at grade seven.

C22 I stayed there for three years then I applied for the present post, head grade one. This is a higher post, an urban school, much bigger than the previous one. It has 27 teachers 22 women and 5 men.

After three years she applied for head grade one, a higher post in an urban school, much bigger than the previous one. It has 27 teachers.

C23: The first problem I experienced was resistance. Before I came here there was an acting head he pretended to be good when he heard that I was coming to head the school. Yet he was busy writing letters to all responsible authorities and offices influencing them not to accept me.

Her first problem she experienced was resistance. Before she came to the school, the acting wrote letters to all responsible authorities and offices influencing them not to accept her.

C24: I was shown the copy at the Ministry of Education which had signatures of the S.D.C members saying that they do not want a woman head they want the man who was acting.

She was shown the copy at the Ministry of Education which had signatures of the S.D.C members saying that they do not want a woman head they wanted the man who was acting.

C25: When they showed me the letter they said they just wanted me to be aware of the environment that I was going into.

She was told that showing her the letter was just an eye opener for her to know the environment she was going into.

C26: So I was told to 'pretend' not to know anything about that and I did that.

She was told to 'pretend' not to know anything about that and she did that

C27: I did not mind, but that 'knowledge' that the previously acting head was not in favour of my coming, helped me to think of a strategy for my way forward.

She did not mind, but used that 'knowledge' that the previously acting head was not in favour of her coming, to think of a strategy for her way forward.

C28: I started by calling the school development committee members. I introduced myself to them knowing they don't want me. Because they thought I did not know anything about the story behind their letter, they welcomed me as if there was nothing.

She called the school development committee members and introduced herself to them. Because they thought she was not informed about their attempt to reject her, they gave her a warm welcomed as if everything was normal.

C29: I approached the chairman of the school development committee and he took me around showing me the school, but there was no hand over take over.

She approached the chairman of the school development committee and he took her around touring the school, but there was no hand over take over.

C30: I was not given records of what had been going on for instance there was an incomplete project of building a school durawall. I had to investigate on my own which company was working on it and how far they had gone with payments, where they had sourced the money and all those things. When I was asking for money from the S.D.C to build another classroom block because we had hot sitting, I came to realise that the durawall was built outside the S.D.C's approval. The money used was supposed to be for the classroom block. So I had to negotiate again with the S.D.C. who had initiated the classroom block project. Parents agreed to pay for the classroom block. So we no longer have hot sitting (double sessions).

She had to investigate on her own, previous records of the development of the school and how it was being run. She negotiated with the S.D.C. to pay for the classroom block, because the classrooms were enough. Parents agreed to pay for the classroom block. So there was no more hot sitting (double sessions).

C31: As head I have an important role. I feel proud, I won the secretary merit award for good results and buildings. My role needs commitment.

She felt she had an important role and it needed commitment. She felt proud to win the merit award for the good results.

C32: At first when I was deputy I wasn't sure of myself. But now I am sure of what I am doing. I am confident. Even when we go for meetings I am comfortable.

When she was deputy she was not confident but later she was. When she went for meetings she felt comfortable.

C33: It needs patience. Sometimes you have to be calm. For instance when I was given a letter of rejection from the S.D.C, I held my anger down.

Her work needed patience. Sometimes she had to be calm.

C34: The important thing that I discovered is that the role needs transparency and talking to people. The more people understand what is going on, the more they become supportive.

She experienced that the role needed transparency and communicating. When people understand what is going on, they become supportive.

C35: Involving senior teachers also help us here. They are our link people.

Involving senior teachers helped her as her link people.

C36: Sometimes teachers do not open up directly to the head. So we ask the senior teachers to listen to their concerns. Working with senior teachers makes communication much easier.

Senior teachers listen to the teachers concerns because it was not always the case that they opened up directly to the head. Working with senior teachers eased her communication. (Networking)

C37: Openness and frankness are other important aspects that contributed to my progress in heading the schools. Even the teachers have adopted that frankness.

Openness and frankness contributed to her progress in heading the schools. The teachers also adopted that frankness.

C38: When we are making proposals for doing a project, teachers are free to give opinions, to say this is not it because of one, two three things. I incorporate their ideas. I also learn from them.

When she makes proposals for projects, she involved teachers in the contributions and suggestions. She incorporated their ideas and learned from them.

C39: We work as a team. You should also be firm, for instance when I arrived at this school, teachers pushed me to take sides but failed, so at least I have no problems with administration and discipline.

She worked as a team although she had to be firm.

C40: I listen to the pupils' problems as a mother but I have also become attached to teachers.

She listened to pupils' problems as a mother, and gave emotional support to teachers.

C41: Sometimes teachers come and close the door to discuss their personal problems. Mothers come in and sit down and tell me what exactly the problem she is encountering. Sometimes I feel that the respect I get is due to the motherly role that I offer, even with the pupils, we fight, but calm down and talk as a mother and child.

Teachers feel free to discuss their personal problems with her. Mothers also tell her the problems they are encountering. She felt that the respect she got was partly due to the motherly role she offered.

C42: I do mentoring and counselling. At one time I had to ask a teacher what worried her even before she told me that she had a problem, because I could see that she was not herself, the way I knew her. After helping that teacher I discovered that her respect for me increased and was also different.

She did mentoring and counselling. She at times could tell that a teacher had a problem before she was informed about it, but just from knowing her personality and observing that she looked different.

She felt she should be someone caring and able to create a school environment that is welcoming.

C43: I feel I should be someone who is caring. I should be able to create a school environment that is welcoming.

She needed to understand the people whom she worked with in order to know how to handle their problems.

C44: I need to understand the people whom I work with in order to know how to handle their problems.

She worked together and applied flexible approaches to her work. That encouraged others to participate freely in most of the school activities.

C45: We work together. I should apply flexible approaches to my work. This will encourage others to participate freely in most of the school activities.

She felt she should facilitate a sense of ownership, and share power. She also felt she was a role model.

C46: I should facilitate a sense of ownership in their work, and share power. I also feel I am a role model.

C47: I am encouraging teachers to read and apply for headship posts too. I discuss with them the importance of advancing Sometimes they highlight the problems of adult learning especially those having a family and the issue of resources and so on. In a way thus how we learn to interact freely and share ideas.	*She discussed with teachers the advantages and disadvantages of adult learning and encouraged them to apply for promotion. In this way she learned to interacted with them freely and share ideas.*
C48: At prize giving days, I encourage teachers to put on their gowns, so that those who have not yet started the degree program might be motivated.	*She encouraged teachers to wear their gowns on prize giving days to encourage or motivate others.*
C49: Working with no clue of the previous school records, having no one to induct me into the system these two were my biggest challenges	*One of her biggest challenges was having no one to induct her into the system and working with*
C50: I was born in 1958 and did seven years primary education. I completed O level in 1975. In 1976 I went to teacher's training college and trained for three years. I completed my training in 1978.	*She was born in 1958 and did seven years primary education. She completed O level in 1975. In 1976 she went to teacher's training college and trained for three years. She completed my training in 1978.*
C51: I have one daughter and one grand child, so together I have two dependants, because my daughter is also not married and she is staying with me.	*She had one daughter and one grand child, so together she had two dependants, because her daughter is also not married and she has been staying with her.*
C52: In 1989 I was promoted to the position of deputy head one in rural areas.	*In 1989 she was promoted to the position of deputy head one in rural areas.*

Lonkina – Meaning units	***Explications***
D1: We were the first group of women to be promoted to deputy head one posts. The first school that I went to as a deputy head, the head was good. That is where I got to know the job of running a school. The head just gave me the keys. I did all the head's work. I was actually running the school because most of the time the head was not there and I benefited a lot. I did manage well and worked well until I transferred to another school.	*She was also one of the first group of women to be promoted to educational leadership positions as deputy head one. She had a warm welcome and felt she got most of her experience of running a school there. She benefited because the head was always away and she was given the opportunity to lead and do all the work up-to the time she transferred.*
D2: The next school I went to, the head had a bad reputation of not accepting deputies more educated than him and it became true as I personally experienced that.	*She experienced resentment from the head who had a reputation not entertaining deputies more educated than him...*
D3: He used to harass me saying 'you have come to take over, I am the mouth piece'.	*The head used to harass her saying she wanted to take over, he is the mouth piece.*
D4: It was not long before he went on leave, but before he left we had formed a fund raising committee. I was the chairperson of the committee. In this committee everyone was contributing. We came up with suggestions on how we could raise the money. . We suggested that there be a civic day when children deliberately dress in their own personal clothes and not school uniform, and then they pay a fee for not putting on uniforms.	*Before the head went on leave, a fund raising committee had been formed in which she was the chairperson. Everyone contributed and the final decision was that there be a civic day when children deliberately dress in their personal clothes, and then they pay a fee for not putting on uniforms.*
D5: The head wanted to dismiss me for implementing the proposed idea.	*The head wanted to dismiss her for implementing proposed idea.*
D6: He moved around telling the community that "she should go".	*The head moved around telling people that 'she should go'.*
D7: While he was on leave we did a lot of improvements at the school. We built a toilet from the money donated by farmers and the Australian High Commissioner. We bought uniforms for the school choir. I bought school equipment, that is garden tools	*She did a lot of improvement while the head was away. She built a toilet from the money donated and bought uniforms for the school choir and other school equipment such as the garden tools*

D8: Each time we used the money we did liaison with the school committee who gave us a go ahead.	*She did liaison with the school committee who authorised her to used the money*
D9: When the head came back from leave I briefed him of what had been going on.	*She gave a report back to the head who had been on leave*
D10: He was furious about the report back and accused me of the developments that had been made, saying I was misusing funds.	*The head was upset about the report and accused her of the developments saying she ha misused funds.*
D11: All the records were there, the items bought what ever development that had taken place was there as evidence of how the money was used but he was still not happy.	*Although there was evidence, with all the records and items bought, the man was still not happy.*
D12: He wrote an allegation against me saying I misused the funds. I had to go to court to defend the allegation.	*She had to go to court to defend herself on the allegation written against her by the head, that she had misused school funds.*
D13: I never handled money on civic days. The treasurer collected it and whenever I wanted to use any money, I would go through the committee.	*She never handled money because the treasurer did that. When she wanted to use money, she would go through the committee*
D14: So I had the records of all transactions. I had to prove that I did not misuse the money.	*She had the records of all transactions. She had to prove that she did not misuse the money.*
D14: I did not think of transferring. I was thinking of completing my project of toilet building. We wanted to build another toilet but he was resistant, now that he was back, we had to approach him for whatever project we wanted to implement, so he did not give his support. He kept on saying I wanted to take over.	*She wanted to complete her project of toilet building before transferring, but the head was resisting. She had to approach him for any project she wanted, now that he was back from leave, but he was not supportive. He kept on saying she wanted to take over.*
D15: We finally managed to build the toilet then I asked for a lateral transfer because I was tired of being tormented. That is how I transferred to this school because deputy one post is equivalent to head two. The only difference is that here I am an independent leader.	*She asked for a lateral transfer when she completed building the toilet, and was tired of being tormented. She transferred as head because deputy head one post is equivalent to head two. The only difference is that as a head she is an independent leader.*

D16: I regret why I had applied for the headship post. I did not know that there are some people who are there to destroy others.	*She did not know that some people specialise in destroying others. She was regretting why she had applied for headship post*
D17: The teachers had already heard about me from the previous school, so they had a negative impression about me. They already had bias.	*Teachers at the present school had been misinformed about her from the previous school, so they had negative impression. They already had a bias...*
D18: I don't know what the head was doing. The papers in this office, the memos, circulars and the timetable were old, dark and I could not follow anything	*In this new office she could not follow anything because the records and papers were not clear and not in order.*
D19: Teachers were dismissing early. They must have been reducing lesson periods, for instance where there are double periods they make it one. I had to start afresh.	*She feels teachers must have been reducing lesson periods since they were dismissing early. She had to re-start.*
D20: I made my new timetable a master timetable from which the teachers made theirs. I consulted them on how we should work towards improving pupils' performance, because the grade seven, pass rate was just too low.	*She introduced new time-table. She consulted the teachers on how they should work towards improving the pupils' performance and school results since the grade seven pass rate was too low.*
D21: I introduced change bit by bit. It took time for them to adjust to the new timetable. Now we are working as a team.	*She initiated change slowly and it took time for them adjust She now works with them as a team.*
D22: What I discovered is that people come to work with their own problems already. In order to understand one another, you need to know each individual's needs, problems and interests.	*She discovered that people come to work with problems already. She felt she needed to know each individual's interests, and problems in order to understand them.*
D23: I interacted with them more often and made sure that anyone with problems we discuss, agree and find a way forward.	*She had to interact with them more often, and so that anyone with problems they discuss and find a way forward.*
D24: On the academic side I made sure that teachers work hard. As I said before that they used to dismiss early, skipping some lessons.	*She encouraged teachers to work hard since they were used to dismiss early.*
D25: As a leader you don't have to take things for granted, to assume that teachers know the importance of their contribution to the child's success.	*She believed that as a leader she should not assume that teachers know the importance of their contribution to a child's success.*

D26: I communicate with teachers through staff meetings, and circulars. I use both formal and informal forms of communication. I interact with both teachers and parents. With parents I make announcements at assembly for children to pass on the message, followed up by letters to the parents. Effective communication helps to prevent unnecessary misunderstandings. We have parents meetings, consultation days and prize giving days. At prize giving days we used to call responsible authorities from the ministry, these days we are inviting people who give us donations.

She interacts and communicates with teachers through staff meetings, and circulars. She uses both formal and informal forms of communication. With parents she makes announcements at assembly for children to pass on the message, followed up by letters to the parents. Effective communication for her helps to prevent unnecessary misunderstandings.

She has parents meetings, consultation days and prize giving days. At prize giving days she used to call responsible authorities from the ministry, these days she invites people who give them donations.

D27: You have to have goals. We came up with school policies, a school vision, and we have our own targets to accomplish. When I came here the pass rate was 56%. We managed to raise it to a range of between 80-90%.

She has goals and have own targets to accomplish. She has managed to improve the results from 56% to a range of between 80-90%.

D28: Many of our children are orphans. We observed that kids sleep in class during lessons. Kids come to school hungry; they travel a long distance, and sleep in class because of tiredness and hunger. This is how we thought of a feeding scheme at the school. We keep a record of all pupils, so it is easy for us to identify the disadvantaged and assist them.

She introduced a feeding scheme for the poor children because they used to sleep in class due tiredness and to hunger. Because she has a record of each child, it's easy for her to identify the disadvantaged and assist them.

D29: Working with people is not easy. If you want the school to have progress you have to involve people. Yet sometimes people have different opinions about progress.

She experienced that working with people is not easy, but in order to have progress, you have to involve them.

D30: In my case, my first promotion as a deputy, I experienced resistance, whatever improvement I wanted to make, was not supported. In such kind of environment one can hardly talk of leadership style. I can only talk of my leadership style as at this school where I am a substantive head.

She experienced resentment when she was deputy head so she felt had nothing to comment on as her leadership style as at that time, but is able to say something on her current position.

D31: My leadership style is that of interacting with others. I discuss with staff whatever we want to do before we implement it. I communicate with both the community and the teachers. I try to accommodate everyone, despite their individual difference. We work as a team and I see myself as an interactive leader. We have circulars and teachers have to abide by those rules.	*Her leadership style is that she interacts with teachers, consults other staff and communicates with the community. She caters for their individual differences and works as a team. She sees herself as an interactive leader. She also uses authority*
D32: There is always room for adjustments, but if the teacher is lost, you guide and counsel the teacher before you write or implement the regulations on circulars.	*She uses flexible approach but if the teacher behaves unprofessionally, she uses power.*
D33: You should lead by example. I have my own class, I make sure the pupils enjoy their work and improve their performance. We have to obtain good results but still maintain good working relations	*She leads by example through her own class. She assures that pupils enjoy their work and improve performance. She has managed to obtain good results and maintain good working relationship.*
D34: I delegate and supervise and make sure that the work is done. There should be discipline at school and there should be good tone. It is like the hands, feet and legs. They should all work towards one goal. What I mean is good atmosphere, open climate so that teachers experience job satisfaction.	*She has to maintain discipline and create an enabling environment for teachers, a conducive atmosphere so that teachers experience job satisfaction.*
D35: When teachers get job satisfaction they become motivated to overcome difficulties and frustrations. By job satisfaction I don't mean they are no uncertainties but a flexible approach to work should be adopted in order to facilitate the teachers' accomplishments of their tasks.	*She felt teachers become motivated to overcome difficulties and frustrations when they get job satisfaction. She felt flexible approach to work should be adopted in order to facilitate the teachers' accomplishments of their tasks.*
D36" Teachers are proud to be associated with their school that is if there is an atmosphere conducive to learning, where there are open channels of communication and the head listens to the subordinates' problems, and give them a voice.	*Only when there is good tone can the teachers be proud to be associated with their school. She felt that there should be open channels of communication and the head should listen to the subordinates' problems, and give them a voice.*

D37: The role is important but there was a time when I regretted why I had applied for a leadership post. That time I learned nothing but being traumatised.	*She feels that her role is important but there was a time when she learned nothing but being traumatised.*
D38: Now I enjoy my work. My children are grown ups and when I am home I forget that I am a manager.	*She now enjoys her work because she has less family responsibilities.*
D39: I was born at a rural hospital. My father passed away when I was two months in my mothers' womb (my mothers was two months pregnant).I am the last born out of eight. We were four boys and four girls.	*She was born at a rural hospital. Her father died before her birth. She is the last born in a family of eight, four, girls and four boys.*
D40: My father had no brother; I grew up with my mother doing farming. My mother was given donations such as clothing by missionaries, and I learned at a mission school.	*Her father had no brother. She was brought up by her mother and she learned at a mission school.*
D41: I was active in sports, but I cannot remember being a prefect. My children are the ones who are becoming prefects.	*She was active in sports, but she cannot remember being a prefect, but her children are.*
D42: At first I wanted to be a nurse. Most of the missionaries were nurse and they used to give and share with the poor. The sisters would call me and give me work at the hospital. I also wanted to help the sick so they couched me mid-wifery (anti-natal care) (to help pregnant women when they deliver.).	*Initially she wanted to be nurse, influenced by the environment she was. She also wanted to help the sick so she was couched how to help pregnant women when they deliver.*
D43: The experience that I got from the nursing aid duties made me hurt the nursing profession, and that is how I went to teaching.	*The experience that she got from the nursing aid duties made her hurt the nursing profession, and that is how she came to teaching.*
D44: I did secretarial before undertaking teaching course. This work was quite confidential, so you needed to be responsible. That is where I learned to be responsible.	*She did secretarial before undertaking teaching course. The work was quite confidential, that she needed to be responsible. That is where she learned to be responsible.*

D45: I wanted to work in the private sector as an accountant but was promoted before I got another job where I could have used by booking knowledge.

She wanted to work in the private sector as an accountant but was promoted before she got another job where she could have used her booking knowledge.

D46: When I was young I wanted to compete with my brother. He used to take me out when herding cattle, and I could do everything that men did, so I had no difficulty in doing men's work.

When she was young she wanted to compete with her brother. He used to take her out when herding cattle, and she could do everything that men did, so she had no difficulty in doing men's work.

IVY: Meaning Unit	***Explications***
E1: I was very happy because it was an achievement, but I didn't know that there were consequences behind.	*She was happy because she had made an achievement, but did not know she was entering into the world of uncertainty.*
E2: My first promotion, as a deputy of a male head was a nasty experience for me. The head was not happy about having a female deputy. The hatred was so open to the extent that he would allocate the duties of a deputy to the senior teacher whilst I was there and he would just ignore me.	*Her first experience as a deputy of a male head was nasty. The head did not like having a female deputy. He allocated the duties of a deputy to the senior teacher whilst she was there and would ignore her.*
E3: I used to cry on a daily basis. I even went to the extent of blaming my husband for encouraging me to take up the position. I spent only two terms at that school and I had to seek for a lateral transfer to another school.	*She used and blamed her husband for encouraging her to take up the position. She spent only two terms at that school and had to seek for a lateral transfer to another school.*
E4: I worked with a female head. My first two months I had fear. I used to think that the head's office is there for the deputy to be scolded. But this time the office was different.	*Though the office had changed, she still had fear for the first two months since she thought the head's office was for the deputy to be scolded. Her head was now female.*
E6: I was actually inducted into the system. and experienced what it means to lead a school. Each time she called me into her office, she would discuss with me freely so much that I felt welcomed. Each time we met we would discuss business first but ended up talking general issues. I liked her approach so much that I ended up feeling free to work and I could also give suggestions, unlike the previous school where I never got the keys to the head office.	*She was inducted into the system and she and got experience from there. She had free discussions with the head. Each time she was called in the office, it would be business discussions first ending in general issues. She liked her approach so much that she felt welcomed and free to contribute, unlike the previous school where she never got the opportunity.*
E7. I worked with teachers at sport and other things for example project planning. We had a Club. In this club we had poultry project, so we were given chickens to start the project. When the chickens were ready we opened an account for the sales. The money was used, for buying books for the children.	*She worked with teachers at sport and project planning. She had chicken project. She opened an account for the sales and used the money for buying books for the children*

E9: I did not stay long again at this school. I was promoted to a head two post. This school had an acting head that wanted to mobilise the community and influence them to say, "How can you be led by a woman?"	*She was promoted to a school where an acting head tried to influence the community to refuse having a woman head.*
E10: I had experienced resistance before, so I just thought it was the men's culture.	*She had experienced resistance before; she just thought it was the men's culture.*
E11: At first it was not easy because the man refused to leave the office. He just could not hand over the keys. We had to share the small office for some time until he finally adjusted to the new situation of a woman head.	*It became difficult for her when the head could not surrender the keys such that she had to share the small office until he adjusted to the new situation of a woman head...*
E12: I used to move around pass on good comments on the work that he did, "as if to say he was better than myself". I had to promote him through praise. Sometimes I would ask him how he did certain things and so on. So he felt supported, I am sure he felt secure also, because he ended up talking to me freely. And finally, we managed to share the duties and thus how we managed to work together.	*She used acknowledgements and good comments, and sometimes she would ask him how he did certain things. Her thinking is that, the acting head must have felt supported and secured since he ended up talking to her freely sharing the duties and thus how she managed to work together.*
E13: I started by making a new timetable because theirs was ending the day at 12 noon. I asked them to send representatives so that we can draft the master timetable together.. The teachers made theirs from that master timetable.	*She called for representatives and started a new timetable, a master timetable together, so that teachers can draft theirs from the master one.*
E14: The teachers were used to being allocated duties for example extra-curricular activities. We agreed that they were going to volunteer/choose areas of their interests and those they are comfortable with. If it happens that one area is left unoccupied because more teachers have gone to one, I would negotiate privately with the teachers.	*Though they were used to being allocated duties, she gave teachers the opportunity to volunteer/ choose areas in extra-curricular activities that interest or are comfortable with them. She used to negotiate privately if there is an unoccupied area because another area has more.*

E15: I transferred again to get close to my family. Through discussions with teachers and the community of the school I transferred to, I found that there was a problem of teachers transferring to schools with better accommodation. So my first priority here was to make sure teachers' accommodation was improved in order to retain the staff.

When she transferred, she discussed with teachers and the community to find out the status of the school. She discovered that there was an exodus of teacher transferring to schools with better accommodation. So her first priority at this school was to improve teacher's accommodation in order to retain staff

E16: The source of funds was mainly school fees and pupils did pay. But that would not be enough to facilitate school improvement

Funds were not enough to facilitate school improvement since school fees was the main source.

E17: We talked to the parents and they were able to raise a certain amount towards that. They were supportive and organised, some volunteered to mould bricks others to build the toilets. We had donations from UNICEF (United Nations Children's Educational Fund). We managed to electrify the school including the teacher's houses.

She talked to parents who gave her support financially and through man-power, to build the toilet. She managed to electrify the school teachers' houses with donated money.

E20: Some of the challenges I faced are that some teachers who try to see whether you are strong enough. Truancy for example, some people come and just disappear before classes dismiss and others just don't turn up for work.

Some of her challenges were that some teachers tried to see whether she was strong enough, and just disappear before classes dismiss and others just could not turn up for work.

E21: Some would want to prove that they know, any suggestion by someone especially a woman, they just dismiss it arguing that they have done it before and it didn't work. Some just make un-productive arguments.

She felt others want to prove that they know, by, dismissing any suggestion especially by a woman arguing that they had done it before and it didn't work Others just make unproductive argument.

E22: I used power. When you use rules you are using power. I would use statutory instruments for backing for example absenteeism you should feel the form. Sometimes we would negotiate. I would look at the personal records of behaviours and it will guide me whether to negotiate or implement the rules.

She used authority, backed up by statutory instruments. Sometimes she would negotiate depending on record of behaviour which would guide her to make decision.

E23: I would be quiet but I feel bad and would feel belittled. I would later discuss with the teacher privately. I continued transferring because it was difficult to get a vacant in Marondera where my family is.	*She would be quiet but feel belittled and would discuss with the teacher privately. She transferred again to the current school*
E24: At this school there was reluctance, which was serious, so at times it would worry me and make me feel that pain. The teachers were not serious about work. You would find them talking outside the classrooms during lessons. The class will be making noise, no one attending to the kids. Soon after break they used to spend another thirty minutes or so waiting outside in pairs, few will be in class and so on.	*When she arrived there was serious reluctance which worried and irritated her. Teachers would leave the classes unattended while they talk in pairs outside, or spent another thirty minutes after break.*
E25: I thought of speaking to them one by one after a time. Meanwhile, I would just go and say lets go into the class.	*She planned to talk to them individually. Her immediate action was to instruct pupils to go in class*
E26: We had meetings together, and I encouraged them to talk about any problem. We would try and work it out if for instance the problem can be solved without delay.	*She held meetings with them and she encouraged them to talk about any problem. She would assist where possible.*
E27: I encouraged them to participate in the discussions that we made and let them to suggest what we can do to improve and how they want us to operate as a school. We drafted our own school rules.	*She encouraged them to participate in the discussions suggesting what could be done to improve the school.* They *drafted their school rules together.*

E28: I liked them because they were open to discuss and because of the continuous interaction I managed to overcome the situation. The responsible authority came to say "you improved the school so much that we are happy because there is a difference. They even told me that some people had removed their children because there was no order at the school and no learning was taking place.

She liked them because they were open to discussion. She overcame the situation because of continuous interaction and the responsible authority acknowledged her success.

E29: When I arrived at this school the pass rate was 50%. My aim is to improve it to a higher percentage. We work together with my deputy but sometimes she is not interested in being involved, maybe it's the age.

Her aim was to improve the pass rate which was 50% when she arrived, to a higher percentage. She works together with her deputy who sometimes is reluctant to be involved.

E31: When I did BEd I was the only one who was a junior teacher. When doing discussions, it was a challenge, so again I face the challenge of working with different people, of different ages and from different backgrounds.

Being the only one junior teacher when she did BEd was a challenge for her. She felt working with different people, of different ages and from different backgrounds was again a challenge.

E33: My perception is that you have to be actively involved in the process of school improvement. Involve the teachers and parents and encourage them to participate in school activities.

Her perception is that she has to be actively involved in the process of school improvement, involve teachers and parents and encourage them to participate in school activities.

E34: Energize them through continuous interaction, and have open communication.

She should have continuous interaction and open communication.

E35: Listen to their problems as well and maintain good relationships with both parents and teachers.

She should listen to their problems as well maintain good relationships with both parents and teachers.

E36: Let them have a say in what is going on at the school and have pride to maintain that, "this is our school". Incorporate their ideas.	*She should involve them in decision making in order to have a sense of ownership.*
E37: I think flexible approach to work helps a lot, and open communication.	*She thinks that flexible approach to work and open communication helps a lot.*
E38: We used to share the ideas of what we wanted to achieve. I listen to their problems. You should ensure that both individual needs and school needs are met, though in most cases it is difficult	*She shared ideas and listen to people's problems. She ensured that both individual needs and school needs were met, though in most cases it is difficult*
E39: Important. You are a mother – socially- you are trying to solve other people's problems you are also a father – handling issues of a 'man' fatherly issues. You care for kids, you do counselling and you are a mentor. You are a manager a leader in fact you are everything.	*She feels that her role is important. She is a mother – socially- she is trying to solve other people's problems she acts like a father – handling issues of a 'man' fatherly issues. She cares for kids, she does counselling and she is a mentor, a manager and a leader. In fact she is everything.*
E40: It's good to reflect on my past. I feel I have made an achievement	*When she reflected on her past she felt she made an achievement*
E41: I was born at a mission hospital. My father was a driver and my mother was a house wife. I was born in a family of six, two boys and four girls and I was the first born.	*Her father was a driver and her mother a house wife. she was born in a family of six, two boys and four girls and she was the first born.*
E42: I did my grade one up to five at a village school, and grade seven in Harare the capital city of Zimbabwe. I played netball and became head-girl at form three and four.	*She did her grade one up to five at a village school, and grade seven in Harare the capital city of Zimbabwe. She played netball and became head-girl at form three and four.*
E43: At first I wanted to be a dietician, I don't know why I wanted to be that but I am sure I was influenced by the types of subjects because I was doing food and nutrition. I did not dream of being a head.	*Initially she wanted to be a dietician, she does not know why she wanted to be that but she is sure she was influenced by the types of subjects because she was doing food and nutrition. She did not dream of being a head.*

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLE OF CONSENT LETTER

Research title:

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF WOMEN PRIMARY SCHOOL HEADS' EXPERIENCES AS EDUCATIONAL LEADERS IN POST COLONIAL ZIMBABWE

I have read the information sheet for the study and have had details of the study explained to me. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, or to decline to answer any particular questions in the study. I agree to participate in the study on the understanding that anonymity and confidentiality as stated in the information sheet is guaranteed. It is also my understanding that the information collected shall be used only for the purposes stated in the information sheet.

Signed:

Name: