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An investigation of the management and leadership experiences of female school principals in the Ondangwa Education Regions

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Abstract

This study explores practical school leadership and management, as enacted by women. The study, conducted in an interpretive paradigm, attempts to gain an understanding of women's subjective experiences of school leadership and management. Two women principals from Ondangwa West Educational Region were interviewed. The two were selected through consultations with one of the senior inspectors in the region. Both had been principals for more than ten years and were seen by those who are concerned with their school to be successful.

The study found that these women prefer a participative style of leadership and management, characterised by consultations with others, teamwork, collaborative decision-making and the use of power to empower others. They also strive for good human relationships because they believe that it fosters mutual respect, trust, openness and a good working atmosphere. All these human centred approaches are directed towards creating a school atmosphere that is conducive to teaching and learning and therefore result in effective schooling and quality educational outcomes. They do not experience gender discrimination in their work places. They have the full support of their supervisors. Though both are married with children, these dual roles do not prevent them from being successful in their professional work. In fact they have reached a stage where they feel confident as leaders and feel that they are acting as role models for fellow women principals and those aspiring to this position.

The study concludes that the styles of leadership and management displayed by women are similar to those that are universally accepted as characteristics needed for effective school management and leadership. Though these leadership styles are traditionally associated with women, these characteristics are not gender specific. Therefore it will be in the best interest of schools, if school principals, both men and women, could borrow from these qualities in order to change schools from authoritarian to more democratic institutions.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context

Statistics on the teaching profession show that while the majority of classroom teachers are women very few women occupy management positions.. The situation of "the women teach and the men manage" is experienced worldwide, in the USA (Shakeshaft 1989), Europe (Wilson (1998), Caribbean countries (Drake & Owen 1998) South Africa (Enomoto, 2000) to mention but a few examples. The trend is generally the same in Namibia, where the teaching force is composed of a high percentage of women but the majority of the school principals are still men (Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture 1999), in spite of the gender equality and affirmative action acts that were introduced after independence in 1990 (Namibia: Government Gazette1998).

Likewise, mainstream literature as well as theories and research on educational management and leadership are also androcentric, viewing and shaping education management and leadership through the male lens only. Enomoto (2000) and Shakeshaft (1989) attribute this to the fact that men are not only the incumbents of leadership positions, but research in this field has generally been done by men on men. This engendering of education management and leadership in theory, research and incumbency shaped the assumptions, beliefs and values that are generally considered as professional norms of leadership in schools. Morris (in Drake & Owen 1998) further argues that school management and leadership have been associated with masculinity. There has been a perception that the job of principalship needs certain traits and qualities that are associated with men, but not inherent in women.

Women are seen as insufficiently forceful and hence unfit for the job of principal, therefore those women who access this male world, are expected to imitate men in order to be successful.

Examples of research that have been carried out on women principals, as found in literature, indicate that successful women school principals use management and leadership approaches different from those normally associated with men (Shakeshaft 1989, Hall 1996, Drake & Owen 1998).

Despite the male domination in educational management and leadership in the Namibian schools in general, this is not the case in Ondangwa East and West educational regions. In these two regions there is a high percentage of women school principals. The two Ondangwa Educational regions cover the former Owamboland, where women were disadvantaged, neglected and marginalized during the colonial era. They also grew up in a strong patriarchal cultural background (United Nations Institute for Namibia 1986).

I was exposed to general situations at schools when I started working as an Advisory Teacher for Science in the Ondangwa West region in 1996. I have been responsible for the professional development of Science teachers. This brings me into contact with school principals, because as part of my work I have to do school visits in order to give advice to the teachers on the spot. Though I mainly work with teachers, some issues in my work are related to the work of the principal. For example if I am observing a lesson in one classroom and the learners in the neighbouring classrooms are just making noise, then there is no way I could follow what is happening in that particular classroom. In other words, my successful visit at a school depends on the general situation and atmosphere at the school.

Normally, in order to economize, we travel to schools as a team of several advisory teachers. It is not uncommon, after such school visits, for a colleague to make a remark such as: “Uh! This school is so well managed you won’t believe it is led by a woman”. “ I did not expect a school led by a man to be in such a mess”. “What would you expect of a school led by a woman?” Of course it is not the stereotype nature of the remarks that bothers me because I am used to that. However, I have always been wondering why some women can lead schools successfully while others cannot, though they are all from more or less the same background, culturally, socially and

politically. I am intrigued by the idea of hearing from those successful school principals what it is they actually do.

As far as I could establish so far nothing has been researched or written about women principals in the Ondangwa Educational Regions, where women principals are in the majority. Findings from this research may shed light on aspects that may help women to succeed as educational leaders and managers. Furthermore, it can reveal women's styles and strategies of management and leadership which can be used by both men and women principals in order to improve their management and leadership skills. The outcome of the research can also provoke further research on other areas of the role of gender in effective educational management and leadership.

1.2 Research goal

My research is an investigation of the management and leadership experience of women school principals in the Ondangwa Educational Regions. The goal of the research is therefore to gain an insight into how women principals experience educational management and leadership.

1.3 Research approach

The research is conducted in the interpretive paradigm. This approach is appropriate for this research because it denotes that reality is constructed by the human mind and its central endeavour is "to understand the subjective world of human experience" (Cohen & Manion 1994:37). In order to understand and interpret social situations, the researcher should interact with the people involved in such situations, to listen to them, and try to make sense of their perceptions and experiences (Cohen & Manion 1994). The interpretive paradigm, in particular, the phenomenological method is, to my mind, most suitable for this research because it enables me to explore how women understand educational management and leadership from their own perspectives and experience.

I used a questionnaire as a selecting tool. The questionnaires were sent to five people who met the following criteria: That they should be women, who had been principals for at least five years and who were seen by those who are associated with their schools to be doing well. I felt that after five years in the office one must have acquired substantial experience and have emerged with a sense of and confidence in the preferred leadership style in that context. From those who completed the questionnaire, I chose the two richest responses.

The chief data- collecting tool was in-depth, open-ended one-on-one interviews, as these would encourage the respondents to describe how they experience school management and leadership. Since my respondents were not so fluent in English, I decided to conduct the interviews in Oshindonga, their vernacular, in order to enable them to express themselves clearly. I translated the data into English when I was transcribing them.

Both principals were from the Oshiwambo-speaking group. This enabled me to explore gender separately from ethnic origin as a factor influencing women's approach to school leadership and management. Therefore their behaviour and experiences should be understood in light of the wider social and cultural contexts in which they work and in which assumptions about women and men in public and private, at work or within the family, prevail.

The interviews were tape-recorded, the data were transcribed verbatim and from the individual accounts, I looked for patterns that I synthesized into themes. For ethical reasons the names of the principals and their schools will not be disclosed.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

In chapter two I present an overview of the literature in order to gain insight into general theories on leadership and management and in particular in educational

contexts as well as what research has already found out about educational management and leadership of women.

In chapter three I outline the research methodology used in this study. I discuss what I understand by the interpretive paradigm and why this study is located within this approach. I further explore the phenomenological approach and try to justify why it is an appropriate method for collecting and analysing data in this study. Finally I highlight the limitations of the whole methodological approach taken in this study.

In chapter four I present the main findings on how practical school leadership and management are enacted and experienced by the two women principals in my study. These are presented in the form of the six themes that emerged from data analysis which are: their road to the position of principalship, the way they lead and manage schools, sources of support, combining professional work with family life, feminism issues and constraints. Throughout the chapter I let the reader "listen" to the voices of the informants by quoting the two principals as much as possible.

In chapter five I interpret the women's experiences of school leadership and management from my findings in light of what literature says about leadership and women, especially within educational contexts, and what other studies have found out about women at the helm of educational institutions, particulars schools.

In chapter six I give a summary of my main findings on how women go about school leadership and management. I further point out the implications of the findings of the study to both men and women concerned with effective school leadership and management. The chapter goes on to list several possible types of professional support structures that can be put in place to assist women in educational leadership and management positions. I also make recommendations for further research in the area of educational leadership and gender. Finally I highlight the limitations of the whole study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

These days there is recognition in education of both the importance of equal opportunities and the strengths as well as the contributions that women bring to educational leadership and management. In this chapter I will briefly review the main theories of leadership and where possible, point out their implications for education and also what they say or do not say about women leadership. Finally I will look at the feminine style of leadership mainly in educational institutions.

2.2 Management versus leadership

Since in this study I will refer to both educational leadership and management of women school principals, I feel it is important to clarify the relationship between these two concepts. Quite often, especially in education, the terms managing and leading are used interchangeably. However, though in my work I will always talk about educational leadership and management, I do believe that they are basically different activities.

Management is considered to have its origin in business and has been referred to as getting things done with and through people. Van der Westhuizen describes it as a "continuous cycle of planning, organising, guiding, supervising and controlling in order to reach previously set goals" (1991:40). It is a short-term routine of activities. Though some terms associated with management such as "control" and "supervise" are becoming unpopular and have a negative connotation especially in education, they are still prevalent.

Leadership on the other hand is associated with influencing and motivating the followers to achieve a shared vision/mission. Van der Waldt & du Toit define it as "a

process of influencing others to achieve certain objectives" (1997:196). Hunt describes it as "a capacity to mobilise a potential need in followers, … a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation" (1992:210). Van der Westhuizen (1991) refers to it as a "calling" through which the leader in a creative and dutiful way stimulates, directs group interaction and activities on a basis of the group goals with a view to attaining them. From all the quoted definitions I can conclude that leadership can be seen as a process whereby one person influences others to do something of their own volition, neither because it is required nor because of fear of the consequences of non-compliance.

Schmuck (1986) outlines three main differences between the two concepts. The first difference is on position and power. The manager has power because of his/her position in the organization while the leader has power because of recognition of the followers. Secondly the manager acts in the interest of the organization while the leader is concerned with the welfare, interests and wishes of the followers. Thirdly the manager aims at maintaining rational detachment while the leaders aspire to achieve a sense of togetherness and teamwork.

Despite the differences mentioned to above, I do admit that the two concepts are closely related, both conceptually and practically, and they are equally important. This view is shared by many authors, such as Hunt (1992), Hall (1996), Adair (1988) and Schmuck (1986). For example Adair (1988: 11) stresses the "existence of one within the other" while Schmuck (1986: 5) points out that "ideally one wants both at the same time and in the same person". Hunt refers to leadership as "the art of the truly effective manager". Hughes ***et al.*** (1987) maintain that successful management requires adaptation of the characteristics that have traditionally been associated with leadership and Hall (1996) describes leadership as "a philosophy in action with management an integral part". Dawson (1993: 113) believes that "leadership is a constituent feature of management".

In my work I shall take this view since I fully agree with Hall (1996) that in the field of education, leadership and management are "inseparable", right from classroom situation up to high levels of decision-making. Therefore the women principals in my

study are simultaneously leaders and managers. It is on this basis that in reviewing the literature, I will draw from both concepts.

2.3 An overview of literature on leadership and management

The concept and theories of leadership and management have undergone a substantial modification and refinement over the past decades and will probably continue to do so. In this section I shall briefly review the main trends in the evolution and development of leadership, and try to relate them to educational situations.

2.3.1 The trait theory

The earliest work on research and theory on leadership was based on pure trait theory, that leadership can be explained in terms of "innate, personal characteristics of a particular individual" (Hughes *et al.* 1987:263). This approach to leadership, which is based on the Aristotelian notion that "from the hour of birth, some are marked for subjection, and others for rule" (Hoy & Miskel 1996:376), dominated leadership theory and research until 1950s.

This "trait thinking" (Van der Mescht 1996) failed to produce a common set of characteristics from which a leader can be chosen, as it was revealed by publications in late 1940s to 1950s, particularly that of Ralph M. Stogdill, and was therefore put to rest. However I do concur with writers such as Adair (1990), Hunt (1992), Hall (1996) and Van der Mescht (1996) to mention but a few, that trait thinking is not completely dead. There is still a tendency in many people to label potential leaders as those who are "ambitious", "charismatic" "decisive" and these "connotations are central to our understanding of leadership" (Van der Mescht 1996:8).

I believe that this persistence of trait thinking can be considered as one of the contributing factors to both external and internal barriers to the advancement of women to senior management and leadership positions. Associating leadership with certain traits can discourage women from seeking promotion posts as they may

question their suitability for management posts since they perceive that the qualities they possess and the leadership style they espouse are not those that are commonly associated with leadership. This is confirmed by Hall (1996) citing Evetts (1990) who, when referring to changes brought by the Education Reform Act 1988 in Britain, argues that those changes required managerialist approaches which presented cultural dilemmas for women head-teachers. In her view: "Heads have had to become tough, aggressive, competitive, directive, and autocratic if they are to deal with the pressure of the new reforms" (Hall 1996: 4). What she implied I think, is that school management is not a suitable job for women. Furthermore I do also concur with Ngcobo (as cited in Van der Mescht 1996) that the trait theory can also be used by those responsible for promoting people, to justify their exclusion of women from leadership positions, in the belief that women do not possess "leadership qualities".

2.3.2 Situation and contingency theories

Fiedler developed a coherent and well-integrated contingency model of leadership in 1976 (Hoy & Miskel 1996). It is based on the idea that a leader is a product of his/her functional relations to specific individuals in a specific situation, i.e. different types of situations require different kinds of leadership and that if a leader is removed from one specific situation and placed in a different one, it is highly unlikely that he or she will be a leader (Musaazi 1982 and Hughes *et al.* 1987). Other influential contingency theories include Blake & Mouton's "Management grid" and Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership. Such theories propose that there are two dominant behaviours in interpersonal relationships, task-oriented behaviour and people-oriented behaviour. Task-oriented behaviours refer to attempts to structure, to provide direction, and to establish standards. People-oriented behaviours refer to concern for the people involved, for maintaining balance and for team building (Hunt 1992, Hoy & Miskel 1996).

I do agree with Van der Mescht (1996) that the task management of Blake & Mouton's management grid makes explicit the tension between task and person orientation and the same tension informed the formulation of Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model. In reality such prescribed way of doing, given a certain

situation, does not always work, because the act of leading can be unpredictable. Therefore Hunt (1992:249) calls on the leaders to "see to it as their role is to maintain a balance between these two behaviours".

Nevertheless, I do believe that the idea that the influence of the situation pervades leadership is by no means out-dated. As Van der Mescht (1996) points out, its emphasis on environment is a valuable contribution. This is particularly important in the context of educational leadership when it comes to factors such as students' rights, political power and the role of parents. These could be some of the sources of external pressure that the educational leaders have to reckon with, as I will elaborate on in section 2.4.6.

2.3.3 Leadership and organizational culture

The trait theory and the situational approach to leadership were based on the organizational metaphor originating mainly in Taylorism and bureaucracy. In principle, organizational thinking has developed beyond the boundaries imposed by the machine metaphor. However, some writers maintain that the image of an organization as a machine is still prevalent in some educational institutions. For example Hughes ***et al.*** (1987:8) write:

> Schools and colleges, particularly if they are large, conform to a considerable degree to Weber' specification of bureaucracy, as judged by their division of work, hierarchical structures, their rules and regulations, their impersonal procedures and their employment practices based on technical criteria.

Though an element of mechanistic mode of thinking might still be observed in organizations, many organizations have moved away from this mode of thinking. Several authors including Schein (1982), Sergiovanni (1984), Hunt (1992), Starratt (1993), Bolman & Deal (1994) and Greenfield (1994), argue that organizations are made up of people with different beliefs, values and assumptions: therefore a deeper understanding of cultural issues is essential.

Schein (1982: 2) maintains that the concept of culture is useful because it helps to explain some of the "unfamiliar" and "incomprehensible" and sometimes seemingly "irrational" behaviour of people in an organization. To him culture and leadership "are two sides of the same coin", therefore understanding of culture is essential to leaders if they are to lead. Bolman & Deal (1994:82) echo the same view, "that leadership is contextual and it is important for leaders to have a deep understanding of the cultures in which they are embedded".

To me the key issue in organizational culture is the renewed interest in the human factor, which is considered today as essential for the success and survival of organizations. Dinkmeyer (1996:54) refers to it as "human capital", which is based on the belief that people are a primary resource for any organization, hence they cannot be considered as "mere cogs in a corporate wheel". This concept of human capital implies valuing and respecting the psychological needs of all individuals in the organization and it is one of the key trends in contemporary leadership.

2.3.4 Transformational versus transactional leadership

It was James McGregor Burns who first distinguished between the two types of leadership; transactional and transformational. Transactional leaders stimulate followers' performance by offering a deal that satisfies the self-interest of the followers: there is an exchange of mutually valued things. Transformational leaders motivate others to act not out of self-interest, but out of commitment to a higher idealistic goal. In other words, transformational leadership lifts both leader and followers to high levels of commitment and motivation by appealing to basic values, liberty, justice, collective goodwill and achievement (Hoy & Miskel 1996:392-395).

In my view, what is important to organizations as far as transformational leadership is concerned is the positive form of its way of mobilising power to change social systems and reform dying organizations. That is why Schein (1982:2) suggests that "there is a possibility … that the only thing of real importance that the leaders do is to create and manage cultures and that the unique talent of leaders is their ability to work with culture".

The same view is echoed by Bolman & Deal (1994) when they summarise the view of the panel that "leaders must embrace and exhibit spiritual, moral, and expressive qualities". However a search for such charismatic and flamboyant leaders, I think, may lead us back to a search for what Hunt called "demi-god personality trait" (1992:255). I, therefore concur with Van der Mescht who refers to transformational leadership as "renewed and enriched emphasis on the leader as a person" (1996:17).

According to Hunt (1992) rapid changes in the market require that organizations be transformed far more quickly than they were able to do in the past. Furthermore, Dinkmeyer maintains that people no longer want to be managed but they want to be led. To him "gone are the days for management in order to control enterprise but rather leadership in order to bring out the best in people" (Dinkmeyer 1996:54). Therefore for the organizations to succeed, there should be a shift from "power over people to shared power, commitment and vision" (Dinkmeyer 1996:54). This is particularly true, I think, of education, where schools are confronted with many challenges due to educational reforms and many other external pressures which I will elaborate on in section 2.4.6. The current interest in transformational leadership can be attributed to the two above-mentioned aspects. However, one still wonders whether the leaders always transform the organizations in a positive way, whose values they try to transmit, and how they transmit them. Maybe that is why Hunt points out that one of the problems of the current interest in transformational leadership "is the embarrassment of finding that many of the so-called transformational leaders of the past decade have been sacked or have led their organizations into losses" (Hunt 1992:255-256).

The brief history of theories on leadership and management that I have outlined above, to me is one-sided as it does not say anything on women leadership. I support Shakeshaft (1989) who argues that in order to be useful and inclusive, theories on leadership and management should take into account the experiences of all the players. Coleman as cited in Bush & West-Burnham (1994:187) echoes the same sentiment as she writes: "Such theories of patriarchy and androcentrism hold that a

male-centred culture invests worth in male values and regards female values and experience as less significant".

I do believe that if organizations are to survive in this fast-changing world, there is a need for a shift in management philosophy. Such philosophy should take into account aspects like combining management with leadership, leadership in multicultural organizations and female leadership. However, before I explore what female leaders have to contribute to the theories of leadership, I will first highlight some important aspects of leadership and management in educational contexts.

2.4 Leadership and management in educational institutions

So far I have dwelt on leadership as exercised in organizations in general. However, I do believe that schools do differ from formal organizations in certain aspects. I concur with Sergiovanni (1992) who accuses the literature on educational leadership of being heavily influenced by the belief that schools are formal organizations and hence give too much attention to direct leadership. Greenfield adds his voice to this argument. His vision of education is captured in the quotation below which is cited in Cahill (1994:253-254):

> The factory model of schooling diminished the understanding of education as a deeply mysterious process, and instead he [Greenfield] uses the metaphor of the educator who moves the students in certain directions just as a gardener works with and brings out the spirit of what is already there.

Both authors advocate a community metaphor. In reflecting on his writings about Catholic education, Cahill (1994:254) quotes Greenfield as saying:

> Catholic educators have been alerted to the need for a change in perspective, and to approach school as a "community" rather than as an "institution". Every one directly involved in the school is part of the school community: teachers, directors, administrators and auxiliary staff. Parents are central figures, since they are the natural and irreplaceable agents in the education of their children. And the community also include the students, since they must be active agents in their own education.

All the members in such a community will work toward realizing a goal that they believe in.

It is obvious that when we substitute community for organization as the metaphor for schools, this will have implications for styles and type of leadership required. In educational institutions, leadership resides not only confined in the principal but is dispersed to others including deputy principals, heads of department, team leaders as well as class teachers. I therefore agree with Sergiovanni (1992: 41) that in education we should talk of "shared leadership". Bush & West -Burnham (1994) also maintain that educational leadership differs from leadership in certain areas. I will briefly discuss these aspects in the next sections.

2.4.1 Professionalism

Coleman (1994) as cited in Bush & West-Burnham (1994) argues that the authority of a principal is not only derived from the legitimate power of his/her position, but it is also under-written by the recognition of his/her professionalism. However this professional expertise in schools is not only confined to the principal. Teachers are also experts in view of their own training and this prompted Coleman to argue that they will expect a degree of autonomy of operation and they will be unwilling to accept traditional authority. In view of this Sergiovanni (1992: 44) argues that leadership and professionalism are "antithetical". If professionalism is emphasized then less leadership is needed, and the teachers as professionals, will work more independently.

2.4.2 Dual role model of leadership

A principal of a school as a leader of the institution has appropriate management responsibilities but at the same time also plays a role as professional in education. Hughes *et al.* (1987: 279) argue that this will give rise "to ambiguities" and "to opportunities" as it may result into tensions between the two roles. They therefore propose a dual role model that applies when the "chief executive" of a professio nally staffed organization may also be considered to be its "leading professional". This

division of tasks, I think, is too artificial and in fact Coleman in Bush & West-Burnham (1994) points out that research has established that in practice it does not work. I agree with what is confirmed by research, according to Hughes et al (1987:279) there should be a substantial inter-penetration of the two sub-roles.

2.4.3 Importance of mission/vision

According to Coleman (1994) in Bush & West-Burnham (1994), many writers on educational leadership in the 1980s and 1990s recognise that it is essential for the leaders in schools to have a mission/vision and to be able to transmit their own commitment into one that can be shared by others. This view seems to rely on the charismatic basis of authority and may imply a concentration on the strength of an individual personality. However Coleman points out that the demands should be seen in the terms of collegiality and the emphasis should be placed on ownership. This same view is echoed by Swartz as quoted in Van der Westhuizen, when he writes of an educational leader that: "He (sic) cannot influence teachers by his personality alone. He has to develop a "we" approach to common school problems and cease to speak of "my school" and "my teachers" (Van der Westhuizen 1991:192).

2.4.4 Educational values-the moral dimension

There is no doubt that education plays a unique role in any society. While I do not dispute the importance of clear vision for the future of any school, I do agree with those writers who argue that educational leadership carries a moral dimension. Coleman in Bush & West-Burnham (1994:66) for example, points out that it is argued that leaders of educational institutions "carry a moral responsibility with regard to the values that inform the culture and mission of schools". Value is also a recurring theme in Greenfield's writing cited in Cahill (1994). He continually attempts to position values as "central" in educational thinking. Sergiovanni (1992:41) in his community metaphor of schools argues that values are one of the centres that bind the members of the community together. "Centers are respositories of values, sentiments, and beliefs that provide the needed cement for uniting people in a common cause.

Centers govern the school value and provide norms that guide behavior and give meaning to school community" (Sergiovanni (1992:41).

2.4.5 Education leadership and school effectiveness as well as school improvement

School effectiveness is generally associated with outcomes such as examinations, pupils' attitudes and so on. Murgatroyd & Gray as quoted in Bush & West-Burnham (1994) define an effective school as one 'which responds to individual pupil and staff needs and to the changing face of the community in which it is placed". They further stress the importance of the leadership of such a school, especially the inter-personal skills of the leader. They support their view by quoting Beare ***et al.*** (1989) who argue that an outstanding leader would show the following: 'personal values, commitment, collaborative decision making and the sharing of the leadership" (Bush & West-Burnham: 1994:68).

School improvement on the other hand is concerned with the introduction of change into schools. Again here literature stresses the importance of the leader, that the educational leader is expected to act both as a change agent and as a maintainer of the day-to-day running of the school (Coleman in Bush & West-Burnham 1994). She (Coleman) argued that transformational leadership, which I have already discussed on page 11, is suitable here, in order to ensure the commitment of all concerned. She based her argument on Sergiovanni's (1990) view that: 'leaders and followers are united in pursuit of high-level goals common to both. Both want to become the best. Both want to shape the school in a new direction" (cited in Bush & West-Burnham 1994:69).

2.4.6 External pressure on educational leaders

The sources of external pressure on educational institutions, according to Coleman as cited in Bush & West-Burnham (1994), include government educational policies, educational reform programmes, demands from job markets and so on. For schools to survive such pressures they require proactive leaders, who could mediate on behalf of

schools. West cited in Bush & West-Burnham (1994:71) describes such leaders as those who:

> Instead of suppressing the potential for value conflict, heads and governors must learn to bring it into the open for general examination and sometimes allow their communities to resolve these differences themselves through a process of mutual education.

From what I have discussed in this section, it is clear that the challenges which are facing educational leaders differ from those faced by leaders in other formal organizations. The survival and success of schools depend heavily on the professional conduct of the school principals and the styles of leadership and management they employ.

In the next section I explore the styles of leadership and management used by women when running an organization, in particular, the schools.

2.5 Female Leadership

Women have gained access to virtually every line of work and are bulging in the management pipelines. Though a great many barriers still exist and the question of why few women reach senior level management positions remains unanswered, the most significant trend in the contemporary corporate world is the rapid increase in the number of women leaders. The education sector is no exception. Hall for example pointed out, when referring to school principals, that they were women who had broken through the "glass ceiling" to become successful leaders of school by circumventing the barriers that traditionally stand in the way of women seeking career advancement in organizations. She further quoted Beck and Steele (1989) arguing that women leaders 'had gone beyond the great divide and taken up leadership positions, with the implied possibilities of power and influence" (Hall 1997:311). The question here is: then how do women lead?

As I have already pointed out on page 12, literature on leadership theories neglected women's experiences. Likewise, the role of women in educational management and

leadership has also been ignored in literature for a long time. Van der Westhuizen (1991:515) laments this as he points out that "it has been shamefully neglected in the past and accorded scant reference even in educational management publications". Other authors such as Shakeshaft (1989) and Enomoto (2000) echo the same sentiment. They attribute this androcentric view in literature to the fact that leading positions in educational management and leadership have been occupied by men for so long and research on education management had been done by men on men. As a result theoretical frameworks with regard to leadership and management have also been constructed around male behavioural models.

However, I think that the increasing number of women taking up top positions in management and leadership of schools and other educational institutions, as I have indicated on page 17, has compelled people to question the validity and relevance of the above theoretical context of educational leadership and management. Hillebrand as cited in Van der Westhuizen (1991) argues that since much research has been carried out for the past decades into professional equality for women in the labour market as well as related issues, a wide variety of research publications on women in educational management has appeared.

According to Shakeshaft (1989) literature on women in leading positions, including education, passed through six stages. In the first stage, literature documented the absence of women in top management posts. In the second phase women in leading positions were identified and studied to find out whether those female figures, in "masculine terms" had truly succeeded. Stage three involved investigations of women in schools with the objective of finding out why there were so few female educational leaders while the majority of teachers were women. In phase four women as career people in their own right were studied and the data documented from a female perspective. Stage five was based on the findings from phase four; it sought to modify the existing themes in order to accommodate also the particular needs and experiences of female educational leaders. Stages six tried to modify the theories further so that the career experiences of both women and men could be better understood with the aim of recording an all-inclusive view of human leadership experience.

In this study I want to gain an understanding of the life-world of women principals. I will therefore draw on the literature that concentrates on the experiences of women leaders. Therefore in the following sub-sections I am going to explore briefly what the literature says about the way women lead and manage with special reference to schools.

2.5.1 Female world

Van der Westhuizen (1991) lists a number of writers in the USA who have begun writing about "a female culture", "female world" etc. For example he refers t o Jessie Bernard (1981) who made the following statement: " …women and men do not only experience the world around them in totally different ways but that the actual experience of women apparently differs undeniably from the world which men experience daily" (Van der Westhuizen 1991:521).

Shakeshaft (1989:195) in her research on women in educational administration in the USA also talks of the existence of a female world in schools, which is reflected in the way the women work in school. In her research she came to the following conclusion:

> The research on male and female administrators and the voices of the women administrators from interviews conducted lead me to believes (sic) that both male and female administrators use a range of behaviours in their work, but the patterns of use are different. Women administrators more often are guided by an injunction to care, a responsibility to discern and alleviate the real and recognizable trouble of this world while the male administrators are informed by an injunction to respect the rights of others and thus to protect from interference the rights to life and self-fulfilment.

Rosener (1990:119) echoes this view as she writes of a second wave of women who are succeeding as managers by not adopting styles and habits normally employed by men but by "drawing on the skills and attitudes they developed from their shared experience as women".

How then is the female world reflected in the way women lead and manage the school?

2.5.1.1 Participative leadership

The participative style of management and leadership, according to Stewart (1991,) enjoyed a renaissance in the 1990s and derives from the work of Lewin, Tannenbaum and Schmidt among others. It is a philosophy underlying a wide range of human relations approaches that put emphasis on involvement. Dinkmeyer (1996) maintains that it is based on the concept that employees closest to the job have the necessary experience and knowledge to develop the best solution to job related problems.

Women leaders and managers are usually associated with this style of management. Rosener (1990:120), in conclusion of her research on female leaders, writes:

> In describing nearly every aspect of management, the women interviewees made reference to trying to make people feel part of the organization. They try to instil this group identity in a variety of ways, including encouraging others to have a say in almost every aspect of work, from setting performance goals to determining strategy. To facilitate inclusion, they create mechanisms that get people to participate and they use a conversational style that sends signals inviting people to get involved.

In the same vein, Shakeshaft (1989:197) found out from her research on women in education administration in the USA that:

> From speech patterns to decision-making styles, women exhibit a more democratic, participatory style that encourages inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness in schools. Women involve themselves more with staff and students, ask for and get higher participation, and maintain more closely knit organizations.

Jeanette Morris in Drake & Owen (1998:106) in her study on women principals in the Caribbean countries, has this to say:

> From the interviews it was evident that most of the women favoured a collaborative management style. Emphasis was placed on team-work, shared decision-making, consultation and delegation of responsibilities to teachers. Most felt that teachers needed to be brought into decision-making process so that they could make a greater contribution.

Van der Westhuizen (1991:523) adds his voice in support of this view: 'the decision-making style of women, their meeting procedures and the manner in which they

address their colleagues, are all indications that they prefer the democratic, participative manner of work".

Literature reveals that it is generally believed that a participatory style of management benefits the organizations because it can help to tap unused human resources by increasing employee involvement on the job and commitment to organizational goals as well as improving the quality of work (Musaazi 1982, Rosener 1990, Van der Westhuizen 1991, Bush 1995, Dinkmeyer 1996). Women leaders in Rosener's work confirmed that this style of management is effective. They maintained that making it easy for the people to express their ideas helps to ensure that decisions reflect as much information as possible. It also increases support for decisions reached and reduces the risk of unexpected oppositions. Involving and including people in decision making and planning gives investments longevity thereby reducing the risk of having one person handling a situation. That way "there are no orphans in the portfolio and a knowledgeable second opinion is always available" (Rosener1990: 122).

Dinkmeyer (1960) shares this view. He argues that as workers are included and shown respect, they become more involved in developing solutions and being responsible for their own behaviour. This style of management recognises that people are motivated by their own goals and by the feeling of belonging, hence it develops the thinking of "ownership" at all levels of the organization. Furthermore it fosters the attitude of "trust" and "respect" at all levels. All employees take full responsibility for their actions and the result of their own actions, whether positive or negative.

I do not question the effectiveness of this style of management. However, I do share the same view with those writers who maintain that managing it is not always easy. Everard & Morris (1996) point out that it is comparatively slow and it can bring with it a perceived risk of early confrontation. The women leaders in Rosener's work also agreed with this view. They mentioned amongst others the disadvantages of soliciting others' opinion as time consuming, it often requires giving up some control, it opens the door to criticism, it exposes personal and turf conflict and sometimes it can be interpreted as not leading to answers. Furthermore it cannot always be assumed that

everyone wants to participate and sometimes saying that you include others doesn't mean everyone necessarily feels included (Rosener 1990).

Though it is generally believed that a participatory style is effective in managing organizations, to me it does not mean that it is the only way or that it works in every situation. Also in view of the disadvantages mentioned above, I think leaders and managers need to make use of a variety of leadership styles. Maybe this is why one of the women in Rosener's work made this remark: "I prefer participation , but there are situations where time is short and I have to take the bull by the horns" (Hall 1990: 122).

2.5.1.2 Meaningful relationships with others

Literature on women leaders reveals that the focus on relationships and connections are central to all their actions. For example both Shakeshaft (1989) and Van der Westhuizen (1991) point out that women leaders spend more time with people, communicate more, care more about individual differences and are concerned more with teachers and marginal students. Hall (1996) points out when referring to women heads in her work that "being available to others when needed was something they valued". Therefore their interpersonal leadership style encouraged "closeness" and certain "intimacy" because it is based on th e "primacy of good relationship" (Hall 1996:107). Likewise women in Morris' work (in Drake & Owen 1998:107) also cite the concern for teachers' personal problems as necessary for a good relationship between the head and the staff.

It is therefore my conviction that women leaders are not applying this approach just because it comes naturally due to their nature and social background, but also because they believe that it is necessary for successful leading of organizations in general and schools in particular. Women in Hall (1996:10) valued it because:

> It kept them in touch with people and events and forestalled problems by enabling support at the right time. It fulfilled their view of themselves as heads who listened, were sensitive and related directly to individuals rather than

> through others. Keeping in touch enabled them to be available to deal with issues as they emerged rather than when they had developed into problems.

This is confirmed by other authors such as Shakeshaft (1989), Van der Westhuizen (1991) and Morris (1998). They point out that women principals succeed in maintaining a particularly high standard of morale among staff and students and parents show positive attitudes towards the schools. Women leaders consider friendly and cordial relations with staff as a way of creating a climate of trust and cooperation. Women principals in Hall's work admitted that they smile a lot in order 'to make people feel good" and generally, their body language in most situations, including disciplining children demonstrated their "preference for more affiliative behaviour, conveying warmth and expressiveness rather than status and dominance" (Hall 1996:104).

This concern for human relations as I have already pointed out on page 11, dominates contemporary leadership thinking. It is believed that people are motivated to work and to contribute towards achievement of the goals of the organization if they feel that they are valued, respected and their individual needs are considered.

2.5.1.3 Focus on teaching and learning

In her work on women principals in the USA Shakeshaft (1989) found that excellence in education is at the heart of female educational leadership. Women principals are instrumental in instructional learning and they show wide knowledge of various teaching methods. They see to it that they are continually informed about the progress of learners. The research referred to further indicates that women principals know their teachers very well as they supervise them directly and pay particular attention to the new teachers.

Hall (1996:115), when referring to women heads in her work, has this to say:

> Central to each head's role as a human resource manager is the goal of achieving the policy objectives and vision for pupils and pupil learning that is at the heart of her school's activity.

The same view is reflected in Morris' work (in Drake & Owen 1998) on women principals in the Caribbean. She refers to principals who encouraged those teachers who were not yet professionally qualified to obtain such training. One principal introduced what she called "clinical supervision" whereby she would visit classes to monitor the teachers' delivery of the curriculum. The research further quotes a principal who had introduced what she called a "professional day" whi ch was dedicated to staff development activities. One principal in the same research pointed out that in order to emphasise the importance of the professional aspect of teachers' work, she changed the traditional order of business at staff meeting, to tackle the professional matters first, and routine issues last. Through such actions of providing continual opportunities for individual and group development, the women head sought to influence the morale of teachers (Hall 1996).

All authors referred to in the above paragraphs maintained that, by focusing on excellence in education, women principals created schools with climates conducive to teaching and learning, ones that were orderly, safe and quiet as well as with high academic achievements (Shakeshaft 1989).

Of course one admires such attitudes and this is what one wants to be at the focus of all educational leaders especially the heads of schools. However the question remains whether this is true for all schools, which are led by women.

2.5.1.4 Motivation

Everard & Morris defines motivation as "getting results through people" or "getting the best out of people" (1996:20). I prefer the second definition because in an organization, including educational institution, the ultimate goal is to achieve the best. I believe this is the aspiration of every leader or manager, to get the best results from other people through other people.

Shakeshaft (1989) points out that studies on motivation have demonstrated that women in education are not only motivated differently than men, but they also motivate their subordinates in very different ways. Hall (1996) argues that

Shakeshaft's findings shifted the thinking on what motivates women school administrators. It showed that popularly used theories of motivation by Herzberg and Maslow failed to take into consideration the specificity of women experience. Motivation, like management and leadership theory, has been conceptualised and defined one-sidedly using a male lens and male experience.

Women heads studied by Hall (1996) indicated that they use their own behaviour and what motivated them to motivate others. They combined care and control as Hall puts it: "The care was manifest in actions that were supportive and nurturing, aiming at making someone feel good about what he or she was doing as well as securing his or her support, commitment and trust" (Hall 1996:123). They always find opportunities for praise of some or all of the other people's performance.

Other authors share the same view that women motivate by praising. For example Ann Wexler cited in Dinkmeyer writes: "One of the things women do instinctively is praise people. This is an important tool. Praise does not come naturally to the lips of men" (1996: 61). Rosener (1990:123) also writes about women leaders in her work who used praise to enhance the self-worth of others. They talked about "giving others credit and praise and sending small signals of recognition".

Apart from praise, studies on women leaders indicate that women also use their own behaviour to motivate others. Hall (1996) for instance mentioned that women in her work attach importance to modelling through their own behaviour, their expectations for teacher performance. Rosener found out the same from women leaders in her study. She refers to it as "energize others" whereby women leaders use their own enthusiasm to get others "excited" or "spread the enthusiasm to others" (Rosener 1990: 124).

However, motivation by enthusiasm can sometimes be misunderstood. This is confirmed by women in Rosener's (1990) study, who maintain that sometimes it is misinterpreted as "cheerleading". Motivation by modelling, I think, can also in some cases result in frustration and despair on the side of subordinates. Personal standards

set by the principal could be too high for others to reach and this may result in such people giving up trying to emulate the leader.

In my opinion, this way of motivating people is in line with other styles of leadership and management associated with women that I have already discussed, such as participative leadership and meaningful relationships with others. Literature has shown that such styles of management create an atmosphere conducive to working. As women in Rosener's work point out, people no longer "accept being dictated to but want to be treated as individuals with minds of their own" (1990:123). It is also believed that people are best motivated to work towards goals that they have been involved in setting and which they therefore feel committed to.

2.5.1.5 Women leaders and power

Power and politics are part of all organizations everywhere, as Hunt rightfully puts it by saying that "organizations are political systems in which power is the life blood" (1992:83). However sometimes power is considered in a negative way. According to Handy, "it has an overtone of feudalism" and therefore authority is used to denote power that is legitimate or "influential" (1990:116).

Though power is often equated with authority, I do think that they are not exactly the same. I agree with authors such as Musaazi (1982), Shakeshaft (1989) and Okumbe (1998) who argue that authority can be considered as part of power. Authority is a relationship between two individuals, one "superior" and the other "subordinate". The superior frames and transmits decisions and the subordinate accepts such decisions, and his or her conduct will be determined by those decisions. In other words, authority is the legitimate or positional power that is the power vested in a particular person or position, which is recognised by both the wielder of power and by those over whom power is wielded. In this sense authority is limited, in that it is merely one possible form of power.

But power is a general and comprehensive term. Hunt describes it as "the capacity to affect other people's behaviour with or without their consent" (1992:65). Musaazi

(1982:100) argues that it includes control that is "rigidly or starkly coercive" as well as control that is based on "non-threatening persuasion" and "suggestion". Giddens in Hall refers to it as "transformative capacity" (1996:137). It is evident from the above description of power that it has to do with influencing someone to behave in a particular way or to make certain decisions.

Literature shows that a number of authors distinguish between different forms of powers such as "coercive", "utility" or "reward" or "resource", "positional" or "legitimate" and "expert" power (Handy 1990, Covey 1992 and Okumbe 1998).

The question then is what type of power do women leaders in education prefer and how do they use it? Research on women leaders has shown that power means different things to men and women.

A number of studies from literature provide evidence that women use power to empower others. For example women in Rosener (1990) confirm that they willingly share power and information with their employees. They believe that sharing of power and information is the most effective strategy for securing the achievement of the goals of the organization. The women principals who were studied by Hall (1996:142) shared the same view as shown by the following:

> Their work with individuals was based on their belief in nurturing others' power by becoming a role model of how they wanted them to work with others and by providing the structures, policies and practices to support that way of working, as well as opportunities for continual development

Literature claims that women leaders in their use of power reject actions that they consider illegitimate, anti-people, self-serving rather than school-centred, unethical and any other actions associated with adversarial political and authoritarian political management and leadership style (Hall 1996). In my view they adopt this style because they are convinced that an authoritarian style that is usually associated with men is not the best and that imitating men does not automatically signify authority. In fact Shakeshaft quotes women leaders as saying they were more successful when they looked "less authoritarian", "less in charge" and "less threatening" (1989:205).

This sharing of power according to Shakeshaft (1989) is based on the notion that power is "not finite" but rather that it "expands" as it is shared. Van der Waldt & Du Toit echo this view as they argue that: "Successful leaders try to expand their power, they think about how they can influence other people's behaviour" (1997:199). Such leading style of empowering others through a collaborative and a participative approach has its disadvantages as I have already mentioned on page 21 of this document. Furthermore it may cause women to be evaluated as weak or ineffective. However, I do believe that if a woman embarks upon such a style of leadership and prepares her staff for this approach then it would work for her.

2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter I have first tried to clarify that leadership and management are closely related but different concepts especially in an educational context. Secondly I reviewed several prominent approaches to the study of leadership, the most persistent ones being trait theory, situational and style theories, leadership in cultural organizations and transformational leadership. I tried to point out their relevance to contemporary organizations and schools as well as their one-sidedness when it comes to women's experiences. Thirdly I explored how leadership in educational institutions differ from leadership in formal organizations since schools can be considered as communities. Educational leadership is not only confined to principals but it is shared among all the professionals in the institution. Finally I explored the styles of leadership and management that are normally associated with women such as participatory leadership, use of power to empower others, sound interpersonal relationships and search for excellence in education. These types of leadership and management are linked with effective school management.

As I have mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, my primary intention is to study or to understand how women principals behave as school leaders and the school leadership and management skills they use. Greenfield as cited in Cahill (1994:256) points out that leadership involves of personal values, individual choice; hence he

argues that "it should be understood as the will and imagination of individuals". That is because an individual can only act according to his or her interpretation of reality.

This implies that in my endeavour to understand the leadership experience of women principals, I have to work within a qualitative research paradigm that aims to capture the subjectivity of individual experience. I am convinced by Greenfield (Cahill 1994:255) that "qualitative research has the potential to reveal fundamental values and more "truth" about human conditions". Van der Mescht (1996) also quotes a number of writers who share the same view that phenomenological and qualitative-ethnographic approaches are suitable to investigate reality as constructed by people. In the next chapter I will elaborate on the line of the qualitative research employed and the justification of its appropriateness to this particular study.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The major focus of my study, as I indicated in chapter one, is on women principals' understanding of their experiences of managing and leading schools in the Ondangwa Educational Regions. In other words, I aim at gaining understanding of the principals' perceptions of their performance as educational managers and leaders through a female lens. The nature of my research goal therefore has implications for the methodological approach I will take. According to Taylor & Bogdan (1998) methodology in social sciences refers to how research is conducted and that the assumptions, interests, and purposes of the researcher shape which methodology s/he chooses. This view is echoed by Cohen & Manion as they write: "…the aim of methodology is to help us to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific inquiry, but the process itself" (1994:39).

In their endeavour to understand reality, researchers work from different beliefs about the nature of reality, the nature of knowledge and the relations between the knower and the would-be known. As a result, research methodologies are broadly divided into three major research paradigms. In the next section I am going to briefly discuss these paradigms and in which one my research falls.

3.2 Research paradigm

Patton (1990:37) describes a paradigm as:

> Worldview, a general perspective, a way of breaking down complexity of the real world of the world. As such paradigms are deeply embedded in the socialization of adherents and practitioners: paradigms tell them what is important, legitimate and reasonable. Paradigms are also normative, telling the practitioner what to do … But it is this aspect of paradigms that constitutes

> both strength and their weakness – their strength in that it makes it possible, their weakness in that the very reason for action is hidden in the unquestioned assumptions of the paradigm.

Bassey describes the research paradigm in simple words as "a network of coherent ideas about the nature of the world and of the functions of researchers which, adhered to by a group of researchers, conditions the patterns of their thinking and underpinning their research actions" (1995:12).

As I have already indicated above, research methodologies are broadly divided into three major paradigms. Various authors use different terms when referring to those beliefs about the nature of reality (Carr & Kemmis 1986, Patton 1990, Best & Kuhn 1993, Cantrell 1993, Creswell 1994, Cohen & Manion 1994, Taylor & Bogdan 1998. I will use the broad categories of the positivist paradigm, the interpretive paradigm and the critical paradigm.

3.2.1 Positivist paradigm

Positivism is also referred to as the traditional, experimental or empiricist approach (Creswell 1994). According to this view reality is out there, objective and singular, apart from the research, and the researcher is independent from what is being researched (Best & Kahn 1993, Creswell 1994, Blanche & Durrheim 1999), and so on.

3.2.1 Critical paradigm

According to this approach reality is multiple, constructed, holistic and is embedded in issues of equity and hegemony (Cantrell 1993). The critical paradigm is based on the belief or assumption that all social practices including research are value-bounded and ideological. The purpose of inquiry is emancipatory, therefore the role of the researcher is to make the participants aware of the injustices and inequities of the situation as well as to act as a catalyst for the participants to change their situation (Popkewitz 1984, Carr & Kemmis 1986, Cantrell 1993, Cannole 1993, Dison 1998). Cantrell (1993:83) summarises the purpose of critical research as to: "Emancipate

people through critique of ideologies that promote inequity and through change in personal understanding and action that lead to transformation of self-consciousness and social conditions".

3.2.2 The interpretive paradigm

This paradigm which is also called qualitative, constructivist, naturalistic approach or broadly as phenomenological inquiry (Patton 1990, Cohen & Manion1994, Creswell 1994, Taylor & Bogdan 1998), began as a counter-movement to the positivist tradition in the late 19th century. Erickson, as cited in Best & Kahn, prefers the term "interpretive" because it is more inclusive. I share the same view with the latter so I will mainly use the term interpretive in my discussions.

This paradigm has its origin in cultural anthropology and American sociology. According to the proponents of this paradigm reality is subjective and multiple as seen by the participants in a study, because to them reality exists only in the context of the mental framework. For the interpretive researcher "the only reality is that what is constructed by the individuals involved in the research situation" and this of course implies that "multiple realities exist in a given situation" (Creswell 1994:4). According to this paradigm objectivity is not possible, hence the researcher tries to minimize the distance between himself or herself and those being researched, and therefore, the results of the inquiry are always shaped by the interactions between the researcher and the researched. Erickson as cited in Best & Kahn maintains that: "a key feature of this family of approaches is that the researcher plays a central role in the education and interpretation of the behaviours observed" (Best & Kuhn 1993:184). The intention of this approach is to understand a particular social situation, event, role, group or interaction. It is largely an investigative process where the researcher gradually makes sense of a social phenomenon by contrasting, comparing, cataloguing and classifying the object of study. It entails immersion in the everyday life of the setting chosen for study, that is the researcher enters the world of the informant and through ongoing interaction, seeks the informants' perspective and meanings (Patton 1990, Best & Kuhn 1993, Cohen & Manion 1994, Creswell 1994, Taylor & Bogdan 1998).

Furthermore the interpretive researcher admits the value-laden nature of this type of study, that is, it cannot be value free, hence Creswell stated that: "…the investigator admits the value-laden nature of the study and actively reports his or her values, biases, as well the value nature of the information gathered from the field" (Creswell 1994:6). It is on this basis that even the language of the study is usually in the first person or personal.

The data collected by interpretive researchers are usually verbal – fieldwork notes, diaries, and transcripts and reports of conversations.

My research study is located in the interpretive paradigm. The objective of my research is to gain the understanding of how women principals experience and interpret educational management and leadership. In order to achieve this, I have to work in the paradigm that will enable me to capture the subjectivity of the individual woman's experience and meaning of educational management and leadership. A paradigm that pursues a relatively open–ended exploration of each woman's experience and see how her world as educational manager and leader is organised. It is therefore on the basis of the features of the interpretive paradigm as I discussed them in the preceding paragraphs and the nature of my research question that I decided to work within the interpretive research paradigm.

Literature identifies various methods for data collection, analysis and report writing associated with the interpretive research paradigm. Therefore in the next section I will talk about the method I employed in collecting and analysing my data.

3.3 Research method: Phenomenological approach

In this study I utilized the phenomenological research method. Cohen and Manion describe research method as "that range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and predictions" (Cohen & Manion 1994:38). Method, according to them, refers to the techniques and procedures used in the process of data-gathering.

There are four methods that are frequently found in human and social sciences: Ethnographies, grounded theory, case studies and phenomenological studies (Best & Kuhn 1993 and Creswell 1994). By the nature of my research goal, phenomenological approach is the appropriate method of collecting and analysing the data. Therefore, in the coming paragraphs I will discuss what is entailed in this approach and why I feel it is suitable for my research.

Phenomenology as a research approach, according to Valle & King as cited in Van der Mescht (1996), has its origin in the existentialist view of the world, which tries to understand the human condition "as it manifests itself in concrete, lived situations" (1996:40). In its broadest meaning as described by Cohen & Manion (1994:29):

> Phenomenology is a theoretical point of view that advocates the study of direct experience taken at face value; and one which sees behaviour as determined by the phenomena of experience rather than by external, objective and physically described reality.

Central to the phenomenological research approach, according to Taylor & Bogdan, is "understanding people from their own frame of reference and experiencing reality as they experience it" (1998:7). Mertens maintains that "it seeks the individual's perceptions and meaning of the phenomenon or experience" …hence the question is always "what is the participant's experience like?" (Mertens 1998:169) A researcher who works within the phenomenological approach, should bear in mind as Rist as cited in Taylor & Bogdan put it, that it is not just a data-gathering technique, but is "a way of approaching the empirical world" (1998:7).

The phenomenological approach as a research procedure, according to Creswell (1994), involves an extensive study of a small number of subjects over a prolonged period of time in order to develop patterns and relationship of meaning.

Taylor & Bogdan (1998) point out that different people do or say different things because they had different experiences and have learned different social meanings or because they found themselves in different situations. Therefore, how a person interprets something depends on the meanings available and how s/he sizes up the situation.

The implications for my own research are clear from the above discussions. The women principals in my research have had (and still have) different experiences in the context of their schools. Furthermore, I do agree with Van der Mescht that leadership is "a way of being rather than a way of doing" (1996:53). For me to be able to capture the subjective experience of each woman, each individual's perception and interpretation of educational management and leadership, I have to listen to the voice of each woman. I have to let "the problem to speak for itself".

As it is pointed out, in the interpretive paradigm, the researcher plays a primary role in the collection of the data. He or she interacts with the researched. Polanyi as cited in Van der Mescht refers to it as "indwelling". This, according to Creswell (1994), necessitates the identification of personal values, assumptions and possible biases of the researcher at the outset of the study.

Since I was aware of this problem, I was on alert all the time and tried to be as objective as possible. Gavron, cited in Bell, supports this: "but awareness of the problem plus constant self-control can help" (1993:95).

The test question for any academic discussion that claims to be based on research findings is whether the conclusions are justified by the research design. Therefore in the following section I am going to describe in detail how the research was conducted and the conceptual framework used to inform the analysis of the data collected.

3.4 The site of the study and the selection of the informants

3.4.1 Site of the study

My research was conceived as a small–scale interpretive study, involving only two women principals within public schools in the Ondangwa West Educational Region. One is a principal of a Junior Primary School, grades 1-4 and the other is principal of a Combined School, grades 1-10. The initial idea as indicated in my proposal was to take one principal from Ondangwa East Educational Region and one from Ondangwa West. I deviated from that because schools in Ondangwa East are far from my residential area. It would not have been easy for me to go there due to the time and money involved. The idea of choosing settings convenient to the researcher is supported by Patton 1990 and Taylor & Bogdan (1998). Patton for example mentions "what can be done within the constraints of time and resources" (1990:184) as a criterion for research design.

I was also not worried about the small number of the respondents, because this is typical of interpretive research paradigm. Patton (1990) and Lincoln & Guba, as cited in Cantrell, (1993) point out that interpretive researcher uses small samples or even single cases, selected "purposefully" to allow the research to focus in depth on issues important to the study.

3.4.2 Selection of the respondents

I arrived at the two respondents by going through the following steps. Since I did not know the principals, I consulted one of the senior inspectors in the region, who knew the principals fairly well. I requested him to shortlist five principals who met the criteria I have already specified on page 3. I sent a questionnaire to those five principals that were short- listed by the senior inspector with an accompanying letter explaining the aims of the questionnaire. Of the five questionnaires I sent out four were returned After going through all the questionnaires, I chose the two richest responses. This is in agreement with the assumptions of interpretive research

paradigm as supported by writers such as Patton 1990, Cantrell 1993 and Creswell 199). Patton (1990:169) for example points out that:

> The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposeful sampling.

It was then my belief that by using the phenomenological research method I would be able to focus on everyday experiences and events of the respondents, their perceptions and meanings attached to educational management and leadership. Therefore in the next section I am going to describe how the data were collected.

3.5 Data gathering tool

Generally the data collection procedures in interpretive research involve four basic types: observation, interviews, documents and visual images. Quite often multiple data collection procedures are used; however, due to time constraint, in my research only one type was employed. Before I go into the process of data collection, I will first talk about the rapport between the respondents and myself.

3.5.1 Relationship between the respondents and the researcher

Taylor & Bogdan (1998) point out that establishing rapport with the informants is the goal of every field worker. It gives a feeling of excitement and fulfilment. It can help people to open up about their feelings. They further argue that one of the requirements for developing a good rapport is to establish what the researcher has in common with the informants.

3.5.1.1 Commonalities between the researcher and the informants

The informants and I had several things in common. We had in common, not only gender, but also age, social and marital status, parent-hood, ethnic origin and our role as professional educators. This parallel between the principals' personal and

professional experiences and my own, was in my view, an important component of the rapport between us. This was necessary as a basis for the openness and trust around which the interviews were conducted. Best & Kahn (1993:253) support this as they maintain that:

> Ethnic origin seems to be important. Interviewers of the same ethnic background as their subjects seem to be more successful in establishing rapport. When there is an ethnic difference, a certain amount of suspicion and even resentment may be encountered. The same relationship seems to prevail when social status of the interviewer and respondent is different. Even the interviewer's clothing may have an inhibiting effect.

3.5.1.2 Ethical implications

I pointed out in chapter one that I was working as an Education Officer in the Ondangwa Educational Region. My position could be considered as threatening to the respondents for they might think that I wanted to evaluate their performance and hence they might tell me what they thought I wanted to hear. However, I thought that this possibility was remote because I went into the interviews without any set questions. They did not know what I was looking for because the design of the questions (being open-ended) led to an exploration of issues as they emerged from their answers.

3.5.2 Open–ended in-depth interviews as data collecting tool

Benney & Hughes, as cited in Taylor & Bogdan (1998), point out that interview is the "favored digging tool" of social science researchers. According to scholars, interviews within interpretive paradigm vary along a continuum, ranging from structured or focused interview to unstructured or open–ended or non-directive (Patton 1990, Cantrell 1993, Cohen & Manion 1994, Creswell 1994 and Taylor & Bogdan 1998). In structured interviews, the interviewer formulates questions in advance based upon a preconceived framework and definition of the problem. In unstructured or open–ended interview on the other hand, the interviewer converses with the respondent, who provides the content of the interview as well as the structure and the definition of the problem.

Cohen & Manion (1994: 273) summarize the features of a non- directive or unstructured interview as:

> The principal features of it (i.e. non-directive interview) are the minimal direction or control exhibited by the interviewer and the freedom the respondent has to express her (sic) subjective feelings as fully and as spontaneously as she chooses or is able.

The type of interview one chooses, according to Bell (1993) is determined by the nature of the topic and what exactly one wants to find out or to know. Patton (1990) also bases interview decisions on the particular situation, the needs of the interviewee and the personal style of the researcher.

The goal of my research is to gain understanding of how women principals experience educational leadership and management and how they interpret it. I believed it is only through listening to their stories, their experiences and the meanings they attach to them, that I would be able to gain the understanding of the whole issue of educational leadership and management through a female lens. For this reason I decided to employ open-ended, in-depth, face-to-face and one-on-one interviews. I fully agree with Guba & Lincoln as cited in Cantrell that the unstructured interview best supports the purposes of interpretive research and that the open-ended questions are suitable when the research problem is about 'the description of the phenomena, the exploration of a process, or the individual's formulation of an issue" (Cantrell 1993:96). Taylor & Bogdan share this view as they argue that: 'The hallmark of in-depth interview is learning how people construct their realities- how they view, define, and experience the world" (1998:101). Similarly, Patton argues that the open-ended interview 'is a chance of a short period of time to try to get inside another person's world" (1990:357). It was on the basis of the above discussions that I went into the interviews without structured questions.

For me to be able to capture the entire story of each respondent in her own words, I decided to use a tape-recorder. Of course I had first confirmed with each respondent if she did not mind the interview being recorded and if she was at ease with the tape-recorder. Using the tape-recorder also enabled me to listen attentively to the

interviewees and to have eye contact with them. I only jotted down notes on important issues that helped me to formulate follow up questions. In order to make sure that the respondents expressed themselves freely and easily, I decided to conduct the interview in Oshindonga, their mother tongue. I felt that conducting the interview in the language in which they were not fluent (i.e. English), would prevent them from communicating their feelings, thoughts and perceptions clearly. In fact both respondents pointed out that they preferred talking in their mother tongue, even before I asked them. Of course I was fully aware of the fact that translation of the data in English had a risk of meaning being missed or misinterpreted; however, I convinced myself that that was negligible when compared to not getting to the core of the experiences of the informants because of the language barrier.

3.6 Data analysis

As with the data collection, the procedures for analysis are unique and specific to interpretive research. Bogdan & Biklen in Cantrell point out that: "Analysis involves working with data, organizing it, breaking it down, synthesizing it, searching for patterns, discovering what is to be learned and deciding what you tell others" Cantrell (1993: 97). Other writers such as Patton 1990, Bassey 1993, Cohen & Manion 1994, Creswell 1994, Taylor & Bogdan 1998) share the same view.

Patton further points out that there are no set rules for analysing data, there are only guidelines: "there are no absolute rules except to do the very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveals given the purpose of the study…" (1990:37 2).

With no rules of thumb available, I decided to employ the widely used method of development of coding through content analysis. I identified categories or themes based upon patterns and ideas that emerged from the data. This is what Patton (1990) calls "inductive analysis" because patterns, themes and categories of analysis emerged out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis. The process of coding and content analysis I used in analysing the data was

primarily based on the steps and guidelines suggested by Hycner as cited in Cohen & Manion (1994:292-296).

In the first place I listened to the tape-recorder several times and transcribed the taped interviews verbatim. I read through the transcriptions several times in order to provide what Cohen & Manion (1994) call "a context for the emergence of specific patterns of meaning and themes later on". I took the more interesting transcript and I broke up its content into naturally occurring units, each conveying a particular meaning. I treated all the data with equal value and suspended as much as possible my own meaning and interpretations and identified the meanings from the data in their pure form. I then organised those units into meaningful clusters. At that point I used colour codes for each cluster, which I then used on the transcripts. I also included codes for exceptional cases because as Taylor & Bogdan (1998) point out, they can help refine the interpretations. After the data had been grouped into meaningful clusters, I went through them again and eliminated irrelevant, repetitive and overlapping information. Finally, I reduced the data by grouping together clusters that were related into themes and I decided on descriptive headings for those themes.

The themes that emerged from my data will be discussed in the next chapter. Under the themes that emerged, I summarised the content of each interview that I sent back to the informants for their comments. Cohen & Manion 1994, Creswell 1994 and Taylor & Bogdan 1998 call this process member checking in order to refine their interpretations and to establish credibility of the study. Those comments were incorporated into the initial data.

3.7 Ethical considerations

Cavan as cited in Cohen & Manion (1994:359) describes ethics as:

> A matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others. Being ethical limits the choices we can make in the pursuit of truth. Ethics say that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better, even if, in the extreme case, the respect of human nature leaves one ignorant of human nature.

This study was conducted with the permission of the Regional Education Director. Informed consent was obtained from the informants after I had explained the aim of the study to them. Interviews were tape-recorded with each individual's permission and written interpretations were made available to them. It is for these ethical reasons that throughout my report I used pseudonyms for the principals and their schools. For the sake of confidentiality I assured my informants that only my supervisor and I would have access to the data.

3.8 Limitations of the research methodology

As I pointed out in chapter one, the nature of my work brought me into contact with schools. I had some pre-conceptions of how some schools principals lead their schools. There was a possibility that I might have been biased either in collecting the data or in interpreting them.

By nature interviews are subject to some degree of fabrications, deceptions, exaggerations and distortions. Douglas cited in Taylor & Bogdan maintains that people may hide important facts about themselves or "lie a bit", "cheat a bit". Taylor & Bogdan further point out that generally people are prone to exaggerating their successes and downplaying their failures (1998:109).

Another limitation of the interviews lies in the fact that people say and do different things in different situations. Since the interview is a particular kind of situation, one cannot assume that what a person says during an interview is what a person believes or will do or say in another situation (Taylor& Bogdan 1998:91).

My interviewing and data analysing skills might also have had an effect on the type of data collected and how they were interpreted.

As I have already pointed out in section 3.4, because of the language problem, interviews were conducted in the mother tongue of the informants. There is a

possibility that in translating them into English I might have misinterpreted some of the information.

3.9 Validity and generalisability of the study

I have provided a detailed account of the focus of the study, my role as a researcher as well as my constant precaution against personal bias, the respondents' position and the basis of selection and the context in which the data were collected. Data collection and analysis strategies have also been outlined in details, including the checking of the interpreted data by the informants. All these gave a clear picture of the methods used in this study.

As far as generalisability is concerned, it was never my intention to generalise the findings of my study. The intent of interpretive research is not to generalize findings, but to form a unique interpretation of events. Therefore when it comes to validity, generalisability, reliability and objectivity of my research, I borrow from Cantrell (1993) and advise the reader to wear the appropriate goggles.

3.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the interpretive approach as the research paradigm I chose for this study. I have also outlined the research method and tools for data collection and analysis employed in this work. I have further discussed my relationship with the informants, the site of the research as well as the selection of the informants. Finally I have highlighted the ethical issues I considered in carrying out the research, limitations of the methodology used as well as its implications on the issues of validity and generalisability of the findings of the study.

Pieces of collected raw data from the interviews will mean nothing to the researcher or the reader, no matter how interesting they are, unless they are placed into meaningful categories or themes. Therefore in the following chapter I will outline the findings of the study in the form of themes as they emerged from the data analysis

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

In chapter three, especially in section 3.4, I described how the raw data from the interviews were analysed and broken down into categories or themes. In this chapter I present the seven themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Since this is an interpretive study, thick description and narrative will be used as a way of communicating a holistic picture of how these principals experience educational management and leadership. The voices of the respondents will be eminent throughout the whole chapter. Patton maintains that description and quotation are important ingredients of qualitative inquiry. According to him thick descriptions and direct quotations "allow the reader to enter into the situation and thoughts of the people represented in the report" (Patton 1990:430). He further argues that thick description makes interpretation possible. Creswell (1994) echoes the same view; he believes that they (description and quotations) provide a lens through which the reader can view the informant's world.

The names of the principals and their schools used in the next sections are all pseudonyms. Mrs Kapepe has been a principal for Eposhe Combined School, grades one to ten, since 1982. Mrs Ndali the founder of Ondjiva Junior Primary School, grades one to four, has been the principal since its establishment in 1992.

4.2 The themes

4.2.1 Road to principalship

Neither of the respondents applied for the position. Mrs Kapepe was elected in a joint meeting between the then school council and the staff members, which was initiated by the inspector. Due to the political situation in the country at that time, the former principal left and the school was without a principal for eight months. In the case of Mrs Ndali she was just called in one morning by her former principal and was told that she had to establish a new Junior Primary School in the vicinity of her former school.

Mrs Kapepe was hesitant in taking up the post because she felt she was too young and inexperienced.

> I tried to give reasons that I was very young, by then I was only twenty-three years old. There were other teachers who were much older than me, with more years of teaching experience. I had only three years teaching experience.

Though she had some misgivings, she decided to take up the positions out of concern for the school: "The school could not continue in that state of not having anyone to take the lead".

She took the courage from women principals she knew.

> When I was in secondary school, both my principal and deputy principal were women, Finnish missionaries. At a nearby girls school the principal was also a Namibian woman. Those women convinced me that even women can become principals of schools not only men. I said to myself, if those women could lead the schools why can't I do so.

Mrs Ndali accepted the offer without hesitation for three reasons:

> I was happy because I wanted to see how it feels to be in a leadership position, because you know, we have always been led by men. I also like working with

> small children. Uh! Going to start with grade one, I was so excited. Teaching a child is what gives me joy. Therefore I felt that if teaching is at the centre of my heart, then I could not see the reason why I could not lead others in order to teach the children together.

Being in leadership positions or being in charge was not something new to both. Mrs Ndali had these experiences:

> Furthermore, this was not my first time to be in leading positions. When I was at the college I was elected as a head-girl. I was also once a chair-person for the SCM branch at the same college. Leadership was not new to me. I was used to being in front of people and leading them.

Mrs Kapepe also pointed out that she was used to taking care of her siblings and be in charge of the household at a very young age.

> I was the second born and the eldest girl. My mother was sick now and then. Whenever she was in hospital, I was always in charge of the house. I took care of my sisters and brothers and the whole house -hold chores. I also got married when I was very young, just a year after I left the college. By the time I became the principal I was already married. All these might have made me so tough that I was not afraid of taking up challenging tasks later in my life, like that of becoming a principal at that tender age.

They could not think of any woman or man leader that they could really refer to as a role model. Mrs Kapepe remembered a male principal of the school where she first taught as having some impressive leading and management skills, but she never thought of imitating him in her own leadership. Mrs Ndali made it clear that she had never known a leader that she admired. "I do not remember any leader, be it a woman or man whom I could have imitated in my work as a leader".

Mrs Ndali was specifically pleased with the idea that she was to start her own school. She felt it was advantageous because:

> When you are starting from afresh, you start with your own ideas. When you are taking over from someone else you first have to be familiar with how the things were done by your predecessor. You cannot just start right away with your own style of doing things. […]. I was really fortunate to start with a new school.

On the other hand she admitted that starting from scratch was not that easy.

> The main disadvantage was the lack of physical facilities. Sometimes I even had to use my own money. I was not complaining, because I really wanted to show people that I could do it, that even a woman could start something that could benefit the community. By nature, I do not easily give up on anything; I would fight until I get what I want.

4.2.2 Ways of managing and leading schools

4.2.2.1 Consultations with others

Both informants made it categorically clear that they divide responsibilities amongst their staff, not only with the management team members, but also with ordinary teachers.

> If I confine everything to myself, I shall not succeed. I will end up being frustrated and having confrontations with others. I should also consider that I am only in this position today, but tomorrow there will be someone else who may come from my own staff. I should let them also gain experience of being in charge and responsible, so that even if I am not there, they can go on with work. (Mrs Ndali)

Whenever something new is to be introduced in the school, both respondents pointed out that they consult with the staff. It is discussed and only when it is thoroughly discussed, a decision will be taken. They also made it clear that any staff member was free to come up with suggestions that could be discussed by the whole staff.

> I want people to have a say in matters pertaining to the school. It will make it easy for me to work with them. People always want to be valued. Right from the beginning I made it clear to them that I am open. Anything they want to talk about, they are free and welcome to do so. I am just a person like others. I do not know everything and I make mistakes. By consulting with others they

> may come up with other aspects I did not think of or possible disadvantages I was not aware of. (Mrs Kapepe).

In the same vein Mrs Ndali had this to say:

> Being a principal does not mean that I know everything. A principal-ship is a learning process. I learn from teachers, learners, parents, and so on. I always invite ideas and suggestions from others. I used to tell them that the school is not mine and it is not theirs. It is for the community. Whatever we do should be in the best interest of the teaching and well being of the learners.

In favour of collective decision-making the respondents argued that it is only if people are involved in the process of decision-making that they will support the decisions taken.

> So the decision is not mine, I do not make decisions. We decide together on what we believe is in the best interest of the school. Such decision will be referred to as our decision, not the decision of the principal (Mrs Ndali).

Mrs Kapepe echoed this view:

> No, autocratic decision-making is not the right way to work with people. I am also a human being. If you make a wrong decision, nobody will tell you or if you land into trouble because of a decision you made alone, nobody will support you.

4.2.2.2 Relationship with people

They both strive for good rapport with the people, be it the learners, the teachers or the parent community. Both confirmed that they have good relationships, especially with the teachers.

> …we have good working relationships. We do not normally experience serious conflicts or confrontations. […] I do not encounter any problems with them.

They attributed the good relationships between them and the staff to the fact that they were open, honest and did not isolate themselves as principals. For example they both mentioned that during their free time, they would sit together with colleagues, chat, cracking jokes and so on.

> Even when we are through with our school work, sometimes you will find us still at school, chatting about general things and so on. I do not isolate myself. I told the teachers that the word principal is not there to divide us. What is important is only work. I made it clear to them that even if one makes a mistake then I speak to him or her, it does not mean the end of friendship. It is just work. (Mrs Kapepe)

Mrs Ndali added another factor that contributes to good relationship with the teachers.

> I try to be close to them (teachers) and not isolate myself as a principal or as someone not to mess with. I also take interest in their personal matters. If they have a problem, for example if one is hospitalised or has a family member who is hospitalised, I always ask about their conditions and also visit them either at home or in hospital.

She pointed out that she maintained the same attitude when it came to the learners.

> You know, HIV/AIDS endemic has now become a serious problem and it affects our school. Now and then one of our learners loses a parent or a close relative due to this disease. In such a case, we would call in the learner, and try to explain and to make him or her understand what death is, and that his or her life continues. Though they are still young, they do understand. That is why these days they do keep on coming to school during the time of mourning, and only stay away on the day of the funeral.

Showing respect for others was another factor identified by the principals that help to strengthen the relationships with others. Mrs Ndali confessed that she always apologized even to the learners if she did something wrong:

> Even if for one reason or another I could not come to school or to my class on time, I always say I am sorry I am late. It is only when your respect people that they will also respect you.

They both indicated for instance that after class visits, they would always talk to the teacher concerned in private. Even if there were some weaknesses observed during the class visits, these were discussed in a good atmosphere. Mrs Ndali put it this way:

> That is why even when there are weaknesses, I point them out in a diplomatic way. I do not want any teacher to have a feeling that he or she is good for nothing, or nothing he or she does is appreciated. I do not label people as failures or incapable of doing anything good. Every person has a good side. S/he only needs encouragement.

> For example last week I experienced something that really made me happy. I had a group of learners who had reading problems. I called them out to sit in front of the class. I wrote a passage on the chalkboard and I instructed them to read it silently (individually). After sometime I asked them questions. Uh! It was amazing! They were all able to answer the questions. I praised them, they were happy. They were feeling good. The following day, when I came in the class and I wanted one learner to read loud to the whole class from the book, almost all of those learners who could not read in the past, had their hands high up, ready to read. Is that not wonderful?

Both informants argued that such good relationships have become a culture of their respective schools. Mrs Kapepe put it this way.

> This kind of relationship has become the culture of the school that those teachers who had joined us at later stages found it difficult to follow what they saw here.

They both attributed the punctuality of the learners of the schools to the way they deal with those who come late.

> I talk to them (learners) to find out the reasons for their coming late. I remind them of the importance of coming to school on time. If you talk to them in good spirit and not threaten them, they will always try their best level to be on time in future. (Mrs Kapepe)

In support of talking to the learners in a friendly way instead of being harsh to them Mrs Ndali had this to add:

> For those who come late I would call them in front of the other learners at the assembly and I ask fellow learners to say what they think of those who came late. They will point out all things they have missed by coming late. It is only after that, that I would then emphasize to them the importance of coming to school on time. It works; late coming is not really a problem at our school. Beating or being harsh to the learners will only cause them to be confused and feel insecure.

Both respondents maintained that the good relationship with their staff encouraged the teachers to be free and open with them. Mrs Kapepe said:

> Even if I do something that they feel is not quite correct or they hear some complaints about something I have done, they freely come to me and we discuss it.

When referring to the cooperation of her staff in taking up responsibilities Mrs Ndali had this to say:

> Our relationship is very good. Teachers are very cooperative. Even if I need assistance in administrative work, for example, completing forms or whatever task, and I ask one to do it, she would readily accept it.

4.2.2.3 Being exemplary

Both principals tried to do things themselves they way the would like others to do them. For example they were always punctual. In fact they made it a point that they were the first ones to arrive at school, maybe about 30 minutes before others arrived Mrs Ndali also pointed out that she always went to her class promptly after morning assembly or after breaks.

> I do not hesitate when it comes to work. Sometimes at the beginning of the day if the teachers start talking about what happened in the village the previous day, they will all immediately go to their respective classrooms when they hear my voice from my classroom.

4.2.3 Concern for quality teaching and learning

Teaching and learning was the central focus for Mrs Ndali, especially of mathematics, which was her major subject. Therefore, when she was told that she was going to establish a Lower Primary school, she was very happy.

> I felt that that was a golden opportunity for me to shape those young minds right from the beginning. I want them to master Mathematics.

Both principals strived for quality educational outcomes.

> We aim at raising the standard or quality of education. It is our vision. We aspire to teach not just for the sake of finishing the syllabi, but to achieve quality outcomes. We want our products, (the learners) when they go to senior secondary schools, to be confident and successful because they had strong foundation. (Mrs Kapepe)

Mrs Ndali shared the same concern.

> Yes, definitely! I want pupils to learn. To learn so that each one can reach up there, where she or he aims at. Therefore what is at the centre of my heart is

> for each learner who is in front of me to reach wherever he or she wanted to reach in life. Thus why the motto of our school is "knowledge is power".

In her work Mrs Ndali paid special attention to the learners with learning problems. This was revealed in the example quoted on page 48 about learners with reading problems. She continually reminded her colleagues to follow suit in giving special attention to the weak learners.

It was due to her concern for learners to gain knowledge that during the previous holiday she organised extra tutorial classes for her grade four learners in Mathematics and English. Those tutorial classes were conducted by an American Peace Corps volunteer, who was accommodated in the principal's house. She was teaching Mathematics and Science at a neighbouring Junior Secondary School.

They both tried to achieve quality teaching and learning through the following:

4.2.3.1 Motivation

Mrs Ndali motivated her staff to work hard through praising.

> Oh! It is (compliments) needed. Everyone likes to be praised. Every person is just like a child. If you say, thank you, here you did well, he or she will even try harder to achieve even better. They need to be complimented so that they can do better in future.

Mrs Kapepe on the other hand used rewards in her effort to motivate both learners and teachers. They had a system at school of motivating learners by giving gifts to the learners with outstanding performances. The teachers in whose subjects the learners performed well are awarded with certificates of appreciation.

They both continually reminded themselves, the staff and the learners about their vision and mission.

> I always remind the teachers of our main aim of coming to school and going to classes. Likewise when teachers go for their respective lessons they emphasize this to the learners as well as urging them to take active role in their own learning. The teachers remind the learners that it is only through hard work

> that they can reach their goals. We work as a team, the management, teachers as well as learners towards achieving our mission. (Mrs Kapepe)

4.2.3.2 Class visits

Both principals pointed out clearly that class visits were very important because these enabled them to know what was going on when it came to actual teaching. Mrs Ndali had this to say:

> Class visits are very important. Not only because they are part of my responsibility as a principal, but also for me to be aware of what is going on in other teachers classes. They help me to see if they are teaching according to the syllabi, if learners are actively involved in their own learning, if the work of the learners is checked regularly, if teachers have progressed in the scheme of work and very important, to pick up aspects where the teachers may need assistance.

Mrs Kapepe always knew which topic every teacher was busy with because every morning she looked at the daily preparation book of every teacher before the classes commenced. She checked the daily preparation and carried out class visits because not all teachers were equally motivated. Such teachers would only perform if someone would be behind them.

Both informants found it essential to give the feedback or rather to discuss the lesson with the teacher concerned, after each class visit. These discussions were always done when the classes are over. These discussions put emphasis on the aspects where the teachers need to improve in their teaching or in their attitudes.

4.2.3.3 Teachers' professional development

Both principals were concerned with professional development of their staff. They both encouraged the teachers to enrol in upgrading courses.

> As principal I always give them proper information about available courses and about institutions that are recognised and those that are not recognised by the government. I also share with them information from principals' meetings and in circulars of the ministry. For example I informed unqualified and

> under-qualified members in the staff about a grace period that was given to them to get necessary qualifications. I encouraged them to finish their studies before the given time lapses. I even volunteered to help them with assignments, should they so wish (Mrs Kapepe).

They also implemented school based professional development activities. Mrs Ndali for example mentioned that, when a teacher attended a workshop outside the school, s/he would give feedback on h er/his return. Also after lesson observations if she noticed a weakness that was common among the colleagues, they would address this issue in a staff meeting, and together they would share ideas on how to improve on that particular aspect. She in particular referred to implementing a learner-centred approach, which was new to many teachers, because it was just introduced after independence, in 1991. Mrs Kapepe mentioned the problem in administering the new continuous assessment system.

In the same vein, Mrs Kapepe organised English tutorial classes for her staff. Those classes took place every Wednesday after school and lasted for one hour. They were conducted by a BES PROJECT phase 2 volunteer, who was accommodated in the house of the principal.

4.2.4. Source of support

Both respondents cited the support of parents especially when it came to curbing and controlling late-coming among the learners. Mrs Ndali also appreciated the financial support the parents rendered to the school, in spite of their low income. Both principals attributed such support and cooperation of the parent community to the parents' satisfaction with the quality of work of the schools, such that even the attendance at the parents' meetings was always good.

> In fact they (the parents) admit that the quality of teaching at our school is very good. They say that their children are very young and they are still in lower grades, but they are able to do things that even those in higher grades at neighbouring schools are unable to do. (Mrs Ndali)

Mrs Kapepe also mentioned members of the parent community who would come to her and commend her for the good job she was doing and encouraged her to continue doing so.

They both maintained that the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture was also supportive, through its structures such as the regional office and the inspector's office. Mrs Kapepe for example pointed out that whenever she met with the regional director and the circuit inspector, they always encouraged her to continue with her work. Both principals also admitted that the workshops or training programmes organised for principals had been very useful for their own professional development. Mrs Ndali in particular also praised the principals' meetings at the circuit office:

> We used to have very informative principals' meetings at the end of every month at the circuit level. Quite often the inspector invites experts in different fields to address us and those presentations are quite useful.

To Mrs Kapepe such monthly circuit meetings were also a source of encouragement when she met fellow women principals at those meetings.

> In the principals' meetings I meet with many fellow women principals. It gives me courage to go on, because I am not alone. There are other women in the same boat.

Both principals had very understanding and supportive husbands. Mrs Ndali for example appreciated good ideas and suggestions she usually got from her husband as well as his assistance with computer work.

4.2.5 Coping with professional life and family life.

To Mrs Kapepe this was not a problem. She divided her time accordingly in order to do her private work without cutting short on the time she had to be at school.

> I cannot cut short on the time I have to be at school. I only adjust my working time at home either by waking up earlier or going to bed late, depending on the season of the year. If it is not a season for working in "mahangu" field, then I need only one hour to do this and that, like feeding pigs, chickens, preparing lunch boxes for the children and so on.

Her children were used to her routine. Her husband was not at home full time as he was working in a town far away from home. To make things easy for both of them he normally took his leave in December when she was also at home. However, even whenever he was around during the school term, he was understanding and supportive.

Mrs Ndali maintained that her professional work influenced her private life and she was not happy about it.

> You know at school you are under time pressure. There is much to be done within a short time, therefore there is always a rush-rush. When I am at home, I would expect everything to be finished at one go. I do feel that sometimes I put too much pressure on my family, especially the children.

She also lamented that coming back from school to continue with household chores was just too much. However she admitted that things became better when her children went to the hostel. She further indicated that she would like to get more involved with the community but the time was just not there.

4.2.6 Gender issues

Both women worked very hard as principals because they wanted to prove that gender cannot prevent them from leading and managing schools effectively. For example Mrs Ndali when she accepted the position of principal, did not only want to have a taste of leadership as a woman but:

> I wanted to show people that I could do it, that even a woman could start something that could benefit the community

Both Principals made it clear that they did not encounter problems in their work because they were women. Problems they had come across were just the problem any principal could face, irrespective of their sex.

When talking about the good relationship between them and the staff, they mentioned absence of men or presence of few men in their staff.

> Unfortunately all of us are women there are no men colleagues. But the relationship, oh! It is very good. (Mrs Ndali)

Mrs Kapepe also made reference to this issue:

> because…most of them are women. Men are very few and most of them were my former students.

Mrs Ndali expressed concern that their fellow women principals' voices were rarely heard in the principals' meetings. They were not free to express themselves. She suggested that principals meet in clusters; maybe in such small groups women would open up and raise their points or problems. She further argued that discrimination on gender basis was still prevalent.

> What disappoints me in those meetings (principals' meetings) is the gender biases when it comes to elections of people to serve on committees. If let's say five people are needed, then the first four to be nominated will all be men, and a woman will be number five. A woman is just added as a token, that there is also a woman. The disease of gender inequality is far from being cured. We still have a long way to go.

However she believed that women are suitable for the job of principal-ship.

> At home we (women) always put our things in proper order. Because of this nature, even at school we would like things to be in order. I really feel that for a woman to lead a school is appropriate because she will only continue with what she has started at home. If a woman can run a house why can't she run a school?

Mrs Kapepe cited an example of a remark that was made by her circuit inspector about her leadership and her school:

> I remember one day he (the inspector) made a remark: "Look, you male principals, some women principals have schools that are far better than yours!"

She was pleased with the statement:

> It made me happy, because it shows that I am up to date in my work. This shows that women are also capable of leading schools even better than some men.

She was also asked to share her strategies of running the school with fellow principals.

She further encouraged other women either those who are already in the position of principal or those who aspire for the position.

> I would like to call upon fellow women principals to lead schools properly and not to harbour any inferior feelings. Let them have the attitude that what a man can do they can also do it. I want to remind them of the saying in English that goes: Behind every successful man, there is a woman. If women can help men to succeed, for sure they themselves can be successful too, even in leading and managing schools.

4.2.7 Constraints

Mrs Kapepe was unhappy with the parents' lack of interest in the academic performance of the children. She said they did not see any need for or importance of coming to school to see how their children were doing academically.

Mrs Ndali also cited lack of cooperation between the school and some few parents as a problem. Over-crowded classrooms were also a constraint:

> Over-crowded classrooms hamper our work. Even the teacher learner ratio of 1:35 that is now the policy of the ministry, is still too high for lower primary classes. These learners need continuous individual attention from the teacher. We could not reach each child the way we would like to.

She further mentioned shortage of physical facilities such as buildings as a problem. For example she wanted to extend the curriculum at the school, to have a complete primary phase, but that was hampered by the lack of resources. Also there were practical subjects included in the curriculum, like Craft and Technology, but there were no materials/equipment for teaching them.

4.3 Conclusion

As a researcher, I have tried throughout this chapter to allow the ideas and the stories of the informants to flow as clearly as possible.

These findings are from the data collected from two different women principals but I decided to integrate them in my presentation. The problem with presenting the data in this way, instead of two separate cases, is that it could be failing to do justice to either, since what they have in common appears to take precedence over how they differ. In other words, it may give the impression that they are identical. Far from it. That is why I presented the findings in a way that demonstrates commonalities between them, with differences clearly noted, where they occurred. I have also tried to keep a balance of quotations from each respondent, of course depending on the richness of each respondent's answers.

The descriptive data as I have presented them in this chapter do not speak for themselves, no matter how interesting they are. The messages and meanings stay hidden and need careful teasing out. Therefore in the next chapter, I am going to discuss the findings and try to understand and give meaning to the experiences of women as they have described them in their own words in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

In chapter three I have outlined how I used the open-ended interview method to gather information on ho w women principals experience and interpret educational leaderships and management. In chapter four I presented the narrative description of women's experiences of educational leadership and management, mainly in their own words. In this chapter I am going to discuss those findings, trying to interpret the experiences and give meaning to them.

Patton (1990:423) argues that interpretation goes beyond the descriptive data:

> Interpretation means attaching significance to what was found, offering explanations, drawing conclusions, making inferences, building linkages, attaching meanings, imposing order, and dealing with rival explanations, disconfirming cases, and data irregularities as part of testing viability of an interpretation.

In my discussions I shall compare my findings with what other researchers have already found out on how women experience educational leadership and management, as it is revealed in literature. Taylor & Bogdan (1998:146) point out that: "Other studies often provide fruitful concepts and propositions that will help interpret your data". However in an attempt to interpret my findings in light of the literature, I shall be cautious and not try to fit them into the literature. Taylor & Bogdan quoted above warn against this:

> You should be careful not to force your data into someone else's framework. If concepts fit your data, do not be afraid to borrow them. If they do not, forget about them.

In the following sections I shall discuss my main findings based on the themes I described in the previous chapter.

5.2 Routes to principalship

The policy in Namibia before independence was that a person should have at least five years teaching experience on top of the required qualification before he or she could be promoted to a position of school principal. Though not a prerequisite, experience as a deputy principal, head of department or senior teacher was considered as advantageous to a person considering taking up the position of a school principal. Management and leadership training programmes were only introduced after independence in 1990, and they were offered after the person had already been in the position.

Neither of the women in my study applied for the position of principalship; they were only appointed. Mrs Kapepe for example was elected in a joint meeting between the staff members and the members of the then school council, now school board. Mrs Ndali on the other hand was only told that she had to go and establish a new school.

What I find interesting here is the fact that these women did not apply for the position of school principal but they were selected from other teachers. People appeared to have seen in them the potential for the kind of leadership the school needed. That is particularly true in the case of Mrs Kapepe who was only twenty-three years old by then and had only three years teaching experience. Does this then take us back to the "trait" theory? One wonders what was in them that convinced those who chose them that that were the right people for the job.

To me this is in contrast to the "trait theory" because originally the "trait" thinking considers the ideal leader as a man, that is why it is sometimes referred to as "great man" theory. This view is supported by Ngcobo as cited in Van der Mescht when she points out that the ideal leader in South Africa was "the white male" (1993:9).

On the other hand I also wonder why Mrs Ndali, with her long experience as a teacher then as an HOD, did not seek promotion before that. She was even eager to take up

the position when she was approached. I think this could be attributed to what is called intrinsic barriers that prevent women from seeking promotions. Greyvenstein cited in Van der Westhuizen (1991:548) after studying research work carried out on women in management positions, including education, from different parts of the world came to this conclusion:

> Women still therefore wait to be chosen, discovered, invited or persuaded to accept a promotion position. This is referred to as the Cinderella Syndrome, whereby women feel unworthy for leadership positions unless their competency is discovered by someone else.

On the other hand it can be argued that maybe she wanted to wait until she felt ready for the position. Studies on other women principals indicate that women usually postpone taking up leadership positions until such a time when they are ready for it. For example when referring to women heads in her study, Hall (1996) concluded that the factor holding them back from earlier applications was not anticipated organizational resistance but their own assessment of whether they were ready, willing and able to do the job. They waited until they were ready for the challenging job. Morris (1998) in her study on women principals in the Caribbean also comes to the same conclusion. Some women in her study, for example, waited until they had taken postgraduate courses in administration at the University before they sought promotions.

The situation of the women principals in my study was totally different. In my opinion they were barely equipped to take up the massive challenge of the principalship, especially Mrs Kapepe. What then motivated and gave them courage and confidence to accept the positions of principal?

5.2.1 Love for teaching

Mrs Ndali clearly pointed out that she was confident that she would succeed as a principal because of her love for teaching. "If teaching a child is central to my heart, I did not see the reason why I could not lead others in order to teach the children together". Mrs Kapepe, too, though she did not mention teaching in particular, confessed that it was due to her concern for the school that she decided to take up the challenge, saying "the school could not continue in that state, of having no one to take the lead".

In her study Hall also refers to some women heads who took up school headship because of their love for teaching or great respect for the education of children. One of them put it this way: "Education is the greatest gift we can give young people" Hall (1996:41).

5.2.2 Past leadership experiences

Mrs Kapepe admitted that taking up responsibilities and being in charge in her early childhood paved the way for her for greater responsibilities at a later stage in her life. She had to take care of her siblings because her mother was hospitalised quite often. "All these might have made me so tough that I was not afraid of taking up the challenging task of principalship at such a tender age".

Drake & Owen (1998:136) also quoted from a diary of a woman principal, who, like Mrs Kapepe, felt her past experiences of being responsible helped her in coping as a leader later on in her life. She wrote this in her diary that she used to share with other women principals:

> The sum of all these life experiences causes me to reflect. I was the sole carer for my grandmother, my mother, and my father. I shared responsibilities for my mother-in-law […]. Were all these experiences, feelings and insights my true training for the principalship? Organising, managing and distributing time and resources were lessons learned […].

Hall (1996) also mentions other studies that acknowledge the impact of childhood experiences and the role of sex-role stereotypes in early and later socialization in shaping the later behaviour of women in leadership positions. However some people, like Marshall, cited in Hall (1996) questions the relevance of such experience in understanding the women's decisions to take up management and leadership positions. I am not in a position to confirm or discard the importance of previous experience. However, I do feel that such experiences must have been very important to women in my study, especially to Mrs Kapepe. As it is already pointed out, she was very young and inexperienced, therefore, she could only draw on the experiences she had gained either from her childhood or from her school career. Both principals were in leadership positions during their school career, either as head-girls or class monitors.

This again takes me back to what I have said earlier on page 61. If there are born leaders, then they can be either men or women, and not just men as is implied by the "trait theory".

5.2.3 Competitive spirit and ambition

Mrs Ndali cited as reasons for her taking up the position of principalship not only her desire to be a leader but also to show people that she could succeed in establishing a school. Therefore she even went to the extent of spending her own money to get things started at her new school. Studies on other women leaders from literature show that women are just as career ambitious as their male colleagues. Hall (1996:44), for example, makes some remarks about women in her work such as: "She carried with her the seeds of ambition to be head" or "Even though she was not sure she would be successful, she had no doubts about becoming a head from the moment it was suggested to her".

5.2.4 Finding and choosing role models

A reason commonly advanced for women's disproportionate representation worldwide in management and leadership positions is the absence of women role

models to inspire others, especially the young ones. This is true in the case of women in my study. Neither of them mentioned a woman as a role model, even when it comes to teaching itself. Mrs Kapepe just mentioned the existence of women principals in her school or a nearby school, who gave her a feeling that even women could be principals, but she never mentioned their leadership styles. Instead she remembered a male principal at her former school who impressed her with his way of leadership and management.

Mrs Ndali on the other hand made it categorically clear that she did not know of a leader, male or female, whom she could consider as a role model. She only had two male teachers who instilled love of teaching in her, due to their unwavering commitment to teaching, especially in Mathematics, which was her main interest.

This convinced me to support some authors in literature who argue, like Al-Khalifa in Hall (1996), that the incumbents of the positions of principalship portray it as masculine, and that is not the way women want to lead. As a result they decide to go their own ways. Even the women principals at the time they were in schools, like those mentioned by Kapepe might have been stereotypical. This can also be confirmed by the fact that like many other women leaders in other studies, neither of the women in my study indicated that they ever thought of imitating men in their work. This is in agreement with what Shakeshaft (1989:12) says: "The effective woman does not copy the effective man, nor does she find that what works for him necessarily works for her".

Unlike other women in other studies, who put emphasis on the parental influence during their childhood that shaped their behaviour later in life as school leaders, this was not the case with my informants. Mrs Ndali made it candidly clear that she could not remember anyone who encouraged her to take up the post or even commended her for taking up the post. In light of what is said above, one can conclude that though role modelling could be inspiring to women aspiring high positions, it is not an important source of efficacious information for successful women.

From what I learn from the two women principals I can conclude that it was mainly due to their love and concern for teaching of children, together with their own inherent determination to succeed and belief in self or self-efficacy that gave them courage, confidence and drive to take up the position of principalship.

5.3 Leadership and management styles

Moving into leadership position means establishing a personal style that is both effective in enabling people to function successfully in their work and is acceptable to the norms of the group of which they have become a part. Both principals in my research had reached a stage in the development of their leadership style where they felt comfortable with and confident in what it had become. Therefore in this section I look at the strategies the women principals used to lead their schools in desired directions, and the influence of an organizational culture they considered suitable for achieving the school's goals. In fact as it can be seen in chapter 2, women leaders in particular are expected to change the norms of organizational culture to create a working environment which respects and explores to the full the talent of all the employees. Is that then what women in my study strived for?

5.3.1 Collaborative leadership and management style

From the interviews it was evident that the two women principals preferred a collaborative management and leadership style. They put emphasis on teamwork, shared decision-making, consultations and delegation of responsibilities. In most cases during the interviews they used the word "we" instead of "I".

In support of consultation with others, Mrs Kapepe had this to say:

> I want people to have a say in matters pertaining to school. […] Right from the beginning I made it clear to them that I am open. Anything they want to talk about, they are free and welcome to do so.

Literature has indicated that research on women managers and leaders revealed that women are usually associated with this style of management and leadership. Examples as cited already in chapter two include the work of Shakeshaft (1989) on women administrators in the USA, Hall (1996) on women heads in Britain, Morris (1998) on women principals in the Caribbean. For example Morris in Drake & Owen (1998) quote one woman principal:

> I have an idea where I'm going but I'd like to feel everyone is on board. I tend to try to get that even if it takes a long, long time.

Another woman in the same work explained how she managed her school with these words:

> I have a very open system. I meet frequently with the heads of my departments… We have lots of sub - committees even for things like social events in the school …so I delegate more and more to the departments.

From the interviews it became clear that the women in my study favoured a collaborative leadership style because they were convinced that it is the appropriate way to work with people and that it benefits their schools. They both believed that being a principal does not mean that they know everything, and that they need to solicit the input from their colleagues or parents or whoever has an interest in the school. This is in agreement with what I have already pointed out in chapter two that the consultations with others in an organization can help to tap unused human resources. Musaazi, for example, maintains that many successful school administrators practise participatory type of leadership because 'it does not only promote higher degree of staff morale, but it is also a means by which the creative talents of many teachers can be tapped" (Musaazi1982: 64). In trying to justify their preference for this style of leadership, Mrs Kapepe argued that:

> I am just a person like others. I do not know everything and I can make mistakes. By consulting with others, they may come up with other aspects I did not think of or possible disadvantages I was not aware of. (Mrs Kapepe)

Mrs Ndali echoed the same view.

> Being a principal does not mean that I know everything. Principalship is a learning process. […]. I always invite ideas and suggestions from others.

Just like women in other studies, women principals in my study preferred collective decision- making, as Mrs Ndali put it this way:

> We decide together on what we believe is in the interest of the school. Such decisions are referred to as our decisions and not the decision of the principal.

I can conclude from Mrs Ndali' statement that they favoured the collective decision - making style because it ensures "ownership". Other people will support the decision, which reduces the risk of opposition. In fact this was confirmed by Mrs Kapepe's words when she said:

> […]. If you make a wrong decisio n, nobody will tell you or if you land into trouble because of a decision you made alone, nobody will support you.

One of the main disadvantages of this participatory or consultative leadership that has been raised in literature is that it is time consuming. Therefore some women in other studies indicated that sometimes they were forced to take unilateral decisions because of the time factor. However, Mrs Ndali though not denying this disadvantage, pointed out that even in emergency cases, she would at least ask one teacher or two for their opinion. She could not just take 'the bull by the horns", as was the case with one of the women in Rosener's work (1990).

Another aspect that I think emerged from the women in my study which made it easy for them to implement a collaborative leadership style is their openness and frankness with other people, especially the teachers. They both made it categorically clear that they had an open door policy. As a result an attitude of mutual trust and respect developed. Therefore they would not even be afraid of criticism from colleagues, an aspect that is also mentioned in the literature as a possible disadvantage of participatory leadership.

5.3.2 Use of power

Studies on women in leadership reveal that power means different things to men and women. Some writers even argue that women are not where power is, or where women are power is not! For someone to make such statements depends on what one means by power. My discussion on power here will be based on the definitions of Kanter and Giddens as cited in Hall (1996:137). Kanter defines power as: 'the ability to get things done, to mobilize resources, to get and use whatever it is that a person needs for the goal he or she is attempting to meet". Giddens refers to it as "transformative capacity" within interactions, which means the use of resources to secure desired outcomes and the differential use of power to realise particular interests. In this section I use these definitions as a means to analyse the ways in which women principals use power to achieve their goals.

Throughout the interviews it was evident that the principals were people-centred, as will be seen in the next section. Therefore they used power to empower others. Bolin as cited in Hall (1996:143), defines empowerment as 'investing in teachers the right to participate in the determination of school goals and policies and the right to exercise professional judgement …". The consultative and participatory nature of their leadership styles, which I have already discussed in section 5.3.1, paved the way for this empowerment as well as for sharing of power and capacity building especially with the teachers.

This is confirmed by what was said by Mrs Ndali.

> I should also consider that I am only in this position today, but tomorrow there will be will be someone else, who may come from the people in my staff. I should let them also gain experience of being in charge and responsible, so that even if I am not there, they can go on with the work.

Their work with individuals was based on their belief in nurturing others' power by trying to be role models. They aimed to model, through their own behaviour, how they wanted their staff to behave and interact. As a result certain things became a culture of their schools that even those who joined the schools at a later stage, found it

difficult to deviate from. For Mrs Ndali to get her teachers to be punctual for their lessons, she made it a point that she was always in her own class promptly when the bell rang. To encourage her teachers to pay particular attention to the learners with learning problems, she would do the same in her own class.

Another aspect that encourages empowerment of others that emerges from my findings is the belief of the principals in the ability of others, as reflected in the following statement by Mrs Ndali:

> I do not want any teacher to have a feeling that she is good for nothing, or nothing she does is appreciated. I do not label people as failures or incapable of doing anything good. Every person has a good side. S/he only needs encouragement.

It also becomes clear from the findings that both principals had a clear vision and mission for their schools. They constantly try to motivate others to work towards achieving that mission. In fact one can conclude that they have reached a stage at which their individual vision had become a shared vision of the whole school community. That is why as I have already mentioned at the beginning of this section, during the interviews they quite often used the word "we".

From the above discussion it can be concluded that the women principals in this study aim at lifting the motivational and moral cohesion of their staff through idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. They use their power to develop people and to build teams. These nurturing qualities are associated with transformational leadership, and are believed to develop an expectation of high performance in the followers.

How the women principals in my study used power and how they interpreted it fit with other discussions of women and power in other research on women leaders from the literature. As I have already discussed it in chapter two section 2.3.1.5, a number of studies provide evidence that women use power to empower others. Hall (1996:145) for example when summarizing her findings on how women in her study interpreted and used power says:

> Power was not about being censorious, belittling or destructive, or taking arbitrary decisions, being hierarchical or confrontational. It meant being able to make things happen by distributing the resources, interacting in ways that left others confident in their actions, enabling others to do things, being thoroughly organized and prepared, having a vision and shaping a culture.

The need to allow some degree of autonomy to the teachers through empowerment and to have a shared visions for schools are essential aspects in educational leadership, as I have already indicated in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.3 of chapter two. It is not enough for the principal as an educational leader to have a vision for a school: s/he should be able to transmit his/her own commitment into one that can be shared by others. What is required of the school principal here is to exhibit transformational leadership abilities, as I have outlined in section 2.3.4.

5.3.3 Human resource management

5.3.3.1 Relationships with people

In conformity with women leaders in other studies in literature, the women principals in my study were people-centred. They claimed that their schools were about people, thus consideration for people was at the heart of their leadership and management styles. Both principals insisted that they did not isolate themselves, so quite often during their spare time they would get involved in general talks with the colleagues. They both admitted that they had good working relationships with others, teachers, learners, community and others who have interest in their schools, and that had become a culture of their schools that even those people who joined in at a later stage found it difficult to deviate from.

Mrs Ndali pointed out that she was very much close to her colleagues:

> I also take interest in their personal matters. If they have a problem, for example if one is hospitalised or has a family members who is hospitalised, I always ask about their conditions and also visit them either at home or in hospital.

She claimed that she maintained the same caring attitude with the learners.

The women principals in my research share the same belief with their counterparts in Morris' work (1998) that concern for human relations by valuing and respecting them as well as considering their individual needs, would be beneficial to their schools. They were convinced that good interpersonal relationships foster cooperation and an atmosphere conducive to working. For example Mrs Ndali always got the full cooperation of her staff:

> Our relationship is very good. Teachers are very cooperative. Even if I need assistance in administrative work, for example completing forms or whatever task, and I ask one to do it, she would readily accept it.

Both also claimed that they did not have the problem of late coming among learners because of their way of dealing with latecomers. They both attributed it to their motherly way of talking to the learners, solicitous appeal for assistance and cooperation of parents in dealing with the problem.

Usually in literature when it comes to the aspect of dealing with people by leaders and managers, terms like "hard" "soft" "tough" "care" and "control" are used. Quite often women are associated with "soft" "love" and "care" end of the continuum. However the women principals in my study exhibited both contrasting characteristics. They indicated that they were quite firm by sticking to the principles about how they should relate to people though they did it within framework of love and care. Mrs Kapepe for example said: "Even if one makes a mistake, then I speak to him or her, it does not mean the end of friendship. It is just work". Mrs Ndali also mentioned of "pointing out mistakes in a diplomatic way". It can therefore be concluded that they used caring and diplomacy as a form of control, to ensure that everyone, both learners and teachers performed to his or her best ability.

Literature also claims that women in leadership positions are usually lonely and isolated and hardly get any feedback from their subordinates. For example Hall (1996) points out that women in her study were eager to take part in her study because they felt it was a way of getting feedback on their performance. They maintained that

it was not easy for them to get feedback from their subordinates. This was not the case with the women in my study. They maintained that even if they did something inappropriate, there would be one teacher who would come to them and make them aware of it. They attributed it to their open door policy that resulted in good relationship with the colleagues, as I have already mentioned in the previous section.

What I found interesting in this aspect of interpersonal relationship is that it appeared as if these principals attributed the good rapport with the teachers to the fact that either all of their teachers were women or there were only few male staff members. My curiosity was aroused by the response of both principals when asked on the issue. Mrs Ndali for instance responded with these words: "Unfortunately we are all women. But the relationship is very, very good". Mrs Kapepe when referring to good relationship with teachers had this to say: " ...most of them are women. Most of the few male teachers in the staff are young and were even my former students". Unfortunately it was not possible for me to probe deeper into how the women principals interacted with male and female teachers in this study, because of the reasons mentioned in the above quotations.

5.3.3.2 Getting the best out of people

Like other women in other studies cited in literature (Shakeshaft 1989, Dinkmeyer 1996, Hall 1996, *etc*) both women principals in my research also recognised the importance of motivating others in order to achieve their mission. Mrs Ndali in particular believed in the power of praise in motivating people, hence she said: "Everyone likes to be praised. They need to be complimented so that they can do better in future". Her concern for students' welfare, building their confidence and self - esteem (see example of learners with reading problems in section 4.2.2.2) and dealing with them as individuals, all contributed to better motivation. Mrs Kapepe on the other hand also made use of extrinsic motivation, by offering awards to both teachers and learners with outstanding performances.

They also tried to get things done by modelling through their own behaviour as well as by giving professional support to the teachers. Mrs Kapepe mentioned that she

checked all the daily preparations every morning in order to make sure that even the less motivated teachers are doing their work. Mrs Ndali did likewise in making sure that all the teachers were punctual for their lessons. In their endeavour to motivate others through role modelling, I think they were quite aware of the possible disadvantages of setting high standards for others which I have mentioned in section 2.5.1.4 of chapter two. That is why Mrs Ndali tried to be realistic and humane in her approach, always apologizing whenever she did something inappropriate, even if it is for coming late for her lesson. To me this behaviour is meant to send a message that nobody is perfect, and people are only expected to do their level best.

The ways of motivating people that I discussed above complemented by other people-centred approaches of women principals' style of management and leadership, discussed earlier, contributed to high morale among their staff and learners. Thus, like other women principals cited in literature, women principals in my study practise what is considered by Blasé and Kiby in Hall (1996:124) as effective strategies used by principals to bring out the best in teachers which is:

> Power of praise, influencing by expecting and by involving, granting professional autonomy, leading by standing behind, gentle nudging, positive use of authority and providing mirrors to the possible.

5.3.3.3 Professional development of the staff

Hall (1996) argues that central to each head of a school is the goal of achieving the policy objectives and vision for pupil learning that is at the centre of any school's activities. Their approach to this task is guided by the belief they have about teachers as professionals and about the extent to which power should be shared. Therefore I think that one of the primary responsibilities of the head of a school is to create a suitable workplace that allows teachers to teach effectively.

Principals in my study used professional development of the staff as a strategy to increase teachers' motivation and effectiveness and to lift the standard of their

schools. I think this is rooted in their views of teachers as resourceful humans, respect for their professional knowledge and expertise and an acknowledgement of the unprecedented demands made by the recent educational reform. One principal mentioned for example learner-centred approach that had been introduced immediately after independence, which implementation the teachers were not properly prepared for. The other one mentioned the new continuous assessment system that was also not well understood by every teacher.

Resembling women principals in other studies, like those in Morris' (1998) work they encouraged staff members to be enrolled in upgrading courses. Those, who were unqualified or under-qualified, were encouraged to get the required qualifications and those who already had them were encouraged to go for higher qualifications. School based professional development was on the agenda of both principals. Mrs Ndali for instance discussed professional issues which emerged from her class visits in the staff meetings. Furthermore, any members of the staff who attended a workshop outside the school, would always debrief the entire staff, on return. Mrs Kapepe, aside from giving feedback to teachers after each class visit, also organised English tutorial classes that took place once a week.

To practise what they preached, they were also committed to their own professional development. They were involved in further studies and always attended training programmes organised for the principals. By being committed to self-development, they sought to encourage similar qualities in others.

5.4 Concern for quality educational outcomes

In agreement with what is in literature (Shakeshaft 1989, Morris 1998), excellence in education was an important professional focus of women in my study. They both strived for quality educational outcomes. Mrs Kapepe put it that way: "We aim at raising the standard or quality of education. It is our vision. We aspire to teach not just for the sake of finishing the syllabi, but to achieve quality outcomes". In the same vein Mrs Ndali had this to say: "I want pupils to learn. To learn so that each one can

reach up there, where she or he aims at. That is why the motto of our school is 'knowledge is power".

They do not only emphasize achievement but also coordinate their teaching programmes and by means of periodic evaluation progress is thoroughly monitored. Mrs Kapepe for example checked daily preparations of all teachers every morning. She claimed that she knew which topic every teacher was busy with. She had a timetable for class visits. Mrs Ndali, though she had a limited time for class visits, as a result of full time teaching, also managed to do class visits now and then. She emphasized the need for class visits:

> To see if they are teaching according to the syllabi, if learners are actively involved in their own learning, if the work of the learners is checked regularly, if teachers have progressed accordingly with their schemes of work and very important, to pick up aspects where the teachers may need assistance.

It was due to her concern for quality learning especially in Mathematics, that she organised extra classes for her grade four learners during the holiday.

In their endeavour to achieve quality educational outcomes, both women principals tried to mobilise and motivate both teachers and learners. They believe that they will only succeed if they work as a team. Mrs Ndali confirms this as she said: "We work as a team, the management, the teachers as well as the learners towards achieving our mission".

Their concern for what is happening inside the classroom led me to conclude that these women principals in my study, like others mentioned in the literature, were not only concentrating on management. They also played a role as professionals. Their practice is in agreement with Shakeshaft's argument that: 'S eparating teaching from administration so that power of change is in the administrator's hands is an organizational format that women did not choose" (Shakeshaft 1989: 205). With this she implies that women principals do not consider themselves as mere managers of schools. This, as I have already indicated in section 2.4.2, is what makes an educational leader different from leaders in other organizations. The principal of a

school should perform both management responsibilities as well as professional functions.

Furthermore as I have pointed out in section 2.4.4, educational leadership has a value dimension. Being a successful leader in education means having values about the primary purpose of education, that is the successful outcomes for pupils' education. I agree with Hall (1996:123), that "educational leadership without values is like music without sound". We cannot talk of a successful principal of a school that is failing its young people.

Literature claims that such schools that aspire to high quality educational outcomes create a climate that is particularly salutary for the learning process. Such atmosphere, according to Van der Westhuizen (1991:52), "reflects order, stability and control, good discipline and quiet". Parents usually have positive attitude towards such schools and they get more involved in all manner of school activities. Both principals confirmed that the parents were full of praises for their schools. Mrs Ndali mentioned that quite often the parents expressed their satisfaction with the work of the school when they come to the parents' meetings. They were always eager to make financial contributions towards the constructions of classrooms, in spite their poor incomes.

In conclusion, I think self-management and self-efficacy are two essential aspects that underpin the leadership and management styles of the two women principals in my research. Carrying out their managerial role was based on how they managed themselves. Through providing selective attention and role modelling to others what is valued in the school, they contributed towards defining and strengthening the culture of their schools. In other words, if I may borrow from Hall (1996), they tried their level best to "walk their talk".

5.5 Dual roles

Literature claims that family and household responsibilities are regarded throughout the world as one of the most important barriers to the professional progress of women

(Van der Westhuizen 1991). This phenomenon also applies to women in educational management and leadership. The relationship between the family duties on one hand and the career demands on the other hand for women in management positions, will always create what Van der Westhuizen (1991:556) calls "conflicting role demands and expectations". That is because it is not easy for women to delegate their household and family duties even if there is a more structured division of responsibilities. This is confirmed by women in Hall (1996:60) who "continued to see themselves either responsible for domestic tasks or sharing them".

Women principals in my research were also faced with the same dilemma of performing dual roles. Mrs Kapepe, like most women heads in Hall's work, was an "adapter" as reflected in her own words: "I cannot cut short on the time I have to be at school. I only adjust my working time at home either by waking up earlier or going to bed later, depending on the season of the year". Her children were also used to her routine. This was also the case with the children of some women heads in Hall's work. When commenting on the same issue, she said: "Those with children thought that their children had grown accustomed to their working lives, as they had never known anything different" (Hall 1996: 60).

Mrs Ndali, on the other hand, though she did not consider it as an impediment to her professional work, lamented that trying to accomplish both roles was really demanding. However, like other women principals mentioned in literature, things became better when her sons were grown up and went to boarding schools. On the other hand, she did not share the same feeling with women heads in Hall's work, who found it important to be in control of the home environment in the same way as they were aiming to keep control of the school. She wanted things to be a bit relaxed at home. She claimed that:

> At school you are under time pressure. There is much to be done within a short time, therefore there is always rush-rush. When I am at home, I would expect everything to be finished at one go. I do feel that sometimes I put too much pressure on my family, especially the children.

Both principals, in resembling many other women principals in literature, stressed the importance of supportive partner in a stressful job for their relatively non-stressful adaptation to the dual demands of home and work. Mrs Kapepe, for example, pointed out that her husband was not at home full time due to work. However to try to make things easier for them, he took his leave in December, when she was also at home most of the time.

What I found fascinating is that neither the women in my study nor those I encountered in the literature considered their dual roles as a potential barrier to their success as heads of the schools. This makes me question the validity of the claim from literature that I mentioned at the beginning of this section. I am therefore tempted to think that such a statement is influenced by the stereotyped assumption (held mostly by men) that women principals cannot really succeed because of their double responsibilities. Van der Westhuizen (1991:558) expressed the same doubt as he says:

> The worst is that men in decision-making posts (without research having been done to prove them correct) assume that family duties are a decisive factor which would prevent women from achieving outstanding success in their work.

Or could it be due to the fact that, as Greyvenstein (1989) cited in Van der Westhuizen (1991) believes that the contemporary society has not yet reached the point of accepting it as a natural phenomenon for a woman to be both a "homemaker" and an "effective career woman" if she prefers so? In this view, Greyvenstein is supported by Kanter cited in Bush & West-Burnham (1994:185) when she says:

> For years researchers studied the activities and attitudes only of women when they looked at "family life", thus reinforcing the myth of separate worlds. The man was plugged in when he appeared, but he was not seen as carrying with him family membership when he went off to work. Employed women were presumed to have, or want to have, a family.

5.6 Sources of support

Several authors, including Shakeshaft (1989) Greyvenstein (1989) and Everard & Morris (1996) raise the need for support systems for women leading and managing

schools. They identified support in the form of guarantees, mentors, role models, networks and job news- letters. Shakeshaft further calls for changing the training programs to adapt to the needs of women. In support of the need for support systems for women in educational leadership, Shakeshaft (1989:135) argues: "Once trained, these women still find a need for a support system that reinforces their aspirations and provides a mechanism for ventilation, generating strategies, and professional companionship".

Van der Westhuizen maintains that there had been an increase in the formation of network systems for professional women in USA and Great Britain, which were directed at the promotion of the professional interests of women. Greyvenstein as cited in Van der Westhuizen (1991: 555) defines networks in the educational context as:

> The process of developing your contacts for advice, information and moral support as a career is pursued. Networks consist of groups of influential persons who control or influence access to management positions, providing visibility, information, support and continued upward mobility in interrelated services.

Where available, networks bring professional women into contact with one another to strengthen mutual contacts, to introduce role models among younger members, to find solutions to specific female professional problems and to disseminate information. Drake & Owen (1998), for example, mention a group of women principals in USA, who met and kept diaries that they shared with each other to analyse, and also to provide mutual support.

Women principals in my research, like their counterparts in other studies in literature, enjoyed the full support of their spouses. Mrs Ndali, for instance, appreciated the good ideas and suggestions she always got from her husband and he also helped her with computer work. They also admitted that they got support from the parents and community at large. Mrs Kapepe specifically mentioned some members of the community who used to come to her to commend her for the good job she was doing and also to encourage her to continue working hard for the school.

Both principals also praised the support they got from the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, through its structures such as the Regional Office and the Circuit offices. This support was in the form of training programmes, circuit meetings as well as physical facilities. Literature claims that women in leadership positions do not receive the backing of authority that would normally be accorded to their male counterparts (Coleman 1994). This was not the case with the women principals in my study. Both principals indicated that they did not encounter any discrimination in their work, as individuals, on the basis of gender. I think that could be an indication that the perceptions of people, especially men, of women's roles are changing. It could be that the world is increasingly becoming more receptive to women leaders and recognises as well as values what women have to offer to organizations including educational institutions.

However, unlike their fellow principals from other studies, (Shakeshaft 1989, Drake & Owen 1998), who had access to other sources of support, these women principals in my work had no access to any other support systems apart from those that I have mentioned above. One can conclude that they were mainly working in isolation, except when they had to attend the formal training workshops and circuit meeting, where they meet in big groups.

5.7 Role modelling for other women

Women who managed to reach leadership and management positions are often seen as representing their "sex" and therefore they are not judged according to their individual abilities. That means that their actions are evaluated as being representative of they way all women work, particularly if they make the slightest mistake or error of judgement. Schmuck in Bush & West-Burnham (1998:186) put it this way:

> If a woman has achieved a position of power and responsibility she is supposed to be exceptional and must prove her worth, whereas the male is not expected to perform in such an exemplary manner.

Greyvenstein cited in Van der Westhuizen (1991:554) shares the same view: "Women in top management posts are regarded as super people and it is therefore expected of them - at all costs - to be successful at everything in every aspect".

In common with other women managers and leaders in other research work, the two principals in my study also tried very hard not to show any sign of weakness. Mrs Ndali, for instance, when she was starting her new school even went to the extent of spending her own money on the construction of the school. She did not show any kind of regret because what was important to her was only to succeed, whatever the price. "I wanted to show people that I could do it, that even a woman could start something that could benefit the community".

Hall (1996:43) in her study of women heads in Britain, also noticed the same attitude, prompted her to say: "It was very important for them not to be seen to fail in their chosen path, and this concern explained some of their reluctance to display any weaknesses in the job".

This strong will to succeed and to be seen as successful explained why Mrs Kapepe was happy about the remark on her work that was once made by her male supervisor, the circuit inspector, in a principals' meeting:

> Look, you men principals, some women principals have schools that are far better than yours!

When I asked about her reaction on that remark she had this to say:

> It made me happy because it shows that I am up to date with my work. This shows that women are also capable of leading schools, even better than some men.

It emerged from the findings that these principals reached a stage were they were quite confident that they were successful in their work. Their personal and professional experiences as women led them to hold values about management and leadership that they hoped would influence others. Hall (1996) also realised the same feeling in women heads in her study. For example one woman indicated her

willingness to participate in the study because she had a story about being a woman in school leadership. She believed that her story would "help other women". Consequently she (Hall) refers to the women heads in her study as "prototypes of success", by which she means that they emerged as role models for other women aspiring leadership in schools. The same can be concluded about women in this study. Mrs Kapepe, for example, called on her fellow women principals to take it easy: "I would like to call upon fellow women principals to lead and manage schools properly and not to harbour any feelings of inferiority". Mrs Ndali expressed the same feeling, though in different words. She was convinced that women are suited to being principals, because of their nature.

> At home we (women) always put our things in order. Because of this nature, even at school we would like things to be in order. I really feel that for a woman to lead a school is appropriate because she will only continue with what she has started at home. If a woman can run a house, why can't she run a school?

She also expressed her concern for fellow women principals who were not free to express themselves in the meetings. The fact that she always tried to make her voice heard in those meetings was also an indication that she would like others to follow suit, and not just let the men talk.

However, I noticed a contradiction in Mrs Kapepe's argument. In her call for fellow women to lead schools properly, she claimed that women were capable of doing whatever men are capable of. But at the same time when her inspector made a remark about men who could not lead school properly while some women could, she was pleased with the remark. I expected her to find that stereotyped remark offensive. To me this remark implies that all men were expected to lead and manage schools properly and hence the inspector found it unusual for some women to be able to perform better than men.

Though, these women as I have already indicated in section 5.5, did not encounter any form of discrimination in their individual work on the basis of gender, Mrs Ndali insisted that the ugly face of discrimination always showed up when it came to election to committees in the principals 'meetings.

> What disappoints me about those meetings (principals' meetings) is the gender bias when it comes to elections of people to serve on committees. […] The disease of gender inequality is far from being cured. We still have a long way to go.

This is in agreement with what Schmuck in Bush & West-Burnham (1998:180) identifies as organizational constraints that hinder the advancement of women. Amongst others she lists: more opportunities given to men to exhibit leadership and male domination of selection to committees, leading to discrimination. Schmuck referred to above, believes that such barriers may operate not only against women but also positively in favour of men.

> At each step of administrative preparation, job seeking and selection, there are organizational processes which clearly indicate a preference for males.

5.9 Conclusion

The core of this chapter is the style of management and leadership the two women principals adapted in managing and leading the schools. It is clear from the discussions that they preferred interactive leadership that encourages participation and consultations with others, collective decision-making, sharing of power or use of power in order to empower others. Their leadership is characterised by qualities such as empathy, warmth, compassion, genuineness, concreteness and intuition and self-confidence.

Literature is full of examples of studies that associate such qualities with effective schooling. Shakeshaft as cited in Bush & West-Burnham, for example from her studies identified the following qualities as crucial to effective schooling: clear educational goals, values that stress care and relationships, focus on educational issues, cooperative decision-making, monitoring of other's progress and behaviour that promotes achievement and learning as well as high morale and commitment by staff (Bush & West-Burnham 1994:191).

In the same vein, Rutherford as cited in Van der Westhuizen (1991:561) from his research isolated five qualities for identifying outstanding educational leaders as:

- Having clear and informed vision, which is aimed at pupils and their special needs;
- Having the ability to convert this vision into clear objectives for the school as the whole, for each teacher and for group of learners;
- Having the ability to create an organizational climate in the school that makes the attainment of the goals and expectations possible;
- Being able to constantly monitor progress in the direction indicated above and
- Being able to intervene by means of professional and, if necessary, corrective ways of working when circumstances warrant this.

When these two sets of standards for effective school management are compared with one another and then contrasted with my findings, there will be quite a number of points of similarities. This shows that women principals in my study follow more or less the same style of leadership and management as their counterparts in other studies carried out somewhere else in different parts of the world.

In the next final chapter I summarise my findings, highlight the possible value of the findings, come up with recommendations for practice as well as for future research and finally point out the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The focus of my study has been the ways in which women principals enact practical school leadership and management. I have shown that their approach to school leadership and management shares many common features even though they are two different individuals, with completely different background experiences and working in two different school contexts.

In this final chapter I start with an overview of the findings as I have discussed them in light of other studies of women in leadership and management in chapter five. Secondly I consider the implications of the findings of the study for both women and men in educational leadership and management. The chapter goes on to propose some recommendations for further research as well as for support that could be rendered to women in leadership and management positions and those who are aspiring to climb the ladder. Finally I point out the limitations of my study.

6.2 Summary of the picture of practical educational leadership and management that emerged from studying the two women principals.

By exploring their respective roads to principalship in section 5.2, it emerged that they did not seek promotion. However, when it was offered to them, they accepted it readily due to their concern and love for the education of young people. Though they lacked influence from their parents, they drew on their past experiences of leadership either from their childhood or from school career. Neither of them mentioned a woman leader as a role model. Though one referred to a man principal who impressed her with his management style, none of the women indicated any feeling of wanting to imitate men in order to succeed. They were mainly self-motivated in choosing the

style they wanted to adapt. Their success as school leaders can be attributed to what Hall (1996) calls "a strong inner locus of control".

Their preference for an interactive style of management and leadership, as discussed in section 5.3.1, was manifest in their support for teamwork, consultations with others and collective decision-making. They opted for collaborative leadership because they were convinced that it helps to tap unused human resources, increase support for decisions reached, enhance the feeling of belonging, develop the feeling of ownership and boost the morale of people.

Power in this study, as I have pointed out in section 5.3.2, is defined as use of resources to secure desired outcomes. Since these women principals' style of leadership and management is people centred, they used power to empower others. All their actions were based on their belief in nurturing others' power. By role modelling through their own behaviour, they created certain cultures for their schools characterized by trust, openness, involvement and sense of self-worth. They had reached a stage at which their individual vision was transformed into shared visions of the entire school.

The people-centredness of their style of leadership was also reflected in their interpersonal relationships that I have discussed in section 5.3.3.1. They both claimed that they had good relationships with teachers, learners, parents and so on. They attributed it to accessibility as principals, showing interest in personal and professional lives of the teachers and concern for other people's personal problems and their well being. According to them such good relationships resulted in good cooperation, mutual trust and created atmosphere conducive to working as a team. However, in the same vein, it emerged from the findings that they knew when to be soft or hard or soft but firm or to use compassion to control in order to get the best out of both learners and teachers.

As human resource managers, as it is outlined in section 5.3.3.2 and 5.3.3.3, they aimed at bringing the best out of their teachers through motivation and professional development. Their strategies for motivating teachers were based on understanding of

their own motivation towards better performance. Their strategies included praising, allowing teachers some degree of autonomy, setting high standards and expectations and providing professional support and materials to the teachers and encouraging teachers to get enrolled in upgrading courses.

As has been mentioned, the driving force in taking up the school leadership positions was their commitment to the education of young people, which they considered as a valuable enterprise. Therefore, as elaborated on in section 5.3.4, they were deeply concerned with quality educational outcomes. They emphasized academic achievement and productivity of teachers and gave more importance to differences between individual learners. They did not only emphasize achievement, but they also coordinated the teaching programmes, monitored the progress of teachers and constantly checked on how teachers were delivering the curricula. They claimed that their aspiration for quality educational outcomes earned them respect from the parents and their positive attitude towards the school, and consequently their support.

Contrary to what is generally believed, as I have argued in section 5.4, they did not consider their dual responsibilities of professional life and family life as a potential barrier to their success as leaders. Though both married with children, they were "adapters" who managed to adjust their family responsibilities to fit into their professional responsibilities. However, they admitted that fulfilling both roles was quite demanding, especially if one had young children.

As I have pointed out in section 5.5, women principals admitted that they enjoyed the unwavering support of their spouses, which they appreciated a lot. They also cited support of the parents and the community at large, in particular in curbing late coming and absenteeism of the learners. They further valued the full support of the Ministry of Basic Education, Sport and Culture, through their supervisors, in the form of professional development and physical facilities. This was contrary to what is claimed in literature, that usually women in leadership positions are not given the same support as their male counterparts. However, unlike their counterparts in other studies, these women had no access to any other sources of support, apart from those that I have mentioned above.

In common with other women leaders in other studies, the principals in my study tried very hard to succeed in their work and not show signs of weakness. That was not only because society always watches women critically, but because they also wanted to be role models for other women aspiring leadership in schools. It became clear from the findings that they reached a stage in which they were quite confident that they were successful as school principals and that their management and leadership experiences could be used to influence others.

Though they did not experience any form of discrimination in their individual work as women, they admitted that discrimination was still alive when it came to selection to committees within the ranks of principals. Women were still underrepresented.

6.3 Implications of the findings of the study for educational leaders

Since this research is done by a woman and is focused on women, there might be a temptation to label it as "women' study" or "feminism" making it irrelevant to the mainstream debate about educational leadership and management. This is not the case, because the study documents and interprets the behaviour of women **leading schools.** I am therefore convinced that it is relevant to any principal, whether man or woman, as long as he or she is concerned with identifying the skills and strategies needed for effective school leadership.

As I have indicated in chapter five, there were similarities between my findings and those reported in studies on other women concerning their styles of leadership and management. Women principals, according to the findings, show dedication to duty, emphasize humanitarian and good human relations which are all directed at pupil advancement, and they also succeeded in maintaining a more ordered school community which in itself promotes effective education. I am not saying that all women principals display these qualities or there are no men who show such qualities in their leadership. I am equally aware that there are many examples of men performing well and women performing poorly in leading and managing schools.

What is important is that these characteristics shown by women in my study are to a great extent in line with universally accepted norms for effective organised school that also produces a high quality of pupil as its end product.

It is my hope that this study will be of interest and use to women and men principals and others aspiring to positions of responsibility in educational institutions. From the above argument I feel that schools can benefit if school leaders and managers, both men and women, borrow from these strategies and practices, which are usually associated with women leaders. There is a need to shift from authoritarian to participative school culture and adoption of styles of management that better match the prevailing values of women.

However, although my study has shown that the women principals behaved in ways contributing to effective schooling, I am not heralding the 'women's day'. I do not think it is useful to regard some leadership and management approaches as gender specific. I believe men are just as capable of adopting a so-called feminine style of management as some women adopt a masculine style. To me what is important is to suit the behaviour to the circumstance. I believe that leadership especially in schools is a very complex process. The question is not choosing between leadership as an instrumental and behavioural activity and leadership as symbolic and cultural. What is important is for the leaders to show adaptability and flexibility, depending on the situation. I think there are times when leaders and managers of schools have to display "Thatcherite resoluteness" or "Ghandian gentleness" irrespective of their gender.

6.4 Recommendations

6.4.1 Possible forms of support that can be provided to women principals

In section 5.5 I raised the point that women principals in my study, unlike their counterparts in other studies, had no access to other sources of support, except from spouses, their supervisors and the parents, forcing them some how to operate in isolation. Family and work support though important, in my view, needs to be supplemented. I feel there is a need to establish large systems of contact from where women can share experiences and learn about how other women handle similar management and leadership issues. Such support systems will reinforce the women's aspirations and provide mechanisms for generating strategies and professional companionship. These could be in the form of:

- Networks for women principals
  A definition of networks in educational management context is in section 5.5. Such networks can be established at any level, either at circuit, regional or national level. Through such groups, women principals can establish contact with one another for mutual support, to find solutions to specifically women leaders problems and to share experiences and information, for instance, in the form of newsletters.

- Coaching by women mentors and role models
  Experienced, successful and influential women principals would take up this role of mentors and role models. Since they are already successful in this position, they can provide more personal and understanding, because they have deeper understanding of the problems and stumbling blocks experienced by women who have trodden that path. This will be particularly useful to inexperienced newly appointed women principals and to those who wish to take up this position.

- Formal advisory groups

This can be in a form of formal sponsorship arrangement in which influential educators take in newly appointed women principals "under their wings" and help in preparing them for the challenging position of principalship.

- Case studies of successful women in educational leadership and management could be developed and made accessible to women in principal positions or those aspiring to take up those positions.

If put in place these will provide women in educational leadership positions with necessary societal support structures for mutual benefit and morale. They will share each other's professional problems and learn from their female colleagues about educational leadership and management.

Of course it could be useful if men are also included as mentors and as members of these advisory groups, although, I am sceptical about it. Not all men in educational leadership and management positions have positive attitude towards equality, role and ability of women in educational leadership and management.

6.4.2 Possible areas for further research

I indicated in section 5.3 that this study could not explore how women principals interacted with male teachers. However, I feel that for both women and men in leadership positions gender can be a problem of practice as was hinted at in some of the remarks from the women principals in this study. There are many aspects in leadership and management of schools that can be influenced by gender, such as understanding how men and women interact not as people, but as members and representatives of their gender, what being men or woman means for making moral and ethical decisions and for understanding different people's points of views. I, therefore, strongly feel that the impact of the gender interactions on effective leadership and management needs to be studied and understood. Findings from such research will help both incumbents of principalship positions and those aspiring to get into those positions to be better prepared for a workforce of both men and women.

Another aspect that I picked from my findings that also needs to be probed further is the impact of family responsibilities not only to the advancement of women to high positions but also its influence on their performance, once they are in promotion posts. As I have indicated in section 5.4, both my findings as well as those from other studies on women leaders are in contradiction with what is generally accepted. Information from such study, I believe, would be useful to women with family responsibilities, but wish to take up leadership positions.

6.5 Limitations of the study

The study has a number of limitations.

This is a very small-scale study. It involves only two women principals from Ondangwa West Educational Region. One in-depth open-ended interview was the only data-gathering tool used. My second contact with them was only for double checking the analysed data. For wider input I could have taken a bigger sample that I could have studied over a longer period of time. I feel that with this small sample, the findings are less generalisable. This may limit the applicability of the results of the study.

Secondly, because of time and resources constraints, my findings are based only on self-reporting or the narratives of the informants. A broader picture on how they performed practical educational leadership and management could have been obtained by: direct observation of each principal as she went about her day-to-day activities; informal or formal interviews or conversations with other people such as teachers, non-teaching staff, their supervisors and parents and follow up interviews. This one-sided information may have implications on the validity of the results of the study. It has to be conceded, however, that obtaining from other sources would have a questionable step to take in terms of my chosen approach (phenomenology).

However, these limitations cannot be used as an excuse for abandoning any attempts to gain a deeper understanding of how women experience school leadership and

management and what it can contribute to the mainstream debate about effective school leadership and management.

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