



**Career advancement experiences of
women in educational leadership
positions at district level in the North
West Province, South Africa**

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DECLARATION

I, Mercy Olajumoke Kutu declare that the research for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Education Management) at the North-West University hereby submitted has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work in design and execution and that all materials taken from other sources herein have been duly acknowledged.

Signature: *MOKutu*

Date: 2019-11-19

DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my Lord God Almighty, the “I am that I am” (KJV- Exodus, 3:14). To Him alone be all the honour and glory in Jesus’ name, Emmanuel. “There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God” (KJV - 1 Samuel, 2:2). “He determines the number of the stars and calls them each by name. Great is our Lord and mighty in power: his understanding has no limit” (KJV - Psalm 147:4-5).

To your power and glory, Lord!

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ABSTRACT

Although numerous studies on women's career advancement in educational leadership positions abound, such are limited to school-based perspectives with a dearth of information on office-based educators despite their recognised roles in the education sector. Hence, this qualitative study, informed by an interpretive paradigm using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach supported by a feminist lens, was aimed at exploring women's experiences of career advancement in educational leadership positions at district level in the North West Province Department of Education and Sport Development, South Africa. The study is theoretically underpinned by self-concept, social role, feminist and transactional-transformational leadership theories. Thirteen purposively selected female managers in the four districts of the North West Province participated in the study. Four of the participants were chosen from one district, with three each from three other districts. In-depth individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with all thirteen participants, while further interviews using WhatsApp chats were conducted with three of the participants to ensure further clarification of their experiences of educational leadership. The data obtained were analysed qualitatively by means of thematic and framework analyses. The study provides insights into the selected participants' varied lived experiences of their career advancement. Key issues concerning women in educational leadership are identified including the challenges attached to educational leadership and the reasons for persistent gender disparity. Although faced with various challenges that are often intersected, the findings indicate that women in educational leadership at district level are capable and successful leaders who can make a difference in the education system. The study argues that the success of female leaders in their career paths hinges on both internal and external support systems. Factors that promote women's attainment and maintenance of educational leadership positions are identified. They include amongst others, self-esteem, leadership styles, support system, hard work and experience, and the use of policy. The findings of the study have provided the basis for the development of a model that will contribute to the advancement of theory and practice on women's career advancement into educational leadership and management positions at district level and beyond. The findings further contribute to the existing body of literature on women in educational leadership.

Keywords: Career advancement; District office; Educational leadership; Gender inequality; Transactional-transformational leadership; Self-concept; Social role, Feminism, Feminist, Leadership styles

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANA	Annual National Assessment
AU	African Union
CA	Care Assistant
CAPS	Continuous and Assessment Policy Statement
DBE	Department of Basic Education
FET	Further Education and Training
GET	General Education and Training
GLIP	Girls' Learners Improvement Programme
GPF	Gender Policy Framework
IGSS	Institutional Governance Support Services
IQMS	Integrated Quality Management System
KLR	Kenya Law Report
MOE	Ministry of Education
MTSF	Medium Term Strategic Framework
NDP	National Development Plan
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PGP	Personal Growth Planner
RCL	Representative Council of Learners
SSIP	Secondary School Improvement Programme
SSNMS	School Safety National Monitoring Strategy

SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SGB	School Governance Body
SMT	School Management Team
SRSA	Sport and Recreation South Africa
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children`s Fund

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

This chapter presents the background to the exploration of women's experiences of career advancement in educational leadership positions at district level in the North West Province, South Africa. The chapter presents the rationale and motivation for the study. Accordingly, the conceptual, methodological and ethical considerations for the study are presented. Career advancement of women into leadership positions, specifically, the educational leadership positions, remains a critical academic discourse globally and within South Africa in the past decade (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Chabaya *et al.* 2009; Zulu, 2009; Airini *et al.*, 2011; Amondi, 2011; Hora 2014; Lumby & Azaola 2014; Ademe & Singh, 2015; Sun & Leithwood, 2015; Zulu, 2016). The emphasis on women's career advancement discourse emerged as a result of gender inequity in the workforce. The issue of gender inequity in leadership positions has become a major public concern in South Africa since the dawn of democracy. This has resulted in the promulgation of such policies as affirmative action, a framework on gender equality, National Development Plan and the formation of the Department of Women, Children, and People with a disability that aims to promote a non-discriminatory society. Accordingly, the constitution of South Africa has served as "a compass for engendering gender equality in the country" (Rarieya *et al.*, 2014:1).

The engendering of gender equality includes the proclamation of gender policies that allay unfair discrimination against women in the workplace, and gender mainstreaming in all institutions and organisations. Despite the improved number of women in the workforce, government and various organisations through policies put in place to aid equity, the career progression of women to leadership and management positions is still low (Allen *et al.*, 2016). South Africa, like countries such as United States of America, United Kingdom, Japan, France, etc. still has low percentage of women in decision-making positions (Allen *et al.*, 2016). Scholars such as Doubell and Struwig (2014), Kalysh *et al.* (2016), Lumby and Azaola (2014) and others have emphasised the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. According to the Businesswomen Association of South Africa (BWA, 2016), women represent only 38 per cent of leadership positions in the public sector. Although 38 per cent seems low, it indicated an improvement in the number of women occupying leadership positions compared to the pre-democratic era where gender inequality featured prominently. The present situation of gender inequality in the workforce

represents serious and undeniable concerns about women's career progression into leadership positions in the education sector, and particularly, in the basic education department.

According to Lumby and Azaola (2014:30), women in the South African context "remain underrepresented in educational leadership and management roles, even in the age phases where the larger majority of the workforce is female". The department of basic education in its annual reports over the past four years presented the nature of educational leadership at administrative level and revealed huge gender inequality at the top leadership and management positions (DBE, 2013a; 2014; 2015a & 2016a). As at 2013 for instance, 40 and 39 per cent of women were in top and senior management positions respectively, 47 per cent were at the middle management positions while 70 per cent were at the junior management positions. In 2014, a substantial improvement to 45 percent in the number of women at upper management levels was reported while the number at senior management levels stagnated at 39 percent. The number of women at middle management leadership levels in 2014 increased marginally to 49 percent and grew to 51 percent in 2016 while the number of women at top management levels regrettably dropped to 25 percent. These four years' data depict the dynamic nature of gender inequality at top management leadership position at departmental level as the bulk of women are only concentrated in middle and junior management-level positions. Noticeably, the data also revealed a sudden drop in the number of women in top management positions. The menace of gender gaps cuts across national level, it infiltrates into the provincial level as we only have 31 percent of women in top and senior management positions in the North West Department of Education and Sport Development (DoE, 2015a:178). The questions that come to mind here are: (i) Why are there only a few women in the leadership positions where decisions are being taken? (ii) How are the few women in leadership positions able to sustain and maintain their positions?

The aim of the above scenarios is not to present a negative disposition about the gender issue, as women have been reported to possess qualities that portray 'eligibility' and 'efficiency' in educational leadership positions (Al-Jaradat, 2014:147). Nonetheless, the issue of 'quality' is controversial as it is believed that gender traits are socially constructed, learned, and informed by the environment (Merchant, 2012:27). According to Al-Jaradat (2014:147), women's qualities include ability to enhance interaction between individuals, cooperating with others, and focusing on social relations more than focusing on the hierarchy. While some of these qualities might be congruent with institutional norms about women's unique leadership styles such as

transformational and transactional styles, to a certain extent, qualities do not suggest women's advancement to leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Merchant, 2012). These qualities have, however, constituted gender stereotypes often used to discriminate against women, as value has been placed on men's traditional qualities as imposed by society (Merchant, 2012; Diko, 2014; Abolade, 2015). For instance, according to Diko (2014:827), "men are socially constructed so as to have the upper hand in areas of power." For Robinson *et al.* (2017:1) "men are still four times likely than women" to occupy the most influential position in education.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT



A considerable body of scholarship exists on the career advancement of women into educational leadership positions globally and in South Africa (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Chabaya *et al.*, 2009; Zulu, 2009; Airini *et al.*, 2011; Amondi, 2011; Diko, 2014; Hora 2014; Ng'ambi, 2015; Sun & Leithwood, 2015). Also, investigations into the experiences of women in educational leadership and management positions at district offices have been conducted internationally by scholars such as Amondi (2011); Kelsey *et al.* (2014); Garn and Brown (2008); and Sampson and Davenport (2010) to mention a few. Interestingly, the findings from these studies demonstrate that gender gaps exist in educational leadership positions at district level. Although various annual reports from South Africa's Department of Basic Education reveal the existence of gender gaps in leadership and management positions at departmental levels, little attention is paid to investigating the factors responsible for the perpetuation of the gaps in these positions from women's perspectives (DBE, 2013a; 2014; 2015a & 2016a). It is important to explore the lived experiences of women in educational leadership and management positions, particularly at district offices based on the individual, societal and organisational factors due to their (district offices) critical roles in the basic education department. The district offices are expected to provide educational "management and professional support, and help schools achieve excellence in learning and teaching" (DBE, 2013b:11). Acknowledging the role of the district offices, the women in educational leadership positions at district offices based on their shared experiences, might help suggest factors that can enhance women's career advancement into educational leadership positions.

1.3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Theoretical perspectives on understanding women and women in leadership roles are unpacked. Four identified theories: self-concept theory, social role theory, feminist theory and transactional-transformational leadership theory are explored to shape our understanding of women's experiences of career advancement in educational leadership positions. While the notions of self-concept and social role theories are central to this study because they permit connections between individual, societal and organisational factors, the feminist notion presents and analyses these connections to understanding women's experiences of career advancement. The transactional-transformational leadership is also important because it presents the nature of the women's leadership style. Also, since the objective of the study amongst others is to: *explore the factors behind the persistence of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions*, concepts such as glass ceiling, inequality regimes and labyrinth phenomena are unpacked to further understand women's experiences of educational leadership positions. Notably, the study qualitatively explores and analyses *the factors that can help the attainability and sustainability of women's career advancement in educational leadership positions* at district level in the North West Province, South Africa.

1.4 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

This research seeks to allow women to reflect and relate their varied experiences of their career advancement to educational leadership positions and reveal potential existing prospects for further advancement. As observed by Kapasi *et al.* (2016), the stories of women are often told from the perspectives of men. It is believed that women's experiences of advancing into leadership positions may vary from one woman to the other (Akpınar-Sposito, 2013a) as "individuals have subjective knowledge of their own lives and the context in which they live" (Hankivsky *et al.*, 2009:8). Acknowledging that the factors affecting women's career advancement are inter-related, it is significant to explore the interface of these factors in the context of women in educational leadership positions. This is to elucidate how these interrelated factors can provide an in-depth understanding of hidden and salient issues that are peculiar to career advancement into educational leadership positions at district level.

Also, acknowledging the persistence of gender inequality in educational leadership positions, it has become critical in this study to understand the factors that can hinder gender inequality from the

standpoint of women. By way of understanding these factors, the participants reflected on their varied experiences and the meanings they attach to them. As a result, the participants were able to share the success stories of how they had attained and sustained leadership positions, and this might help bridge the current gender gaps that exist in educational leadership and management positions. Sharing of a success story by the selected participants in this study is epistemologically and ontologically significant as it might help to inform theory and practice concerning women's career advancement into educational leadership at district level.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

The central research question that guides the study is:

What are the career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions and the meanings attached to the experiences?

1.5.1 Sub-questions

- (i) What is the nature of women's experiences of career advancement in educational leadership positions at district level?
- (ii) What are the factors that can impede women's career advancement to educational leadership positions?
- (iii) How do women in educational leadership positions at district office attain leadership positions?
- (iv) How do women in educational leadership positions at district office sustain leadership positions?
- (v) What model can be used for understanding and enhancing women's career advancement to educational leadership?

1.5.2 Research aim

The aim of the research was to explore the career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district office.

1.5.3 Research objectives

- (i) Unpack the in-depth characteristics of women including their experiences in educational leadership positions at district office;
- (ii) Explore the factors behind the persistence of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions, and;
- (iii) Explore the factors that can help the attainability of women's career advancement to educational leadership positions;
- (iv) Explore the factors that can help the sustainability of women's career advancement to educational leadership positions; and
- (v) Develop a model for understanding and enhancing women's career advancement to educational leadership.

Theoretical and empirical investigations were conducted to achieve the aim and objectives of the study. The theoretical aspect of the study presents theories that give credence to different concepts ingrained in the literature overview. The theories and concepts have served as guides to understanding the study while the empirical aspect of the study presents the methodology, methods, and process of achieving the objectives of the study.

1.6 LITERATURE REVIEW

Hanson *et al.* (2011:376) contend that the purpose of the literature review is "to identify and analyse what is known and unknown about a topic of inquiry". Hence the study commenced with the identification of the known and unknown by means of a literature search. This involved identification of keywords that were related to my study in journals, books, research reports, and government gazettes as suggested by Creswell (2016:60). The following keywords were used in the literature review: gender; gender equality, social roles, gender roles, career advancement; educational leadership, stereotypes; women in educational leadership positions; educational leadership and management; leadership styles. Researcher's engagement with the literature review in the study provided a theoretical understanding of the perspectives of career advancement of women in educational leadership positions. The literature review informed the research questions, aim, and objectives.

1.7 EMPIRICAL STUDY: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In the empirical investigation, a qualitative research design with a phenomenology approach was employed to explore the career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district level. Creswell (2009:4) presents qualitative research as “a means of exploring and understanding the meaning that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.” Since qualitative research aims to “describe and understand the phenomenon studied by capturing and communicating participants’ experiences in their own words via observation and interview”, this study engaged with a hermeneutical phenomenology approach through in-depth individual interviews and the use of WhatsApp technology group chats (Yilmaz, 2013:313). The use of a qualitative approach with hermeneutical phenomenology in this study aims to describe and interpret meanings that the selected women in educational leadership positions ascribed to their experiences of career advancement. Patton (2002:114) presents hermeneutic as a theoretical framework for interpretive understanding or meaning, with special attention to context and original purpose. For instance, women in educational leadership’s standpoints of career advancement in relation to how they perceive, describe, feel about, judge, remember, make sense of, and talk about their experiences of career advancement with others (Patton, 2015:115). According to Creswell (2013), a phenomenological approach describes the common meaning for several individuals of their common experiences of a concept or a phenomenon such as the varied experiences of women in educational leadership positions concerning their career advancement.

1.8 INTERPRETIVE PARADIGM

The study was informed by an interpretive paradigm using a feminist lens. Creswell (2013) asserts that researchers tend to bring to the inquiry certain theories, paradigms, and perspectives that might serve as a guide in the research process. The study was situated in an interpretive paradigm based on the philosophical underpinning of the interpretive paradigm which acknowledges the importance of lived experiences. Thanh and Thanh (2015) conceptualise interpretive paradigm as a means of viewing the world through the perceptions and experiences of the participants. Furthermore, the study was situated in an interpretive paradigm to help interpret how the participants describe their beliefs, opinions, perceptions, and values of career. The feminist theory

was used as a frame of analysis; this is to better understand women's experiences of career advancement to educational leadership positions in offices at district levels.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODS

This study engages with the use of qualitative research methods in data collection, analysis and interpretation, that is, purposive selection of the study participants, interviews, WhatsApp chat networking and thematic and framework analyses.

1.9.1 Selection of participants: criterion strategy

Subsequently, a purposive sampling by means of criterion strategy was used to select the districts and women in leadership positions in the Department of Education and Sport Development in the North West province. Petty *et al.* (2012:380) refer to purposive sampling as a sample selection being women leaders in the department of basic education. Criterion strategy depicts "individuals and cases that meet a particular criterion", based on relevance to a study (Bryman, 2012:419). The criterion in the study was that the districts to be selected for the study must have women in leadership positions which are traditionally recognised as a male domain. Also, all participants must be women holding leadership positions in their respective districts and who can provide insights on educational leadership based on experiences.

1.9.2 Data Collection

Data collection for the study was done by means of in-depth interviews with observations, and WhatsApp networking. The in-depth interviews with observation were used to explore women's experiences of career advancement to educational leadership positions and the meanings attached to the experiences.

1.9.2.1 In-depth face-to-face interview with observation

The in-depth interviews were engaged in by using open-ended questions whereby the views, opinions, and perceptions of the participants on career advancement to leadership positions were recorded verbatim by means of a digital voice recorder. The rationale for engaging with in-depth interviews using open-ended questions in the study is "to provide an opportunity for detailed investigation of the research phenomenon" such as an in-depth understanding of the experiences of women in educational leadership positions regarding career advancement (Lewis, 2013:58).

Additionally, during the interviews, the researcher observed the behaviours and mannerisms of the study participants by means of field notes to assess any discrepancies between their actions and the constructs of their views and opinions of the phenomenon under investigation. This was to enhance thick description and interpretation of the participants' experiences of the phenomenon under investigation for the purpose of trustworthiness.

1.9.2.2 WhatsApp networking

WhatsApp networking was adopted by means of WhatsApp chat using smartphones. The WhatsApp chat involved interactions with three of the participants in the study who volunteered to engage in further discussions on salient issues that emanated from the face-to-face interview sessions.

1.9.3 Data Analysis

Since the focus of this study was to describe and interpret participants' experiences and the meaning of a phenomenon, thematic and framework analysis became important and was thus performed. Thematic and framework analysis was performed with a view to "present rich, interconnected, and logical analysis" based on research questions and participants' direct experiences of the phenomenon under investigation (Braun & Clarke, 2013:260).

1.10 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study provides insights into women's varied lived experiences of educational leadership positions at district level. As a result, it contributes to knowledge production from women's perspectives to literature in educational leadership and management. Contributory factors that promote women's attainment and sustenance of educational leadership positions at district level have been identified. These identified factors could serve as a motivation for women who may aspire to advance their career to educational leadership positions, most importantly at education district office level. Similarly, the emerged framework from the study might contribute to theory and practice on women's career advancement in educational leadership and management at district level.

1.11 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

The table below depicts the preliminary chapter division

Table 1.1 Summary of the structure of the preliminary chapters

Chapter	Summarised contents
1	The first chapter presents the problem statement and the main research question. Importantly, the chapter presents the aims and objectives of the study; the methodology and process that will be employed to achieve these aims.
2	The second chapter presents the theoretical framework for understanding the study. In the chapter, the theories of self-concept, social role, feminism and transactional-transformational leadership are unpacked to understand women's experiences of career advancement to educational leadership positions.
3	Chapter three presents a review of literature that further enhances the understanding of the study. The chapter is engaged with by analysing and unpacking the factors that are behind the persistence of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership. Accordingly, individual, societal and organisational factors are engaged with. The factors such as glass ceiling, inequality regimes and labyrinth were also engaged with to further our understanding of women's experiences of educational leadership positions.
4	This chapter presents a framework for understanding how the empirical aspect of the study is achieved. The nature of a qualitative research approach is provided. Here the rationale for working in the chosen research methodology and paradigm is presented, followed by the researcher's role and the ethical considerations for the study.
5	Chapter five presents the analysis and interpretation of the data collected through in-depth interviews with observations.
6	Chapter six presents an overview of the study, a synthesis of significant findings as well as recommendations based on the findings. The limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, and concluding comments are also presented.
7	Chapter seven presents a model for understanding and enhancing women's career advancement to educational leadership

1.12 SUMMARY

This chapter explained why and how this study was conducted. Acknowledging the persistence of gender inequality in educational leadership positions, the study embarks on a qualitative study with a view to understanding the factors that contribute to the persistence of women's underrepresentation in educational leadership positions. Thirteen women, i.e. three women each from three districts and four women from one other district in the North West Province Department of Education and Sport Development were purposely selected for the study. To theoretically understand the study, self-concept theory; social role theory, feminist theory and transactional-transformational leadership theory were adopted. For a conceptual understanding of the study, concepts such as individual, society, organisation, glass ceiling, inequality regimes and labyrinth were further utilised. Consequently, qualitative research methods and methodology were used to explore these women's experiences of career advancement in educational leadership positions at district level. The chapter provides methodological framework to this qualitative study and the reasons for performing it. The outlined process in Table 1.2 provides the study overview.

Table 1.2 Schematic representation of an overview of the study

<p>Research Problem: Persistence of gender gaps and underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions: NWP District Level Research Question: What are the career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions and the meanings attached to the experiences?</p> <p>Research Aim: Exploration of career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at the district levels</p> <p>Objectives</p> <p>Theoretical: Unpack the notions that can be used to understand and analyse the in-depth characteristics of women, including their experiences of career advancement to educational leadership positions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the factors behind the persistence of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions, and; <p>Empirical: Explore the factors that can help the attainability and sustainability of women’s career advancement to educational leadership positions;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a framework for understanding and enhancing women’s career advancement to educational leadership. 			
<p><u>Theoretical framework</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-concept theory • Social role theory • Feminist theory • Transactional-transformational leadership theories 	<p><u>Conceptual framework</u></p> <p><u>Concepts</u></p> <p>Glass ceiling Inequality regimes Labyrinth Individual Society Organisation</p>	<p><u>Methodological framework</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative research – hermeneutic phenomenology approach • Interpretive paradigm with feminist lens • Methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Purposive sampling ○ Interviews: In-depth individual face-to-face with observation ○ WhatsApp networking 	<p><u>Analytical and interpretive framework</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thematic and framework analysis • Methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Coding, ○ Identification of patterns ○ Categorisation; ○ Thick description, and interpretation of participants’ responses
<p><u>Findings and Contribution</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic knowledge and practice in educational leadership and management practice • Presents lived experiences of participants’ educational leadership positions at district level • Factors that could promote women’s attainment and sustenance of educational leadership positions at district office have been identified. • Development of a framework 			



CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR UNDERSTANDING WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the theories used in providing an understanding of women's disposition and their experiences of career advancement to educational leadership positions. I engaged with the self-concept theory, social role theory, feminist theory and transactional-transformational leadership theory. The aim was to gain an in-depth theoretical understanding of various perspectives that can be used to understand the nature of women. The purpose involves the comprehension of the factors that might negatively or positively influence women's career advancement to educational leadership positions. I assume that an in-depth understanding of the theoretical underpinning of women's disposition might provide a basis for a nuanced understanding of women's career advancement to educational leadership positions at district level.

2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical frameworks for understanding this study are the self-concept theory, social role theory, feminist theory and transactional-transformational leadership theories. Theoretical frameworks denote the "blueprint" for the entire study (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:13). The theoretical frameworks provide the structure of the study regarding epistemological, methodological and analytical approaches (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:13). According to Grant and Osanloo (2014:13), theoretical framework consists of the selected theory (or theories) that inform our thinking regarding how we understand and plan a research topic. Theory embodies "notions, ideas, and definitions that are relevant to our topics" (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:13). The concept 'theory' is referred to as "a systematic body of knowledge, grounded in empirical evidence, which are for explanatory and predictive purposes" (Saunders *et al.*, 2015:36). Although the role of the theoretical framework is essential, it is equally pertinent that our choice of theories is based on their appropriateness to our field of study as they are like 'a mirror' in the research process (Imenda, 2014:188).

The self-concept theory, social role theory, feminist theory and transactional-transformational leadership theory were used in this study because they address the issues that apply to women and

leadership. The researcher engaged with these theories to gain an in-depth theoretical understanding of women's characteristics and their experiences of educational leadership positions at district level. Additionally, she engaged with these theories due to her recognition of the ability of theories to "provide guidelines and directions for research" e.g. "the structure and support for the rationale of a study, the problem statement, the purpose, the significance, and the research questions" (Grant & Osanloo, 2014:15). The following are the explanations of the theories:

2.2.1 The Self-concept

The self-concept theory as emanating from the work of Charles Horton Cooley (1902) and expanded upon by scholars such as Gecas (1982), Oyserman *et al.* (2012) and others inform this study. Cooley (1902:179) conceptualises the social self as an idea, or system of ideas, drawn from the communicative life, that the mind cherishes as its own. Cooley is an American philosopher and a sociologist whose work is rooted in the study of William James (1890). As mentioned by Gecas (1982:3), self-concept as "a product of the reflexive activity, that is, the concept the individual has of herself or himself as a physical, social, spiritual or moral being." As observed by Oyserman *et al.* (2012), self can be divided into different categories, i.e. concerning our acquaintance and different social reactions, for instance, mother, sister, educator, educational manager and others. Mehrad (2016) observes that the main factor behind the view and thinking about self is self-concept. Self-concept is predicted as a multi-dimensional construct as it encompasses an individual's perception of self about different appearances such as academics, gender roles, sexuality, racial identity and others (Mehrad, 2016:62).

Since this study explores women's experiences of career advancement to educational leadership positions, it draws heavily on the concept that an individual has of herself or himself as a social being; this is as based on shared meaning and interaction. Cooley (1902) and scholars such as Mead (1934), Gecas (1982) and recent scholars such as Mehrad (2016) and Stojiljković *et al.* (2014) have conceptualised self-concept as the belief and view about oneself. Mehrad (2016:62) views self-concept as "the total opinions that an individual has of herself or himself". Self-concept, as observed by Stojiljković *et al.* (2014:876), includes all the experiences that an individual has about herself/himself.

Cooley's starting point of understanding self-concept is the presentation of self from the empirical and social perspectives. Cooley philosophises the self as 'I' and 'Me' and refers self to elements

such as “opinions, purposes, desires, claims and views and the self-feeling or sense of feeling that are associated with these elements” (Cooley, 1902:176). As such, ‘I’ is suggested as a sense of feeling and its expression; and appropriation while ‘Me’ serves a reflective or introspective purpose as it reflects on others’ view (Cooley, 1902:176). As individuals, we might show a sense of feeling when we are praised or humiliated due to a particular action.

Cooley (1902) provides a theoretical framework for understanding self-concept from the empirical and sociological perspectives through the notion “looking-glass self”. Cooley (1902) equates “the looking-glass self” to a metaphorical mirror which portrays how individuals use the interaction between the individual self and the other individual to make meaning of who they are. From the looking glass perspective, Cooley (1902) views the self as a social phenomenon which arises as a result of social action and experiences.

Presumably, social experiences here are acquired through interactions with parents, family, peers, schools, colleagues, community, and others. The looking-glass self focuses on how one views herself or himself concerning the other (Rousseau, 2002). From the “looking-glass self” perspective, an individual imagines through self how s/he thinks others perceive her/him (Cooley, 1902:183). In other words, the self-feeling or how one feels about herself or himself arises because of her/his reflection of the other individuals’ attitudes towards her/him. Through the idea of the “looking-glass self” Cooley (1902:184) theorised three fundamental principles of self-concept:

- (i) *The imagination of our appearance to the other*: This principle denotes that the social self arises from society due to social interaction. The principle elaborates on the involvement of self and the others in shaping the self as rooted in imagination. Although the principle emphasises the role of the other in forming self-concept, the role of the individual self in developing the self-concept becomes essential as the individual needs to play an active role in interpreting and giving meaning to the other individuals’ perceived judgment about own.
- (ii) *The imagination of her/his judgment of that appearance*: This principle suggests that the involvement of others in shaping the self is based on the element of imagination. This principle provides a meaning-making lens to the “looking-glass lens” as it focuses on the imagined judgment and evaluation of the self as based on the way we perceive ourselves through the other individual.

- (iii) *Some kind of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification:* This principle proposes that the imagination of an individual is not exclusively a reflection of selves, but rather the effect of this image upon others' minds. This principle provides the evidence of self-feelings based on our imagination of others about us, for instance, pride or shame as a result of one's action.

The idea that the self arises as a result of social interaction corroborates with Mead's theory that the self is "something which has a development" (1934:135). It is believed that "the self is not initially there at birth but arises in the process of social experience and activity, meaning, it develops in a certain individual as a result of her/his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals in that process" (Mead, 1934:135). The critical assumption here is that the self-concept advances through social relations and actions. From this theoretical standpoint, Mead (1934) captures how individual self imbibes in the attitudes of the other individual to become a member of society through role-taking. Here an individual tends to view or think about the self in response to different attitudes of the other individual towards her or him.

Accordingly, Gecas (1982) renders socio-psychological perspectives to understanding the self-concept theory; and proposes two approaches to understanding self-concept: identity and self-esteem. Identity from a sociological perspective portrays the antecedent of self-concept; and concerns itself with "the causes of behaviour outside the individual" (Gecas, 1982:2). In other words, identity is informed by outside structures such as culture, society, politics, and economy. The critical consideration here is the influence of the power of the other in forming self-concept. Identity is concerned with the individualities and characteristics, social relations, roles, and social group relationships that delineates who one is (Oyserman *et al.*, 2012:69). Identity encompasses and symbolises the present, past and future perspectives (Oyserman *et al.*, 2012:69). The three domains present one's beliefs of self in terms of one's perception. This entails thinking or opinion about self as situated in the past, present and the future. The past refers to what one used to be; the present depicts what one is at present while the future refers to what one aspires to become (Oyserman *et al.*, 2012). According to Stets and Burke (2014:412), "identity defines individuals in terms of the roles they occupy, the social categories or groups they belong to, and the individual characteristics that define them as unique persons" such as the character that defines an individual as a member of society regarding the meaning that one's actions convey.

Gecas (1982) introduces self-esteem from a psychological perspective as the consequences of self-concept. Self-esteem presents emotional and evaluative dimensions of self-concept. The emotional and evaluative dimensions of self-concept according to Stets and Burke (2014:419) are concerned with aspects such as self-worth, self-efficacy, and authenticity. The self-worth aim of analysing an individual's motive to feel valued and accepted by others is based on individual-self-evaluation. As argued by Stets and Burke (2014:410) that although one's self-worth can emerge from self-assessment, self-worth may often be influenced by one's accomplishments. Consequently, one's accomplishments and self-worth are interdependent, and may elevate one's self-worth and vice versa. Self-efficacy is concerned with the motive to see oneself as efficient and agentic (Stets & Burke, 2014). This aspect of self-esteem according to Stets and Burke (2014:410) encapsulates "an assessment of what one is capable of doing in situations". Authenticity as an aspect of self-concept symbolises meaning and understanding of self-esteem. Authenticity encapsulates the validity of an individual seeing herself as being accepted and efficient regarding a role. An individual acts consciously or unconsciously to validate herself. For instance, this action may be found in the way and manner the individual has been able to manage conflicts between two colleagues in the office or the way she has been able to lead a group in achieving success in a project.

2.2.1.1 Criticisms of self-concept

Building on the assumption that self-concept is influenced by the perspectives of other individuals, authors such as Gecas (1982) and Kyriacou and Constanti (2012) have raised remarkable criticisms. Gecas (1982:6) points out the disparity between self-concept and the appraisal of the other. According to Gecas (1982), basing our self-concept on the perceptions of the others may be wrong as not all others are significant to us. Critiques of self-concept by Gecas (1982) verge on those of Kyriacou and Constanti (2012). Kyriacou and Constanti (2012) believe that the failure of the individual self to interpret our understanding of the perception of the others may result in false self-images. However, the unique way in which the benefits of the self-concept erode its critiques lies in its multi-dimensional nature. As pointed out by Sedikides *et al.* (2011:98), self-concept is not a "singular, monolithic cognitive structure" as it is underpinned by three components: the individual self, relational self and collective self. Sedikides *et al.* (2011:98) refer the individual self to the attributes that differentiate one person from the other. Besides, the interpersonal self is referred to as one's side and involves attributes that are shared with others. In as much as the

connection of the three is the development of self-concept, the role of the individual self is significant. The individual self becomes important when choosing to incorporate perception of the significant other and collective self to form her or his identity.

2.2.1.2 Significance of self-concept to this study

Whereas self-concept can reproduce a negative stereotype, Cooley's looking-glass self as alluded to by Kyriacou and Constanti (2012:208) is not "objectively formed by what others think about an individual but depends on individual impressions of how others perceive her/him". Addressing the issue of self-concept using a looking-glass self, Rahim (2010) encourages that even though there is a strong relationship between looking-glass self and stereotypes, the difference between the two is that the looking-glass self-principle is based on positive social interactions, while stereotype principles are based on prejudice, inequality and marginalisation of the subjected groups. For instance, according to Rahim (2010), it is possible for individuals to integrate the society's negative stereotypical beliefs about them and reproduce them as their identity and hence become more subjugated. However, the importance of self-concept lies within the elements of identity and self-esteem and their attributes. From an identity perspective, self-concept is conceptualised as an essential motivational tool (Oyserman *et al.*, 2012:70). Oyserman *et al.* (2012) identify the importance of the self. The self, according to the authors, is useful because it influences how one makes sense of herself or himself (Oyserman *et al.*, 2012:70).

Scholars such as Allen *et al.* (2016); Karelaia and Guillén (2014) have used the self-concept theory to understand women in leadership positions. For example, Karelaia and Guillén (2014:204) emphasise that self-concept has a direct effect on women in leadership positions. They further emphasise that holding a positive view of the self will motivate one to lead and help one to view leading "as an attractive goal rather than a duty" (*ibid*). As observed by Oyserman *et al.* (2012:70), self-concept is a shaper of behaviour in situations. Similarly, Mehrad (2016:65) suggests that self-concept should be considered "a critical issue that impacts on individuals' attitudes toward life and society". This consideration assumes that self-concept "can change individuals' behaviour and their relationship with others in various cultures and societies" (Mehrad, 2016:65). By implication, might influence women in educational leadership positions to lead and view leadership as a way of life. In the context of this study, it is then assumed that through the notion of self-concept, women in educational leadership might be able to see themselves as people who can lead.

Self-concept is significant only if it has an optimistic effect on individuals (Gecas, 1982). The optimistic effect of self-concept lies within the component of self-esteem. The self-esteem dimension of self-concept according to Gecas (1982:5) is tied to motivation; this is underpinned by elements such as self-efficacy, sense of self-worth and authenticity. Focusing on educational leadership, for instance, evaluating self as being able to lead, or have leadership acumen, might help one to advance to an educational leadership position. Inability to assess self as one who possesses the ability or capability of leading might pose a problem as one might not aspire to advance her or his career path. The elements of self-concept are very crucial to this study as it is important for a woman in educational leadership to reflect on her imagination to make meaning of how she sees herself.

What is therefore distinct with regard to these elements is that they enunciate two assumptions: (i) what a woman in an educational leadership position thinks about herself might be wrong and eventually lead to self-doubt regarding her career advancement, and (ii) what a woman in educational leadership values might provide her with a kind of motivation for her career advancement. While the value judgment might offer ways in which females in educational leadership can evaluate selves, the social dimension of self-concept is equally essential. The strength of self-concept from a social perspective lies in social interaction and perception of self through imagination and self-evaluation. Self-concept from a social interaction perspective places emphasis on society as central to how one perceives self as an individual. Hence the perception of self, as rooted in society, is strengthened by the interaction between self as an individual and the other individual. Although who we are and who we want to be is associated with the perceptions of the other individuals around us, our active role is nonetheless, incredibly significant. Consequently, we are expected to display specific roles and responsibilities based on an element such as gender. These expectations, according to Walker and Lynn (2013:2), “become internalised into individual’s self-concept, thereby guiding the behaviour of role occupants”. The social role theory will be explained in the next section.

2.2.2 The social role theory

The social role theory emanating from the work of Alice Eagly (1987) and expanded upon by Eagly (2012), and Eagly and Wood (2012), is used to understand this study. Eagly’s (1987) social role theory is developed to interpret and analyse the persistence of sex differences in social

behaviour, i.e. the inequality between women and men in their natures and skills. This theory views sex difference from a social psychological perspective. Eagly is an American social psychologist who passionately researched on sex differences, gender and leadership. Eagly (1987) proposes two main approaches to understanding sex differences, namely the social role and gender role. According to Eagly (1987:7), social role “delineates women and men as gender role and the stereotypes that people hold about women and men as gender stereotypes”, for example, identifying certain jobs or positions for women or men. According to Wood and Eagly (2012:458), people tend to carry out gender roles as they endorse specific social roles.

Eagly (1987) emphasises the importance of gender in analysing sex difference. Central to gender is a societal stereotype regarding gender; this is based on the beliefs that individual sex determines their specific roles (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Shen-Miller & Smiler, 2015). Conceptualising gender roles is essential to this study as it might help to provide insights into women’s experiences of their career advancement to educational leadership positions.

Eagly’s (1987) assumption of sex differences reflects social roles and gender roles from adult life perspective; this is against biological and early childhood development. Eagly (1987:1) conceptualises sex “as the grouping of women and women into categories of females and male”. This form of grouping presents biological differences, and it is culturally underpinned. Eagly (1987) views sex differences beyond tradition and argues that the behaviour of women and men is determined by social and gender roles. Eagly (1987) presents gender roles in relation to interpretation and meaning that societies assign to the categories of female and male. According to Eagly and Wood (2012:458), the formation of gender roles is rooted in people’s observation. Eagly and Wood (2012:458) suggest that gender roles form as people observe the behaviour of female and male and infer that the sexes possess corresponding dispositions. Gender roles according to Eagly (1987) and Wood and Eagly (2012) are those shared expectations about appropriate qualities and comportments. Gender roles include the stereotypes that society holds about individuals. Here individuals are expected to pose or behave in a certain way based on their gender. This perceived expectation based on gender is referred to as gender stereotype. According to Eagly (1987:12) gender roles “as seen from this perspective are to explain the sex differences in society”. As a result, gender itself is perceived to be socially influenced. Here, being a woman or a man is perceived to be a social construction, i.e. the influence of society on human behaviour which Connell and Pearse (2015:6) termed ‘gender appropriate behaviour’. The appropriate

behaviour here is based on a “social effort to channel people’s behaviour” (Connell & Pearse, 2015:6). Understanding the gender roles theory is appropriate for this study because it is a gender-related study, i.e. it is a gender-specific exploration, for instance, women in an educational leadership position.

Since this study explores women’s experiences of career advancement in educational leadership positions, the study utilised the concept of social role to understand different social roles that women in educational leadership positions are conformed to, being leaders or managers.

Eagly and Wood (1999) have identified two philosophical approaches to understanding social roles theory: the evolutionary psychological approach and socio-psychological approach. The evolutionary psychological disposition assumes that because women and men hold sex-specific traits they differ psychologically; thus, they tend to occupy different social roles (Eagly & Wood, 1999:408). The social-psychological character, on the other hand, accepts that because women and men tend to occupy the different positions, they become psychologically different in the ways that adjust them to these social roles (Eagly & Wood, 1999:408). Eagly and Wood (1999:408) emphasise psychological and social dispositions as the causes of social role. In a sense, the psychological domain is sex-specific while the social domain is social structure oriented. Although these dispositions differ in their orientations, they converged in that they “both offer functional analysis” to understand the social role (Eagly & Wood, 1999:408). For instance, they both emphasise the role of “environmental conditions” (Eagly & Wood, 1999:408). The evolutionary psychological dimension believes that sex differences arise as a result of adaptation to the physical and social environment (Eagly & Wood, 1999:408). The social-psychological dimension assumes that sex difference arises as a result of “contrasting social positions of women and men” as ingrained in social structures labelled gender hierarchy and patriarchy (Eagly & Wood, 1999:412). Gender hierarchy and patriarchy here outline the dominance of men over women in that women are considered subordinate regarding power and status (Eagly & Wood, 1999:412).

The fundamental underpinning of the social role is a division of labour between women and men (Eagly & Wood, 2012). The division of labour, according to Wood and Eagly (2012), is evident in all spheres of society. Wood and Eagly (2012) have rendered a distinct perspective to understanding social role based on the division of labour. Eagly and Wood (2011) observe the division of labour between women and men from a biosocial perspective. The biosocial

perspective in this study includes biological and social factors that influence the division of labour between women and men. The biosocial perspective according to Wood and Eagly (2012:57) consists of the following components: (i) distinctive physical attributes of women and men; women's reproductive activities and men's sizes and strength; and (ii) culture, socio-economic and ecological environment. The first set of components embodies biological factors while the second set embodies cultural, social-economic, and ecological factors. Wood and Eagly's (2012) analysis of social role from these different perspectives explains the origin of behaviour concerning biological, cultural, socio-psychological, and socio-economic factors. The analysis also captures how "the position of women and men in the social structure determines gender role" (Eagly & Wood, 2012:459). For instance, men's physical size and women's reproductive abilities are considered the cause of the division of labour while the division of labour, on the other hand, is the cause of gender roles.

2.2.2.1 Criticisms of social role theory

Jackson (1998) has observed the criticisms of the social role theory from both feminists and sociologist's perspectives. Jackson (1998:49) points out how the feminists have uncovered the detrimental use of the social role theory in social sciences and questioned its authenticity. Although it is assumed that social role theory informs social integration and maintains social order, critiques have questioned its authenticity in the social system, for instance, expectations to carry out presumed appropriate behaviour. Accordingly, recent scholars such as Kray *et al.* (2017:98) have observed how the social role as engrained in gender role "has predicted justification for gender role in that it supports status quo in relations between women and men".

Jackson's (1998) analysis captures the role of power in conforming to certain expectations. For instance, it is presumed that the person who holds the expectations might exercise sanctions on individuals who fail to comply with the expected roles.

2.2.2.2 Significance of social role theory to this study

The significance of social role as delineated by gender role is that social role is applicable to all spheres of life as "women and men are expected" to possess qualities appropriate to their gender (Acker, 2009:203). The fact that social role as defined by gender role, has been successfully used in part to maintain social order cannot be overemphasised. The notion of social role has been used

to understand women in leadership positions, particularly the educational leadership positions by scholars such as Shah and Shah (2012); Diko (2014); Koenig and Eagly (2014); and Allen *et al.* (2016). For instance, Shah and Shah (2012) have used the social role to understand women college heads and their leadership positions and; Allen *et al.* (2016) have used the social role theory to understand women and career advancement.

Although the cultural and social-economic dimensions of the social role are central to this study, the biological aspect cannot be overemphasised. The biological dimension to understanding social roles as embedded in physical attributes and reproductive activities are equally significant. In part, the reproductive aspect in relation to childbearing, nurturing and caring is vital to this study. Eagly and Wood (2012:465) explain the significance of reproductive activities. Unlike men, it is assumed that it is challenging for women to participate in rigorous activities such as “speed locomotion, uninterrupted activity, extended training, or long-distance travel away from home” (Eagly & Wood, 2012:465). Moreover, women are expected to perform specific roles which are in part based on their perceived abilities. The view concerning the abilities of women and men to perform certain activities based on their gender has given credence to communal and agentic phenomena (Abele, 2003). The agentic and communal domains have been used to differentiate male and female in the family and workplace (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Dulin, 2007; Wood & Eagly, 2012). While women in a family setting are expected to be engaged in housework and take care of children, they are accordingly, in the workplace expected to accept lower positions. The indication here is that women based on social roles are expected to conform to certain roles in society. The significant point regarding expectation of roles in this study is the issue of “communion and agentic competence” tension that one may face when adhering to the social role when it comes to leadership (Koenig & Eagly, 2014:371).

2.2.3 The feminist theory



The feminist theory is adopted to understand this study. Feminist theory delineates different perspectives to demystify and unveil different views, opinions and needs. The feminist theory presents a different theoretical understanding of feminism. According to Nicholson and Pasque (2011:3), feminism “is not a static notion; it develops with us throughout our lives, and it is formed by several lenses we use to view the world and ourselves.” Feminism itself is perceived as a multifaceted notion as it may involve different perspectives. As Greene and Griffiths (2005:73)

put it: “there is no one feminism; there are multiple points of view described as feminist”. According to Nicholson and Pasque (2011:3) feminism encapsulates “different meanings and thinking based on different group views, opinions and needs as supported by political, economic, social and personal factors.”

Watkins who is also known as ‘hooks’ (2000:viii) conceptualises feminism as a complex notion that has different meanings for people and suggests a simple definition for understanding it. Feminism is conceptualised as “a movement to put an end to sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression” (Watkins, 2000:viii). Feminism based on Watkins’ (2000:viii) understanding is “not about being a female or a male as we are all socialised to accept sexist thought and action from birth”. The implication here is that feminism is not a women’s movement against men (Watkins, 2000:viii).

From the above understanding, the acceptance of sexist thought and action have permeated gender inequality and all forms of exploitation or oppression between women and men, and among women or men respectfully (Lorber, 1997:8). Lorber (1997:8) considers gender inequality as a societal problem engrained; and is perceived to reside in every “structure of marriage and family, work, economy, politics, religion” and others. As such, sexism thought and action is perceived as a social construction that has justified gender inequality (Watkins, 2000:viii).

There have been three waves of feminism for understanding different perspectives that underpin feminism: the first-wave feminism, the second-wave feminism and the third-wave feminism (Code 2000; Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006; Nicholson & Pasque, 2011). The first wave of feminism presented the movements of the 19th century and aimed at gender equality and women’s liberation (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006:1). The first wave of feminism is perceived to rise in the context of industrial society and liberal politics in parallel with liberal and social feminism (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006:1). This movement has been traced to the work of Mary Wollstonecraft who aimed at confronting inequality that women face (Code, 2000; Harrison & Boyd, 2003; Nehere, 2016). The second wave of feminism which emerged between 1960s and 70s presented radical perspectives for understanding feminism (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006:7). One of the goals of the second wave of feminism, as mentioned by Nehere (2016), is to criticise the first wave of feminism whose aim was middle-class white women.

Central to second-wave feminism here according to Code (2000:xix), is women's lives and their diverse experiences regardless of their colour. The movement presents the inclusion of black women as it is believed that their experiences were neglected in the first wave of feminism (Code, 2000; Acker, 2006). The varied lived experiences of women here entail what Crenshaw (1989) views as intersectionality. Crenshaw (1989:139) argues that black women can experience discrimination in any form such as race/ethnicity, gender, class or other forms of oppression. Women's varied lived experiences can further be referred to what Acker (2006:441) calls inequality regimes and conceptualised as the "interlocked practices and processes" that produce the persistence of inequality.

Code (2000:xix) views conscience raising as significant to this movement as it entails "women learning from one another, sharing experiences to assess shared aims for modifications to ensure sisterhood". Hurst *et al.* (2016:61) mention that the idea of "sisterhood is to ensure unity and support among women, especially it is expected that women in positions of power will serve as role models for others and then enhance women's representation in leadership positions". The third wave of feminism stresses the capability of women and is believed to be built on the privileges of the first and second waves of feminism (Hurst *et al.*, 2016). As stated earlier, there are different perspectives to understanding feminism, but this study will only engage with liberal, social, radical and psychoanalytic views to feminism as presented by Krolokke and Sorenson (2006), Nicholson and Pasque (2011) and others. Four perspectives are chosen due to their appropriateness to this study as they exemplify women's experiences regarding the varied experiences of their situation as female leaders in educational leadership.

2.2.3.1 Liberal feminism

The liberal perspective to feminism concerns itself with issues of women's political rights and their rights to education (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006:1). The intent entails "confronting stereotypical behaviours that stipulate how women should behave or talk; and restrict women's place to home, meeting the desires of husband and children" (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006:5). Seemingly, the intent of liberal feminism is the emancipation of women, which entails ensuring equality, women's participation in public and political activities (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006:1). Personal and political autonomy is significant here as they view "physical demand, reproduction and motherhood as a drain on women's natural potential" (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:6).

Liberal feminism does not only question the beliefs that women are not capable of engaging in public activity; it also disrupts the status quo that creates a dichotomy between women and men (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006; Nicholson & Pasque, 2011). Liberal feminism explains the position of women and argues that patriarchal beliefs have subjugated women and hindered their opportunities to reach full potential; hence perceived as the cause of gender social injustices (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:5). Patriarchal beliefs are perceived to be strengthened by ‘biological determinism’ of Aristotle that views men as superior to women physically and emotionally; and suggests gender-appropriate jobs considering their femininity and masculinity (Code, 2000:xx; Connell & Pearse, 2015:6), (see 2.2.2).

2.2.3.2 Social feminism

In line with liberal feminism, the concern of social feminism is social justice, focusing on socio-economic and political perspectives to analyse and remove women’s oppression (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:7). From social economic and political views, women are required to attain economic and political power, as it is believed that women have contributed to their oppression through participation as a consumer (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:8). It further explains women’s situation in the workplace, for instance “unequal pay, barriers to career advancement and lack of family-friendly policies” which can impact women’s emancipation (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:8).

Central here is the intent of social feminism to alter the dependence of women on men and family; and ensure their involvement in productive labour that will afford them socio-economic and political power (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006:10). The goal is to disrupt the social role, gender and patriarchy in society and ensure equal opportunities for women and men alike (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006; and Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:8). However, social feminism, according to Krolokke and Sorenson (2006:9), places more emphasis on working-class women with the intent to confront “women’s oppression, the interests of the working class, blacks, women and homosexuals”.

2.2.3.3 Radical feminism

The core of radical feminism is the “disruption of systematic, institutional and individual oppression based on the belief that social and liberal feminisms are not proactive enough to combat them” (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:6). Radical feminism is conceptualised from two perspectives:

radical libertarian feminism and radical cultural feminism. The radical libertarian feminism concerns itself with “personal freedom of expression and androgyny as an option to combat gender inequality and women’s oppression” (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:6). Androgyny means a combination of femininity and masculinity, i.e. gender-neutral persons (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011).

However, radical cultural feminism believes that “the root of women’s oppression is not femininity, rather the low value that patriarchy assigns to feminine qualities” (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:6). It is believed that “if society could place more value on feminine quality, there would be less oppression” (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:6). Bisong and Samuel (2014:35) mention that radical feminism views femininity from a positive perspective, as it is believed that “women are kinder or gentler.” This, however, shows the unique characteristics of women as mother, kinder, carer etc. (Bisong & Samuel, 2014). The significance of radical feminism to this study is that it has helped to form the basis for understanding the numerous factors that explain the persistence of gender inequality.

2.2.3.4 Psychoanalytic feminism

Psychoanalytic feminism aims at furthering the understanding of feminism and women’s situation with the intent of disrupting the persistence of “non-feminist and patriarchal behaviours” (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:8). According to Nicholson and Pasque (2011:8), psychoanalytic feminism traces gender inequality to childhood experiences where women and men are labelled as feminine and masculine; and then adopt gendered characteristic that later becomes value-laden and constitutes bias against women.

The assumption here is that women have been socialised from the young age to perceive that men are superior. The implication here is that the perception that women have of themselves may undermine their confidence and pursuit of careers (Nicholson & Pasque, 2011:8). Psychoanalytic feminism shows the significance of self-concept in that it presents and analyses how the perception of others can determine how women perceive self and their career path. Psychoanalytic feminism becomes essential in this study as it serves the basis for understanding women in educational leadership to perceive themselves and their educational leadership positions.

2.2.3.5 Criticisms of feminist theory

Critiques of the feminist theory lie within its different perspectives and their intents. For instance, liberal feminism failure to include women of colour has led to the formation of radical feminism whose purpose is to ensure the inclusion of women of colour and their varied experiences. Although they agree that the role feminism is significant in society, for instance raising conscience about women's oppression throughout history, Bisong and Samuel (2014) believe that there is no basis for feminism to agitate for equality and equal opportunities. Bisong and Samuel (2014) argue that if feminism beliefs about equality are based on gender equality, for instance, sharing of the same human nature; then animals can also claim equality with the human races. The contestation of Bisong and Samuel (2014) is that women should fight for rights, not equality; they believe that if women want equality they should work hard. Indeed, we cannot overemphasise that women are working hard to ensure equality in all areas, especially attaining education and as such, are gaining spaces in the workforce although not as expected. However, the contestation of feminism about equality appears to be more than gender equality based on the sharing of the same nature with men; it is about ensuring equality for both women and men. For instance, as stated before, feminism is about removing "biological determinism" which undermines women's capability (Code, 2000:xx). This includes confrontation of cultural beliefs and norms which stipulate gender roles and categorise women as communal and men as agentic, which then leads to the perception that men are ideal leaders.

2.2.3.6 The significance of feminist perspectives to this study

The centrality of feminism is the disruption of all the norms attached to gender inequality. Feminist theory becomes significant in this study, especially in understanding women's experiences of their career advancement as informed by their varied experiences of their situations as an individual in society and organisation. According to Harrison and Boyd (2003:296), feminism focuses on the analysis of the social position of women and their subsidiary role in history, campaign for improvement and women's advancement in all spheres of society. Specifically, "the support of political ideologies that maintain social norms" and therefore, perpetuate gender inequality, stereotype, patriarchy, role congruity, and others are questioned (Jackson, 1998:49). The role of feminism regarding these perspectives cannot be overemphasised as they have strongly analysed and criticised different forms of stereotypical behaviours and inequalities against women and the

oppressed in society (Jackson, 1998; Watkins, 2000). For example, considering the postulation of the social role regarding shared expectations based on cultural norms and beliefs, Jackson (1998) notes the influence of social roles in contributing to the perpetuation of “normative behaviours and attitudes”. The contention here is that individuals as members of society are expected to conform and accommodate certain prescribed behaviours through internalisation and imitation (Jackson, 1998; Allen *et al.*, 2016). Noting that men do not form the only group who perpetuates sexist thinking and behaviour, Watkins (2000:8) reveals that feminist focus is the creation of gender justice. Nehere (2016:8) conceptualises feminism from a broader perspective and mentions that the focus of feminism is “to increase individuals’ consciousness about the truth of women’s oppression.” This, according to Nehere (2016:8), entails the “creation of a framework that will increase women’s self-esteem, ensure women’s participation in decision making and social actions, empower women and facilitate recognition of women’s value and worth by society.” Accordingly, situating this study in a feminist perspective is to unravel the causes of different barriers that women face on their career path, this is to better understand the barriers to proffer solutions that could help curtail them.

2.2.4 The transactional-transformational leadership theory

The transactional-transformational leadership theory was adopted to understand this study. Leadership itself is an integral part of society. According to Uzohue *et al.* (2016:17), leadership “is the process of developing ideas and a vision and living by values that endorse these ideas and vision”. The ‘process’ according to Uzohue *et al.* (2016:17) includes ability “to encourage people or groups to embrace their behaviours and make decisions about human and other resources to attain organisational goals”. Leadership as inferred from the above perspectives presents an assumption of responsibilities to achieve specific goals and outcomes.

There are different forms of leadership theories, which include the great man leadership theory, the trait leadership theory and contingency leadership theory. The great man theory is based on the inherent capacity of an individual to lead and the philosophical postulation that leaders are born and are not made (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013). Specifically, leadership positions are perceived as a male domain (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015). The trait leadership theory is characteristics-based, and entirely related to great man theory. The philosophical underpinning of the trait theory is that people inherit certain traits and qualities that make them suitable for leadership positions

(Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015). There is no single leadership style appropriate for all situations; but informed leadership style depends on the nature of the followers and work situation (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015:8). Transactional leadership theory as based on status quo entails exchange relationship between leaders and followers suggests a form of contingent reward for carrying out a specific activity (Burns 1978; Bass, 1985; 1990; and Bass & Avolio 1993; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015). The transformational leadership theory is based on the actualisation of interests beyond individuals (Bass; 1985; 1990).

The transactional and transformational leadership theories are expounded by Burns (1978) and expanded upon by Bass (1985; 1990). Burns (1978) views leadership from the transactional and transformational perspectives and proposes that leaders can adopt one of the two. Burns (1978) draws a distinction between these two forms of leadership. The transactional leadership presents an exchange of valued things with the expectation of reward (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985, 1990; Suresh & Rajini; 2013; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). I begin with the presentation of the nature of transactional leadership in this study to understand the women's experiences of educational leadership positions. According to Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013:356), the transactional leadership theory also described as “managerial leadership”, emphasises the role of supervision, organisation and group performance. The practice of management in transactional leadership makes it significant to this study.

Bass (1985), Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) and Bass and Riggio (2006) provide a theoretical framework for understanding the transactional-transformational leadership theory using a Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Bass (1985) established the full range of leadership model on MLQ performance. Bass (1985), Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) and Bass and Riggio (2006) suggest a combination of the elements of both transactional and transformation leadership styles of leadership, as transformational leadership is viewed as an improvement on transactional leadership. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999:184) reported that “most leaders have a profile of the full range of leadership model that presents the theories of both transactional and transformational leadership”. The importance of Bass (1985), Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) and Bass and Riggio (2006), in the discourses of leadership is the movement beyond a dichotomy between transactional and transformational leadership. For example, Bass and Riggio (2006:4) note that transformational leadership is in “some way an expansion of transactional leadership”.

Transactional leadership presents a transaction between leaders and followers (Bass, 1990; Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to Bass (1990:20), transactional leadership is based on expectation and reward. The leaders “propose what is expected of the followers and what compensation they will receive if they fulfil the requirements” (Bass, 1990:20). Transactional leadership, according to Bass (1990:20) is categorised by two factors: initiating and organising work and showing consideration for employees. While the first factor focuses on management, the second factor emphasises employees’ self-interest in the form of reward and punishment (Bass, 1990:20). The transactional leadership perspective assumes that a leader’s ability to reward or discipline employees will determine her/his effectiveness (ibid). Figure 2.1 depicts the features of the transactional leadership theory.



Figure 2.1 Nomenclature of transactional leadership theory (Adapted from Bass, 1990).

Figure 2.1 further presents the elements that characterise transactional leadership: contingent reward, management by exception (MBE) and laissez-faire (Bass, 1990:21). The contingent reward is concerned with the exchange of reward for performance. A leader from the contingent reward or ‘contingent penalisation’ perspective makes clear to the followers what is expected of them and what to expect when they achieve a specific goal (Bass & Riggio, 2006:8).

The contingent reward, according to Bass and Riggio (2006:8), can be both transactional and transformational. It is transactional when it involves a material one, that is, a bonus award for performance beyond expectation (Bass and Riggio, 2006:8). Conversely, the contingent reward is viewed as transformational when it involves psychological reward such as praise for performance beyond expectation. The management by exception (MBE) is viewed from active (A) and passive (P) perspectives (Bass, 1990; Bass & Riggio, 2006). The 'A' perspective focuses on taking necessary action to guide and monitor organisational rules and regulations. The 'P' perspective is concerned with interventions which leaders are expected to make when the organisational set standards are not met (Bass, 1990; Bass & Riggio, 2006). The transactional leadership from Laissez-faire perspective presents "an avoidance or lack of leadership" (Bass & Riggio, 2006:9). From the laissez-faire perspective, leaders tend to avoid taking responsibility in that they circumvent being involved in organisational activities in terms of decision making, goals performance and achievements. From this perspective, leaders are presumed to avoid responsibility where actions are expected. These elements present the strength and weakness of leaders who assume transactional leadership. Bass (1990); Bass and Riggio (2006) categorised contingency reward domain as active, while the 'A' aspect of the MBE is also categorised as effective. The 'P' aspect is considered ineffective. The laissez-faire is viewed as non-transactional.

Given that any of or all these elements may characterise a leader suggests that organisational failure or success in part, depends on the organisational leadership. While transactional leadership may help leaders to achieve the organisational goal, it may also result in organisational failure. The effectiveness of transactional leadership when we refer to contingent reward and active aspect of MBE domains need cooperation and "a sense of self-worth" from the leaders and the followers; thus, the adoption of transformational leadership becomes significant (Bass & Riggio, 2006:8). Transformational is an interactive form of leadership. There is an exchange though, the exchange, according to Bass and Riggio (2006:4) is based on discussion and understanding between the followers and leaders. The followers and leaders through mutual understanding provide modality to achieve the organisational goals; and rewards if the requirements are satisfied. Transformational leadership is focused on the interest of the employees and the achievement of organisational goals and mission (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990; Lee, 2014). From the transformational leadership perspective, leaders and followers alike mutually work together towards achieving the set organisational goals. Transformational leadership presents "the features of individual influence, spiritual assurance and intellectual stimulation" (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014:57).

These characteristics go beyond individual interest; they emphasise the interest of the leaders and followers. As a result, transformational leadership suggests a high level of interaction between leaders and followers. The terminologies for understanding transformational leadership are presented in figure 2.2.

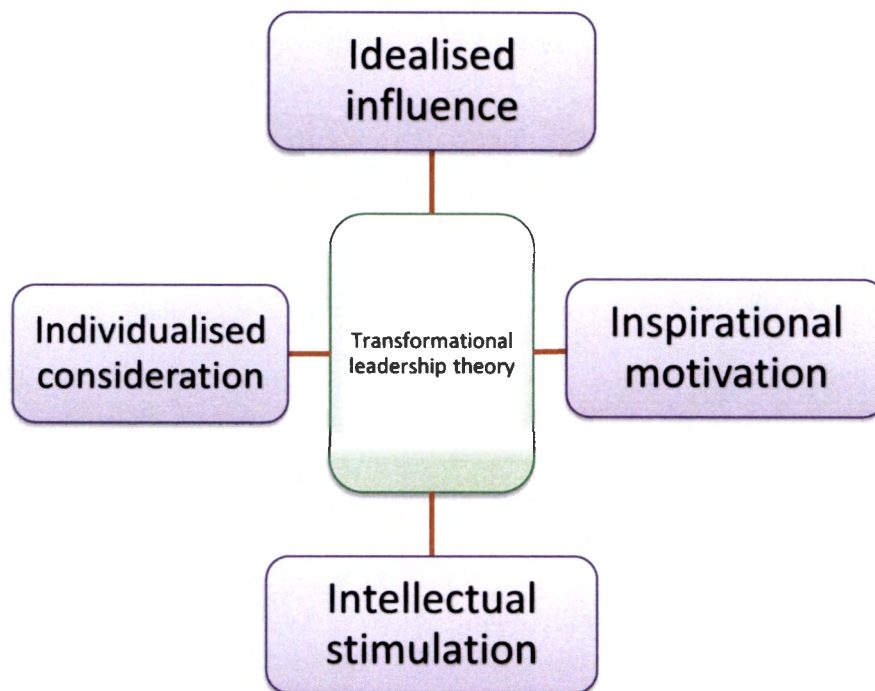


Figure 2.2 Nomenclature of transformational leadership theory (Adapted from Bass, 1990:22).

Bass (1985; 1990); Bass and Avolio (1993); and Bass and Riggio (2006) identify four theoretical components of the transformational leadership and include charisma, inspiration, individualised consideration, and intellectual stimulation. The four theoretical frameworks present four elements which describe the nature of a leader who assumes transformational leadership styles. The elements are categorised as 4Is: (i) idealised influence, (ii) inspirational motivation (iii) individualised contribution and (iv) intellectuality. The idealised leader is endowed with a charismatic power. The element of charisma involves leaders' ability "to provide vision and sense of mission" to their followers (Bass, 1990:22). Based on the charismatic nature of the leaders, they gain respect from followers. The followers tend to identify with them (Bass, 1990:22; Bass & Riggio, 2006:6). Followers see leaders as "role models and emulate them" because they mentor and motivate them (Bass & Riggio, 2006:6). The element of inspiration presents an inspirational leader, "endowed with enthusiasm and optimism, for instance, ability to communicate high

expectation” (Bass, 1990:22; Bass & Riggio, 2006:7). This includes the ability to stimulate and mentor their followers to face challenges and solve problems. Specifically, a transformational leader provides followers with “an optimistic and attractive vision” and empowers them (Andreani & Petrik, 2016:25). The transformational leadership here goes beyond self-interest and contingent reward. The focus of transformational leadership is to motivate and enhance followers’ abilities to face organisational challenges. In fact, by the power of persuasion and conviction, the followers tend to do more than expected. The transformational leadership is concerned with taking employees into consideration by meeting their needs rationally and intellectually (Bass, 1990:21). The individualised consideration focuses on the individual or personal attention and treatment of employees, this involves leaders’ ability to enhance mutual relationship in the organisation, “coach and advise their followers” (Bass, 1990:21). The intellectual stimulation is concerned with intellectuality, and this includes ability to enhance and promote rationality in the organisation. As a result, the followers are stimulated to expand the use of their abilities, which involves abilities to question assumptions and face new challenges with different perspectives without fear of failure (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

2.2.4.1 Criticisms of the transactional-transformational leadership theory

Both transactional and transformational leadership theories are faced with criticisms. First, I will present the bias ascribed to transactional leadership theory. Bass (1985); Yukl (1999); Bass and Riggio (2006); Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013); McCleskey (2014); Sultana *et al.* (2015); and others have pointed out the criticisms of transactional leadership theory. As mentioned in section 2.4, the criticisms of transactional leadership theory are based on its inherent characteristics: contingent reinforcement, management by exception and laissez-faire attitude.

For instance, Yukl (1999) has questioned the inclusion of the components of transactional leadership. Yukl (1999) argues that even though transactional leadership is defined as a “process of leader-subordinate exchange, the theory has failed to link this and each of its components.” Yukl (1999:289) suggests that contingent reward such as praise should be part of transformational and transactional leadership theories since it is personal. The inclusion of MBE and laissez-faire is also questioned. It is assumed that the ‘P’ aspect of management by exception and laissez faire do not involve an exchange; therefore, they should not have been included as components of transactional leadership theory (Yukl, 1999:287). While one could agree that it is possible to have

passive leaders who can wait until “it is broken before it is fixed” (Bass 1990:20), the inclusion of laissez faire is not essential. Yukl’s (1999) analysis though, focuses on transformational and charismatic leadership, which is significant because, in part, it focuses on transactional-transformational leadership theories.

The contractual nature of transactional leadership theory that is founded on the transactional connection between leaders and followers has also been questioned. McCleskey (2014:122) opined that transactional connection between leaders and followers is likely to be “superficial since it is built on temporary exchanges of gratifications”. As a result, transactional leadership often creates resentment between leaders and followers. Since a transactional relationship is based on self-interest, failure to achieve a set goal from the two parties may result in conflict and hatred. Bass (1985); Bass and Riggio (2006); Odumeru (2013) and McCleskey (2014) have pointed out the punishment aspect of contingent reinforcement as a detriment to transactional leadership theory, for instance, reliance on punishment when the status quo is not conformed to or when an accomplishment is not fulfilled. A dependence on punishment may impact on followers. According to Sultana *et al.* (2015:4), reliance on punishment for any mistake may result in involuntary manipulation to save self from punishment.

Based on Yukl (1999) and recent scholars such as Lee (2014); Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013); and Sultana *et al.* (2015), the criticisms of transformational leadership theory are conceptualised from three main domains: (i) conceptual weakness, (ii) applicability and (iii) ethical dimension. The conceptual weakness includes the ambiguity of the components of the transformational leadership theory. The conceptual weakness points to the indistinctness of the components of the transformational leadership theory and their processes. For Yukl (1999:288), the ambiguity of the components can raise a question concerning the validity of the components of transformational leadership theory. However, Sultana *et al.* (2015) defend the overlapping nature of the components of the transformational leadership theory. Sultana *et al.* (2015:2) propose that though the components are related, they are independently evaluated since they are theoretically different and essential for critical function. For instance, idealised influence offers a vision and sense of mission, while inspirational motivation conveys grand expectations. According to Sultana *et al.* (2015:2), the universal applicability points out “the inadequate measurement of situational variables”. This involves the assumption that transformational leadership developments and consequences are similar in all situations. From an ethical perspective, it is believed that transformational leadership

has placed more emphasis on the influence of leaders on individual followers while group or organisational level processes are ignored, for instance how well the group work together mutually to achieve organisational goals is ignored (Yukl, 1999; Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013; Lee, 2014). The argument here is that the transformational leaders solely determine organisational effectiveness; therefore, the influence of leaders becomes unidirectional as it flows from the leader to the follower. Here, transformational leadership is presumed to lack reciprocity. Yukl (1999) maintains that a detailed description of leaders' influences on organisational processes is provided. This implies that despite the pertinence of the leaders' role in the organisation, the role of all stakeholders remains vital. Also, the ethical perspective includes its failure to sufficiently identify the negative effects of transformational leadership theory. The view here is that the theory fails to point out that transformational leadership processes may not be favourable in all situations (Yukl, 1999:29 Sultana *et al.*, 2015:21). It is further assumed that transformational leadership through motivation can be biased in favouring top management and owners. For instance, there is a possibility that leaders through emotional involvement can exploit followers to achieve organisational goals without even realising it. The heroic bias points out the heroic conception of leadership, for instance the view of leaders as extraordinary when organisational goals are achieved (Yukl, 1999:291).

Bass and Riggio (2006) note the criticisms of transactional and transformational leadership and argue that transactional and transformational leadership, including the use of MLQ, has been adopted widely. Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013); and Sultana *et al.* (2015) allude to the universality of transactional and transformational leadership theories. For instance, Sultana *et al.* (2015:1) present transactional and transformational leadership theories as "the most well-known leadership theories". As a result, transactional and transformational leadership can be presented as universal forms of leadership.

Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) note the criticisms of transactional and transformational leadership and place them within the framework of moral and ethical phenomena. Since the philosophical underpinning of transactional leadership is based on self-interest, Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) argue for the adoption of moral legitimacy and transparency. The adoption of moral legitimacy and transparency, according to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) is freedom, respect, integrity, trust, the keeping of promise and respect for all participants in the contractual agreement. Bass and Riggio (2006) by way of defending the criticisms of transformational leadership equated it to authentic

transformational leadership. According to Bass and Steidlmeier (1999:187) the authentic leadership “offers a more convincing and realistic concept of self – a self that is connected to friends, family, and community whose welfare may be more to oneself than one’s own.” Central to transformational leadership here is the interest and welfare of the others. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999:187) compare the authentic leadership with pseudo-transformational leadership which they categorised as self-serving leadership; seeking power at the expense of followers. Bass and Riggio (2006:5) present a pseudo-transformational leader as one who possesses exploitative and self-interest traits. This form of leadership may lead followers astray. A person who assumes pseudo-transformational leadership is considered one who misleads, deceives, and manipulates (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Bass & Riggio, 2006). The one who assumes authentic leadership is reflected as one who focuses on people.

2.2.4.2 Putting transactional-transformational leadership into perspectives: Leadership-Management

Although subtle differences are identified between leadership and management, they complement each other (Ademe & Singh, 2015; Mohammadkhani & Gholamzadeh 2016). Ademe and Singh (2015:22) indicate that although both management and leadership are used interchangeably, they are two separate words that complement each other. For instance, according to Mohammadkhani and Gholamzadeh (2016:277), the onus of creating, illuminating, and formulating of vision as achievable goals through the contributions of the subordinates lie on leadership.

On the other hand, the responsibility of planning, allocating of resources and ensuring the achievement of organisational goals lies firmly on management. The responsibility includes instituting rules and regulations that guide the achievement of such goals (Mohammadkhani & Gholamzadeh, 2016:277). While management is viewed as the maintenance of organisational activities, leadership initiates organisational goals and vision for accomplishments (Bush, 2007). As observed by Manoj and Shilpa (2013:309), even though leadership and management are not the same, they go hand in hand. The aim of engaging with these theories is for possible integration of the strength of transactional leadership theory into transformational leadership theory. As Middleton *et al.* (2015) observe, most leaders can make use of the elements of transactional and transformational leadership.

2.2.4.3 The significance of transactional-transformational leadership theory to this study

Whether or not transformational leadership is applied in conjunction with transactional leadership, it is essential to point out that transformational leadership has been one of the extensively used forms of leadership theory (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013; McCleskey, 2014; Chao, 2017). While transactional leadership is often associated with masculine leadership style, the transformational leadership is associated with a feminine leadership style (Hoyt & Simon, 2017:4). However, Deloitte (2011:1) argues that “being an effective leader is not related to be a woman or a man; leadership is leadership.” Deloitte goes further to argue for “rethink on gender and leadership and proposes that gender should not be used to evaluate leadership’s effectiveness. This is to “enable leaders’ capability to be observed individually and not according to covert gender stereotypes” (ibid). However, the beliefs that women do possess distinct leadership styles and skills differ from those of men should not be overemphasised; for instance, “relations-oriented and participative leadership behaviours” (Zulu, 2011:843). Transformational leadership theory has been widely used to inform the study of women and leadership (Chao, 2017). Chao (2017) has used transformational leadership theory to understand women in leadership positions. Chao (2017) uses the transformational leadership theory to examine Chinese women’s leadership styles. Chao (2017) in the study emphasises the importance of transformational leadership style as embedded in vision, determination and decision making.

The transactional-transformational leadership theory, however, has been used by Zulu (2009) and Naidoo and Perumal (2014) to understand women in educational leadership. As observed by Al-Jaradat (2014:148), leadership is not “a simple process as it requires multiple abilities, whether it is assumed by women or men”. The importance of transactional-transformational leadership theory in this study lies within the augmentation of their components. The complementariness achieved through the use of two or more leadership approaches has been noted by scholars such as Amanchukwu *et al.* (2015), and Naidoo and Perumal (2014). Amanchukwu *et al.* (2015:10) suggest that leadership is not a “one size fits all” phenomenon. Here leadership is presumed to be a selection and adaptation of different leadership approaches such as transactional and transformational to fit various organisations, groups, and individuals. Transactional leadership components can be adopted when there is a need to supervise and organise a group and organisational process. We can also select transformational leadership components when there is

a need to motivate, inspire, and engage followers to achieve organisational goals (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015:10).

Bass and Riggio (2006) combined the four elements of transformational leadership theory: charisma or idealised influence, inspirational motivations, individualised consideration, and intellectual stimulation. We cannot overemphasise the significance of the four elements of transformational leadership theory as they deal with collaborations, i.e. relationship and interactions among leaders, colleagues, followers, and organisational processes. The elements of transactional leadership can be useful when it comes to “supervision of a large number of followers” (Gomes, 2014:67.).

The feature of transactional leadership such as being “directive and action-oriented” is crucial as this aspect might as well be significant in setting and achieving organisational goals (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013:358). Hence, the transactional-transformational leadership theory becomes vital to this study as it might prove a deeper understanding of the experiences of women in educational leadership positions regarding career advancement to educational leadership positions at district offices.

The characteristics of transformational leadership: idealised influence, inspirational motivation, individualised considerations, and intellectual stimulation, might form part of the basis for women’s experiences of career advancement to educational leadership positions. For instance, “focusing on motivating and inspiring others to reach their potential” might be relevant to attainability and sustainability of educational leadership positions (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015:9). This, according to Gomes (2014:65), includes inspiring others to mutually identify vision, create a sense of self-worth and purpose that exceeds self-interest.

2.3 ALIGNING THE FOUR THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS



The four theoretical frameworks used in this study are related and interacted. Self-concept and social roles are essential characteristics of social behaviours, and experiences depend on the individual’s perspectives, views, opinions, and their society. Both self-concept and social roles focus on the internalisation of other individuals’ behaviours to shape an individual’s behaviour. Feminist theory focuses on the analysis of gender inequality in society, and on women’s lived experiences in patriarchal societies. As an individual in society, one expects to carry out a specific

role being a woman or man; as a result, social roles are often gender specific. Thus, gender roles also become an integral part of social behaviour and experiences. Although stereotypical archetype may often be derogatory, it is assumed that women and men do possess different attributes which might form part of their gender roles, for instance being communal or agentic. Besides, an individual as a member of society needs to conform to certain rules and norms. The concepts *agentic* and *communal* form the philosophical underpinning of transactional and transformational leadership theory, respectively. Leadership forms an essential aspect of the socio-political strata of society for instance, women's experiences of career advancement to educational leadership positions; specifically, the sustainability and attainability of educational leadership positions.

Consequently, I argue that situating this study within the four theoretical frameworks might provide insights into a better understanding of women's experiences of career advancement to educational leadership positions. Specifically, these theories would provide insights into the exploration of the persistence of the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions. Also, I reason that understanding women based on these theoretical frameworks might help to proffer guidelines that might influence women's attainability and sustainability of educational leadership positions.

2.4 SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the concepts of self-concept, social roles, and transactional-transformational leadership theory as the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study. As a theoretical framework, the notion of self-concept presents women's beliefs and opinions of selves as inextricably based on the perception of the others. In the context of this study, it is considered that every woman in an educational leadership position possesses a self-concept. The self-concept in the perspective of women in educational leadership in this study might involve how they see themselves as individual leaders, mothers, wives, sisters from the perspective of the others.

The social roles as a theoretical framework for understanding this study reflect distinct roles that women are conformed to, based on social structures. It is considered that women in educational leadership have certain social roles they are conformed to being women. Focusing on a social role in this study might widen our understanding of women's different roles parallel to their career advancement experiences in educational leadership positions.

Feminist theory serves as a theoretical lens for understanding and analysing women's varied experiences. A feminist theory strengthened by liberal, social, radical and psychoanalytic feminist perspectives is presented. Even though these perspectives have their convergences, they all aim at analysing the reasons for gender inequality and means to combat them. Engaging with these perspectives has provided the basis for analysing and understanding women's experiences of educational leadership from the standpoint of women better.

Transactional-transformational leadership as a theoretical framework in this study refers to leadership styles in organisations. As Bantwini and Moorosi (2016:4) opine, the transactional and transformational approaches to leadership are often dichotomised. Even though the attributes of transformational leadership are often the unique characteristics of women, their argumentation with the transactional leadership approach is vital to this study. It is presumed that adopting the transactional-transformational leadership approach might broaden our understanding of different situations women might have encountered in educational leadership positions regarding attainability and sustainability of these positions. Importantly, engaging with transactional and transformational leadership theories in this study might assist us in erasing the issue of dichotomy that often underpins women and men leadership styles, that is, agentic and communal. Therefore, we can interrogate women's varied experiences of educational leadership positions at the district office. The interrogation might open a space for a better understanding of this study.

The next chapter will discuss the background of the education district office as the context of this study. It will discuss the impediments to women's career advancement from academic perspectives as a means for understanding factors behind the persistence of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions.

CHAPTER 3

EDUCATION DISTRICT OFFICE AND WOMEN'S CAREER ADVANCEMENT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background to the education district office as the context of this study. It discusses the impediments to women's career advancement from academic perspectives as a means for understanding factors behind the persistence of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions. In correspondence with the theoretical framework of the study as discussed in Chapter 2, concepts such as glass ceiling, inequality regimes, labyrinth, individual, society and organisation are considered in understanding the career experiences of women in educational leadership positions. Accordingly, different strategies that have been suggested by different scholars to eliminate factors that can hinder women's career advancement are also presented.

3.2 EDUCATION DISTRICT OFFICE

The education district office in South Africa is an arm of the educational system situated between the provincial department of education and education institutions and the public (DoE, 2012:8). The power of the education district office lies in the Provincial Education Department (DBE, 2012:13). Bantwini and Diko (2011:226) describe South Africa's education districts as the "intermediaries between the National and Provincial Departments of Education, and the local schools". One can view the education district office as an arm of the education system which operates at grass-root level. Education district office depicts decentralisation of education whereby power is delegated from the top sphere of education to the bottom for implementation at school level. This form of decentralisation, according to the UNESCO (2017:1) rests upon the district office, i.e. office-based and school-based educators. The roles of district office educators, according to UNESCO (2017:2), are to enact education policies, monitor education quality and provide instructive support for school-based educators (UNESCO, 2017:2). The focus of this study is the office-based educators at the district offices. These are the education specialists, senior education specialists, deputy chief education specialists, chief education specialists, sub-district managers, circuit managers and human resource managers who are in educational leadership and thus responsible for the smooth running of the basic educational system.

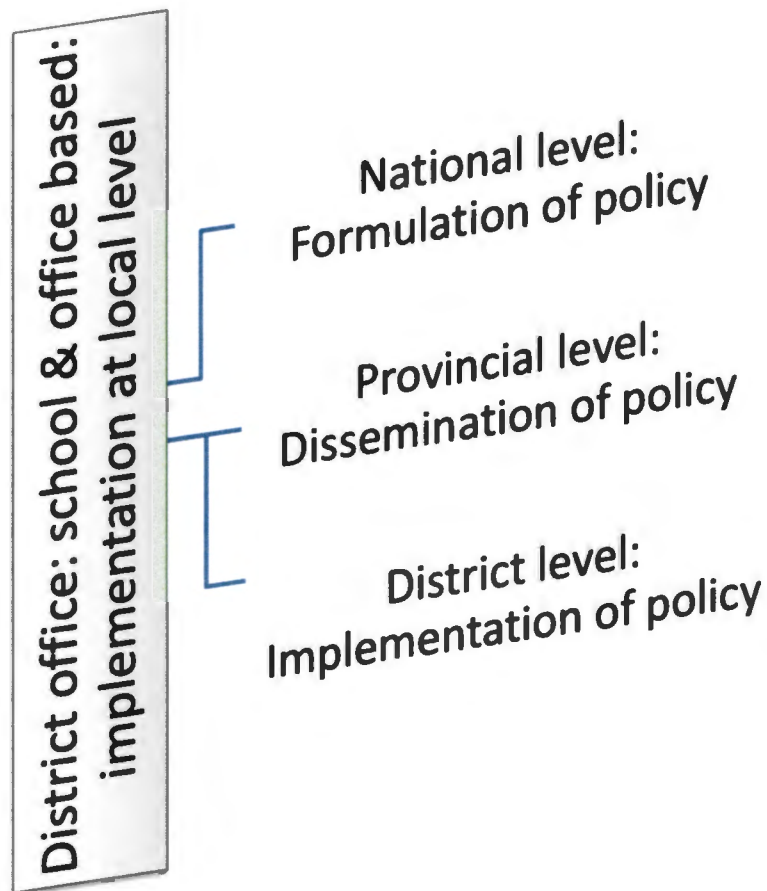


Figure 3.1 Example of the South African education system administration

(Adapted from the policy on the organisational roles and responsibilities of education districts, DBE 2012).

3.2.1 The significance of education district office

Although the roles of education district vary from one province to the other, the roles amongst others, according to the DBE (2012:33-45) include the provision of leadership; planning and management; strategic planning and transformation; research and development; curriculum delivery and staff development and others.

The significance of the district education office has been depicted in different countries' education policy statements as an essential dimension of the education system due to its contribution to quality teaching and learning. For instance, in Kenya, the significance of district education office lies within the management of schools at local level as it plays an interactive role with the Ministry

of Education (MOE) and schools regarding the implementation of government policy on education at district level (KLR, 2012). Amondi (2011) has identified different functions of the MOE, which include amongst others: dissemination and implementation of education policies, administration and management of education programmes; planning and implementation of education and training programmes; curriculum development and implementation; provision of curriculum support materials through the education district office. The education district office in countries such as Ghana, Niger and Uganda, is expected to manage schools (ILO, 2016); this involves the enactment of education policies at school level (Eghan, 2016:643). Accordingly, in the South African context, the role of the education district office is to manage and support education (DBE, 2012). In the South African context, the functions of education district office are stated by the department of basic education in the policy on the organisational roles and responsibilities of education districts (DBE, 2012:13-14). The functions are divided into three main categories as depicted in figure 3.2: (i) support (ii) accountability and (iii) public information.

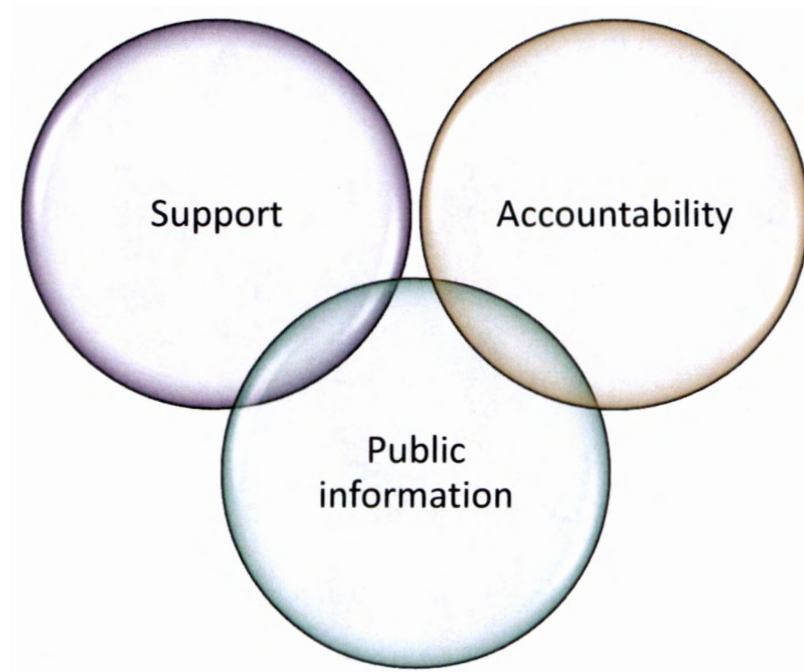


Figure 3.2 Roles of the education district office (Adapted from the policy on the organisational roles and responsibilities of education districts, DBE 2012).

- (i) **Support:** The role of the district office is to provide an enabling environment for schools under its jurisdiction to work within education law and policy. Since the district office works directly with school principals, it assists them in ensuring improvements in

teaching and learning quality. This includes the provision of professional development to educators and the administrative staff.

- (ii) **Accountability:** Since the district office oversees the running affairs of schools in its jurisdiction, it is responsible for the district schools' performance. As a result, it is the district office's responsibility to pay a visit to schools to diagnose problems and provide interventions where necessary.
- (iii) **Public information:** Since the district office is an intermediary between the provincial department of education, the school, and the public, it is its responsibility to ensure communication flow among the three spheres.

As against the racially based "19 education departments of apartheid", the education system in South Africa is categorised into two strata: Basic Education and Higher Education and Training departments (Christie *et al.*, 2011:12). The basic education department deals with General Education, GR-12, including literacy education (DBE, 2015b). Higher Education and Training is concerned with tertiary schooling. The basic Education stratum which is the focus of this study is divided into foundation phase level of schooling – Grades R-3; Intermediate phase level, Grades 4-6; and senior phase level, Grades 7-9. The Further Education and Training level (FET), Grades 10-12 including community colleges and private colleges offering diploma and certificate programmes (DBE, 2013b:6).

The district education office holds the onus of ensuring equal access to high-quality education (DBE, 2012). The aim of the district office in line with the national and provincial departments of education is "to develop, maintain and support the South African school education system" (DBE, 2016b:138). Thus, the role of the education district lies in monitoring and supporting the education system at local level. The support involves the provision of training and development to educators and ensuring quality education. This entails effective implementation of national and provincial policies (DBE, 2016b). Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018) point out the importance of the educator's support. Educator's support, according to Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018:1) is vital as it will allow educators to "effectively implement reform at the school level". According to Nkambule and Amsterdam (2018:1), educator support becomes incredibly significant in the South African context due to the new curriculum that emerged after the apartheid era. Also, the experience of educators with the continuous curriculum review in South Africa demands support

Although the onus of the effectiveness of schools lies on the national and provincial government, the district office is the provincial office interface with schools (DBE, 2012). An education district office gathers information and diagnoses problems in schools and provides support and intervention; this includes the exhibition of *Batho Pele* principles (DBE, 2012). The principles of *Batho Pele* “involve consultation, provision of information about schooling to the public setting and keeping the standard and ensuring transparency, redressing sub-standard and ensuring value for money” (DBE, 2012:24).

The roles of education districts vary from one province to the other and according to the DBE (2012:33-45), they include amongst others, ‘the provision of leadership, planning and management, strategic planning and transformation, research and development, curriculum delivery and staff development and others. This includes placing emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for instance the “Education 2030” as stressed in Goal number 4 which stipulates “inclusive and suitable education and promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all.” (UN, 2015a:34). This includes school outcomes (DBE, 2016b:135).

The following diagram depicts the example of the features of the education district office in the North West Province. The features include district curriculum support, district management support team; district learner support team; and district operations team (DBE, 2012:21-23).

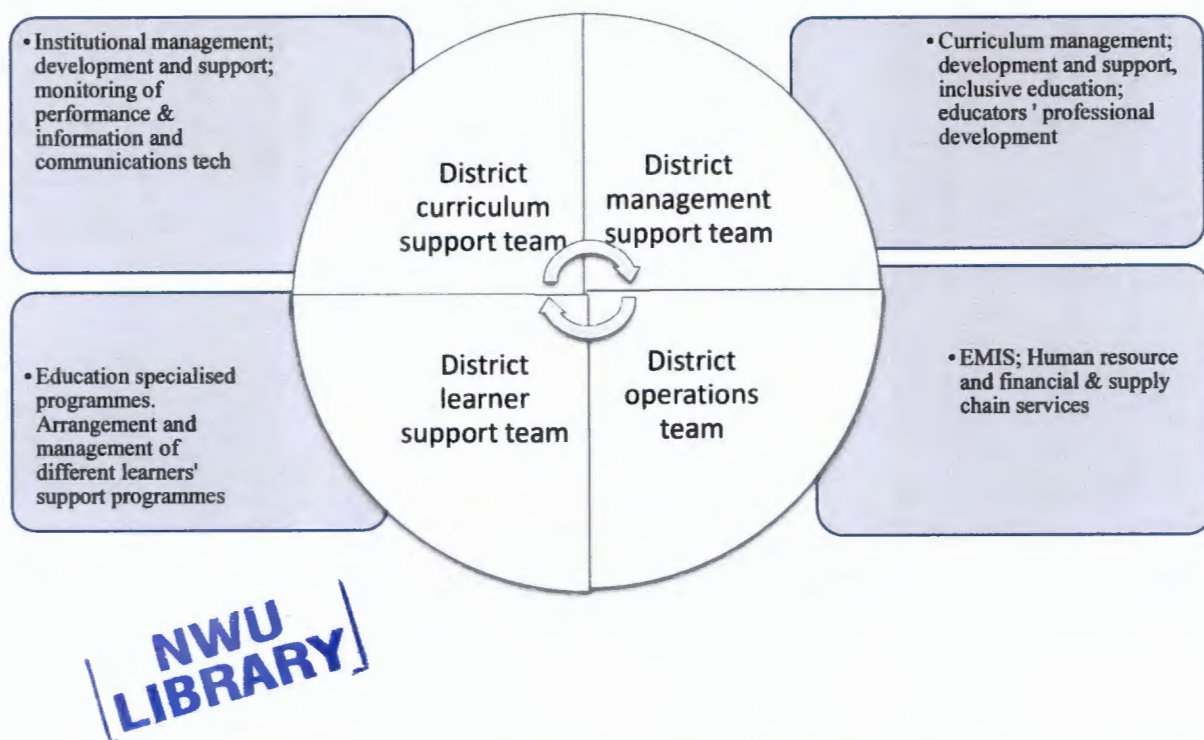


Figure 3.4 Functions of the education district office (Adapted from the policy on the organisational roles and responsibilities of education districts, DBE, 2012:21-23).

- (i) **District curriculum support team:** This team is concerned with the management of curriculum, learning and inclusive education for learners who experience learning disabilities. Also, the district office is concerned with educators' professional development.
- (ii) **District management support team:** The function of this team is educational management; and monitoring of the performance of schools, for example the monitoring of the Annual National Assessment (ANA) and the Secondary School Improvement Programme (SSIP). ANA is adopted for measuring school performances, e.g. measuring of learners' progress and determining of learners' disability for remedial intervention (DBE, 2016b:135).
- (iii) **District learner support:** This includes an arrangement of different support programmes such as winter schools, Saturday schools that may enhance teaching and learning; and learners' performance.

- (iv) District operations team: The function of the district operations team includes management of information and human resources focusing on recruitment and training of educators, financial and supply chain services for running the affairs of the education district office.

Of note is that the education district office is plagued with challenges as the role of education district office has been criticised based on the low visits of the district office to schools for adequate monitoring. However, the education department at national level has observed the criticisms and pronounced increased visitations to schools. This is stated in the Action plan to 2019, towards the realisation of schooling 2030 goal 27 (DBE, 2015b). The department of basic education has also observed the challenges associated with a continuous change of curriculum in South Africa. As a result, the department pointed out in its 2019 Action Plan that the present Curriculum Statement Policy: Continuous and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) has reached its finalisation (DBE, 2015b:13). Besides, CAPS, as observed by DBE, has received overwhelming support. The indication here is the sustainability of CAPS and the education system. Nevertheless, the role of the education district office remains significant.

The North West education district offices like all other South African education district offices are headed by District Directors whose authority lies in the delegation from the Superintendent General or the Head of Department (HOD), who is based in the provincial education office (DBE, 2012). The sub-district director is the head of sub-district office; a circuit manager is the head of a circuit office. Where there is a sub-district office, the district manager delegates the power of the circuit manager. Additionally, the power of the sub-district manager is delegated by the district director (DBE, 2012:15). Often, the district office can be divided into sub-districts and circuits, depending on the size of a district; this is to ensure close administration and effective service delivery (DBE, 2012:15).

Office-based educators have different responsibilities attached to their office. The policy on the organisational roles and responsibilities of education districts asserts that the office-based educators are responsible for: leadership, communication, financial planning and management, strategic planning and transformation, policy, research and development, curriculum delivery and staff development (DBE, 2012:30-33). Central here is the role of an education district office to

fast-track effective curriculum delivery as the core of education (DBE, 2012:30). This entails ensuring effective curriculum delivery.

The office-based educators are to provide “an environment that ensures commitment among colleagues and school-based educators” (DBE, 2012:30). The office-based educators are expected “to consult with all education stakeholders on the matter that concerns them, for instance the aim and means of providing learning interventions” (DBE, 2012:31). It is the responsibility of the office-based educators “to advise principals and school management on planning and budgeting to meet school objectives” (DBE, 2012:31). The office-based educators are expected to “work with schools in identifying the needs of the learner; and preparing strategic plans and policy to meet these needs” (DBE, 2012:32). The office-based educators are positioned “to research with universities and other educational agencies, and carefully apply the findings” (DBE, 2012:32).

Regarding curriculum delivery, the office-based educators are “to assist in the redeployment of school-based educators and resources, facilitate curriculum development, implementation and assessment” (DBE, 2012:33). This entails provision and assessment of educators’ professional development, for instance organisation of training programmes and workshops for the office-based educators (DBE, 2012:33). It appears that the office-based educators have been positioned as the educators of the educators, as they are to assist and lead the school-based educators in “identifying, evaluating and meeting the needs of learners” (DBE, 2012:30).

Scholars such as Christie *et al.* (2010) and Scott (2017) have associated leadership to quality teaching and learning as they believe that leaders have an enormous influence on student learning and teaching outcomes. Scott (2017:1) for example, observes that effective leaders could have a profound influence in recruiting and retaining high-quality educators which in turn will affect quality teaching and learning outcomes. The responsibilities of the office-based educators here have suggested the need to observe the experiences of women in educational leadership at district level. The career path of women to educational leadership often starts from the classroom. Parylo *et al.* (2013:568) indicate that in comparison with their male counterparts, women often experience more difficulties in the advancement of their careers to educational leadership positions.

Although Parylo *et al.* (2013:573) focus on the narrative of women and men in educational leadership, the study reveals the difference in women’s and men’s experiences of educational leadership. While men’s narrative is basically on the experiences of their job responsibilities,

women's narratives include the evaluation of their personal experiences, that is, reflection of who they are as individuals (Parylo *et al.*, 2013:573). It is thought that women's experiences of educational leadership are "different from that of their male colleagues, for instance, this is apparent in the structure, content and style in terms of the construction of their story, content and the way of presentation" (Parylo *et al.*, 2013:573). As Jauregui and Olivos (2018:4) observe, women's career experiences are "unique and dynamic as they do not only involve occupations but their post-vocational interests and their ability to fit in personal and professional lives". In the next section, the understanding of career advancement will be provided as a basis for understanding the challenges being faced by women on their career path into educational leadership.

3.3 UNDERSTANDING CAREER ADVANCEMENT

Career advancement can be conceptualised from two different perspectives, for instance, individual and organisation perspectives. Scholars such as Kottke and Agars (2015); Visagie and Koekemoer (2014) have referred the two perspectives to subjective and objective career success. From the subjective perspective, career advancement is intrinsic and pertains to how an individual evaluates herself/himself in terms of job satisfaction (Visagie & Koekemoer, 2014:43). From the objective perspective, career advancement is perceived to entail extrinsic elements such as salary increment, upward mobility such as promotion to a higher position, sometimes after a long year of service (Visagie & Koekemoer, 2014:44).

Dai and Song (2016) have however placed more emphasis on subjective career success as the objective career success is often related to traditional perspective on career advancement. According to Visagie and Koekemoer (2014:43), career advancement from a traditional perspective has been defined in relation to objective measures such as hierarchical promotions or salary increase, often in a single organisation. Dai and Song (2016:238) have also conceptualised the traditional perspective on career success as rooted in "traditional career model where the internal and external organisation environment is perceived as relatively stable." From the traditional career model perspective, employees are perceived to have a relatively stable career where an organisation is structured linearly, for instance gradual promotion and gradual wage increase (Dai & Song, 2016; Jauregui & Olivos, 2018).

Subjective career success has been situated within the "no boundary career model development, and this is as informed by a wide range of opportunities" (Dai & Song, 2016:238). Here, personal

knowledge and skills have been considered integral to career success. For instance, it is perceived that individuals show a sense of career success when they have experience and skills (Dai & Song, 2016:239). This includes the ability to maintain work-life balance (Poon *et al.*, 2015:22; Jauregui & Olivos, 2018:2). According to Dai and Song (2016:241), the shared impact of personal knowledge and skill is significant as it might contribute to organisational success. For instance, individuals might use their knowledge, skill and work-balance capability to enhance productivity and stay longer in an organisation.

Dai and Song (2016), Kottke and Agars (2015); and Visagie and Koekemoer (2014) share the difference between objective and subjective career success and relate it to their significance to individual and organisation. Traditionally, organisation cum society is perceived to emphasise objective perspective at the expense of subjective perspective (Visagie & Koekemoer, 2014; Dai & Song, 2016). Consequently, organisation cum society often uses extrinsic elements such as promotion, salary increase as indicators of success (Visagie & Koekemoer, 2014; Kottke & Agars, 2015; Gu & Su, 2016). The subjective career success is viewed as important to the individual and the organisation as it concerns both in terms of goals setting and achievement (Visagie & Koekemoer, 2014; Dai & Song, 2016). Although it is believed that both subjective and objective career success can influence each other, it has recently been conceived that subjective career success might have a direct effect on what one might view as career advancement. However, the focus of this study is both objective and subjective career success as it is believed that they are inseparable; one cannot treat one at the expense of the other. Equally, it is important for women to share their experiences of both subjective and objective career success; this is to allow a better understanding of how women can attain and sustain their educational leadership position at district level.

3.3.1 Women as the focus of career advancement

Although potential reasons such as government policies and affirmative actions have contributed to the rise of women in the workforce, the rise of industrialisation was first identified as a reason for an increased number of women in the workforce (Eagly, 2012). This has caused a significant shift in the position of women. The primary factor in industrialised society is the division of labour between women and men. The advent of industrialisation of the 20th century where women and men are differently distributed into labour, based on their sex, plays a huge role in women's career

path (Eagly, 2012). Women and men during that period were distributed into labour, based on their physical characteristics and outlook (see 2.2.2.2).

Scholars such as Andric (2015); Allen *et al.* (2016); Derks *et al.* (2016); and Cimirotic *et al.* (2017) have noted the enormous number of women entering the workforce and their underrepresentation in leadership positions. For instance, Andric (2015) notes the underrepresentation of women in a leadership position and relates it to globalisation and demographic factors. The crux of the argument is despite the increase of women in a leadership position, they are yet to advance to leadership positions in a significant proportion comparable to men.

3.3.2 Women's career advancement to leadership positions in the South African context

The issue of women and career advancement to a leadership position constitutes an issue of national and global discourse. Interestingly, South Africa is one of the countries at the fore of advocating women's career advancement. South Africa is one of the few in the world which emphasises the issue of gender equality and one of the leading countries in Africa when it comes to gender equality, for instance, acknowledging the number of women in decision-making positions in politics. Women representatives in politics have put SA in the fourth position worldwide regarding the issue of gender equality (GCIS, 2013:1). However, it is noteworthy to state that the representation of women in politics does not suggest the representation of women in all spheres, most especially the economic and social domains, as South Africa is believed to be "one of the most unequal countries in the world" (SAHRC, 2013:1). According to South African Human Rights Commission (2013:1), the economic and social inequality "overlaps unfair discrimination and women are the most susceptible people."

In the South African context, the role of apartheid government cannot be overemphasised due to its "discrimination act against women's appointment into leadership positions, specifically the educational leadership positions" (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014:3). There is no doubt that there has been a shift as women are now holding leadership positions. For example, Chao (2017:63) affirms that there is a significant progress in the empowerment of women in the business world and political arena, which is evident in all socio-political spheres including education institutions in South Africa.

As stated earlier, South Africa's commitment to the issue of gender equality and discrimination has become eminent in different policies such as affirmative action, Gender Framework Policy (GPF), 2009-2014 Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF), and the establishment of Department of Women and People with Disability. The National Development Plan 2030 also overlaps the United Nations (UN) sustainable development goals (SDGs) on gender equality and African Union's (AU) goal towards women's empowerment and gender equality, e.g. equal access to leadership and decision-making positions (UN, 2015a:44).

The commitment of the UN to gender equality has been traced to the 1948 UN Charter and Declaration on Human Rights which emphasises the right of all, based on the principle that all human beings are born equal (UN, 2015b:4). The aim of the UN is "to advance women's participation in politics, leadership and economics" (UN, 2015a:12). This entails women's empowerment and gender equality as part of the SDGs. It is believed that the inclusion of women's empowerment and gender equality in the SDGs has shown that they have a significant role to play in ensuring the actualisation of the SDGs (UN, 2015a:12). Rooted in African Charter on Human Rights and Peoples Rights, the right of women in Africa, the promotion of gender equality is one of the main goals of the AU (AU Article 4) (AU, 2009:1). According to Ping (2009:iii), the establishment of the AU Gender Policy is informed by the commitment of the African region. The aim is to ensure "socio-economic development based on diversity in the social, cultural, and traditional settings and efforts to have a discourse on cultures and practices that hinder on women and girls' freedom of human rights" (Ping, 2009:iii).

The establishment of Affirmative Action in South Africa is to redress gender inequality and discrimination experienced by the previously disadvantaged people (Archibong & Adejumo, 2013:15). The promulgation of Gender Policy Framework (GPF) is rooted in the establishment of South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality (GCIS, 2009). The NPF is concerned with the attainment of gender equality; this is supported by the principle of human rights as enshrined in the UN Human Rights Declaration as supported by different global frameworks (GCIS, 2018:7). The principle of human rights concerning gender equality emphasises the equal and inalienable right of all women and men (GCIS, 2009:i). The prioritisation of gender equality in social, economic, and political spheres becomes the focus of the policy (GCIS, 2009:26). As such, it sets guidelines for engendering gender issues within all "the structures, institutions, policies, procedures, practices and programmes of the government, its

agencies and parastatals, civil society and the private sector” in South Africa (GCIS, 2009:ii). The main goal of the policy is to bridge the gender gaps that exist in South Africa and ensure gender equality (GCIS, 2009:44). The aim is to ensure 50 per cent representation of women in decision-making positions.

Similarly, the South African government 2009-2014 Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) agenda and plan, as outlined in the 10-point priorities has also emphasised the issue of equality. The MTSF is “a statement of intent (that) aims at identifying challenges facing South Africans; this is to suggest strategies that will enhance a better world” (The Presidency, 2009:1). The MTSF is informed by the electoral mandate aimed at creating a “nation united in diversity, working together to weave the threads that will result in the creation of a democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society” (The Presidency, 2009:2). This includes priority number 4 which aims at strengthening the skills and human resource base, which focuses on “improving schools management and M&E systems and supporting and developing a high-quality teaching profession”, and priority number 7 – build cohesive, caring and sustainable communities in conjunction with other priorities that aim at strengthening “human capabilities, promote shared values and social solidarity and strive to reduce overall inequality” (The Presidency, 2009:7-8). This includes ensuring full participation of women in all institutions (The Presidency, 2009:6). Accordingly, the National Development Plan as underpinned by the constitution of South Africa aims at ensuring equality and redressing the wrong of the past (The Presidency, 2012:467). Here it is suggested that success should depend on choice, effort, and talent (The Presidency, 2012:464). For instance, attaining a leadership position should be based on an individual’s choice, effort and talents. South Africa’s legislation does support gender equality, but the challenge lies in full implementation and enforcement to actualise the set goals.

Nevertheless, women continue to be underrepresented in leadership positions, educational leadership. Zulu (2017:195) notes the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions from the higher education perspective. Although Zulu (2017) emphasises the progress made by one of the South African universities studied regarding gender parity in leadership, there are also negative trends regarding the role of intersectionality. The role of intersectionality as cited by Zulu (2017:198) is evident in the sparse number of black South African women who are in the leadership positions at historically white universities. As cited by Zulu (2017:196), intersectionality presents a combination of racism and sexism. As emphasised by Zulu (2017:198),

intersectionality is multifaceted; it encapsulates “gender, class and race” and women, the black women in the South African context are the most subjugated. Accordingly, when we compare the number of women who started their career as teachers, only a few have been able to ascend to leadership positions (Bynum, 2015). Wiley *et al.* (2017:18) state that “despite the increased number of women in classroom, men continuously dominate the leadership positions.” Accordingly, from the South African context, Wills (2015:14) states that “despite the over-representation of women in the teaching profession, men dominate school leadership positions.” For instance, according to Simkins (2015:33), approximately 70 per cent of teachers are females, while roughly 30 per cent are males. In other words, despite the proportion of female teachers, they are still not advancing to educational leadership positions such as that of the district office. Seemingly, the goal of attaining equality has not been achieved. According to the OECD (2017:40), the adoption of the SDGs shows that no country has achieved gender equality as women are still faced with different challenges on their career path to decision-making positions.

Gender equality in this sense, according to Osituyo (2018:180), is not only about gender representation in the leadership roles but also about the type of leadership roles attained. What should be emphasised is the way of ensuring that every individual reaches her/his potential base on her/his interests, needs, and priorities. In other words, the opportunities, rights, and responsibilities of women and men should not depend on whether they are born female or male; it should depend on quality and experiences within leadership roles (Chao, 2017:63; Osituyo, 2018:180). However, gender equality has been identified as an essential development goal and an essential tool for achieving all other development goals (OECD, 2015:1). According to OECD (2015:1), gender equality is “not only a moral imperative but an essential way of creating a stronger, more sustainable and inclusive economy that permeates the equal inclusion of women and men alike in decision-making positions” such as educational leadership positions.

3.4 IMPEDIMENTS TO WOMEN’S CAREER ADVANCEMENT: WOMEN AND EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS

Many scholars have presented different constraints that have contributed to women’s career advancement to leadership positions, particularly the educational leadership positions, for example Chabaya *et al.* (2009); Allen *et al.* (2016);and Raja (2016).

Allen *et al.* (2016:208-211) conceptualised the factors that can hinder women's career advancement from multiple interrelated perspectives such as gender roles, self-concept, career choice; threats to the status quo; sharing of unpaid labour; managing work and caregiving; governmental and societal role. From the gender roles, self-concept and career choice perspectives, Allen *et al.* (2016:208) note the effect of expected gender role and self-concept on a career choice. The impact of expected gender role and self-concept is traced to childhood development when girls and boys alike have the same self-esteem and how girls' self-esteem suddenly decreases (Allen *et al.*, 2016:208). The decrease in girls' self-esteem is associated with societal expectations and the way in which girls are portrayed in society. Allen *et al.* (2016:208) cite the use of demeaning languages and the role of media in associating specific characteristics to describe female personality. It is believed that using words that demean female nature and ascribing specific characteristics to women might lead to a reduction in self-confidence and thus reduce their participation and willingness to compete with men and therefore limit their opportunity of career advancement to leadership positions (Allen *et al.*, 2016:208).

Following, Thomas *et al.* (2013), Allen *et al.* (2016:209) use the illustration of pets and threats to describe challenges faced by women at the workplace. Allen *et al.* (2016) indicate that the challenges women face at work differ according to their positions in an organisation. For instance, the treatment of women in junior positions as a 'pet', that is "the beloved and cared for" and the treatment of women in senior and management positions as a 'threat' (Thomas *et al.*, 2013:276). The threat presents women at a senior level who are more experienced but often faced with challenges being in a minority group, being a woman in male-dominated jobs or positions (Thomas *et al.*, 2013). The pet and threat phenomena might imply women's experiences of career advancement to leadership positions, the educational leadership positions. The pet and threat phenomena might as well present obstacles to women's career advancement to educational leadership positions.

Although women may revel in unrestricted acceptance from men at the entry-level of their career because they seem protected, a close reflection on pet and threat phenomena suggests that women from the 'pet' perspective are subjugated in an organisation. Accordingly, the 'threat' phenomenon might suggest women's superiority, but women's assumption of authority may as well expose them to overt discrimination from subordinates, peers, and colleagues (Thomas, 2013). They might often face prejudice about their credibility and suitability for the acquired positions regardless of

their arduous work. Another challenge that women face is the distribution of unpaid labour (Allen *et al.*, 2016:210). This is a situation where women, due to the expected societal role and cultural pressure, take responsibility for the household task. Men from these perspectives are expected to provide financial needs for the family while women serve as caregivers (Allen *et al.*, 2016:210). Although the views of Allen *et al.* (2016) are theoretical, they are significant as they have provided a conceptual basis for understanding why women experience different challenges on their path to career advancement.

Chabaya *et al.* (2009) have qualitatively explored the reasons for the persistent under-representation of women in educational leadership positions in Zimbabwe. The study shows that women are under-represented in educational leadership positions due to gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes are related to factors such as low self-esteem, lack of support and family responsibilities (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009). The study observes that women show low self-esteem due to stereotypical beliefs as enshrined in gender socialisation which explains “perceived gender roles in terms of what women can do or not do” (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:241). Here, it is believed that women perceived that gender role is internalised through gender socialisation and culture which propel gender identification and then impact on women’s behaviour, and perceptions of leadership roles (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:244). The study points out a lack of support concerning gender stereotype (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:246). Central here is power relations between women and men as a result of gender socialisation and culture of a patriarchal society which has suggested women’s exclusion from public space and men’s tendency not to support women due to the stereotypical beliefs that focus on gender-specific roles (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:246). The implication here is that gender socialisation and culture which suggest division of labour between women and men have “defined the preconceived capabilities of women and men and their proper place in the power hierarchies” (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:246). Also, the study finds that “family responsibilities in relation to gender stereotypes has restricted women’s mobility as they have preferred to be near the home and the family at the expense of their career advancement” (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:247). Central to this finding is that women based on gender socialisation and culture have somewhat legitimised inequalities as they have chosen to nurture and care for their husband and children at the expense of their career progression. The implication here is that from an incredibly young age women are socialised to nurture and care for children (Chabaya, *et al.*, 2009:247). This has, however, been believed to widening the dominance of men in leadership positions and then infers continued persistent under-representation of women in educational leadership positions (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:247).

Even though the study has been conducted a decade ago, its relevance to the present study cannot be overemphasised. The fact that the study was conducted within the African context has made it imperative to the present study. While South Africa might be ahead of Zimbabwe regarding the issue of gender equality on a political terrain, like South Africa, Zimbabwe is mentioned to be an “unequal society striving to eliminate gender inequalities” (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:235-236) (see 3.3.2). Although it is believed that culture might vary from one society to the other, culture and tradition still form part of women’s situations and leadership roles in Africa (Osituyo, 2018:180). However, from the South African context, Osituyo (2018:180) observes that traditional beliefs and cultural attitudes regarding the status and women’s role within society are still prevalent and many women who are part of this system find it challenging to move away from the culture and tradition they do not consent.

Also, using a feminist lens has made the study relevant to the present study (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:237). A feminist lens is believed to “offer women the opportunity to speak out on the issue that concerns them” (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009:237). This assertion is essential to the present study as a feminist lens has been used to offer women the opportunity to share their lived experiences on educational leadership and then contribute to discourses on women educational leadership roles in terms of attainability and sustainability.



Raja (2016:134) has qualitatively observed socio-cultural context such as patriarchy, gender roles, belief systems, mobility, and activities as barriers to women’s career advancement. Raja (2016:136) finds patriarchy to be a system where financial power rested upon men. As a result, men take responsibility for family wellbeing. Although the study points out the role of education as an enabler for women’s participation in the workforce, based on belief systems, women are still restricted regarding job preferences as they are encouraged to take gender-specific jobs (Raja, 2016:137). For example, women are mainly supported to take teaching jobs based on the belief that it would allow them to attend to family responsibilities. According to Raja (2016), women seeking job opportunities outside their home are not encouraged as the house is defined as the best place for women to perform their role. Although according to Raja (2016), the situation surrounding mobility and activities is changing, women are still restrained from participating in professional development programmes that might involve travelling. Raja (2016) maintains that gender role stereotypes and traditional attitudes are societal constraints that have created gender

division; thus, perpetuate gender discrimination and occupational separation, for instance women's adherence to gender-specific jobs and their underrepresentation in leadership positions.

Though the study is conducted in Pakistan, from a religious perspective, it has shed light on how patriarchy system, gender roles, belief system, and cultural norms have contributed to challenges that women encounter on their path to career advancement. Also, the study has added to the international agenda aiming at limiting gender inequality.

Al-Jaradat (2014) from a quantitative perspective, descriptively explores challenges women face on their path to educational leadership and administrative positions through four domains: organisation, personal, social, and physical. Al-Jaradat (2014:151) finds that physical challenges accounted for most of the problems that women face in an educational leadership position, followed by organisational challenges. The personal and social challenges are rated as other challenges. The physical and organisational challenges, according to Al-Jaradat (2014), are interrelated. The physical challenges depict all the educational supplies and services that women need to function in an organisation. Al-Jaradat (2014) recognises personal and social challenges that women face; they include women's perception of leadership training and development; incongruity between work and the familial role which might prevent them from attending professional training; and women's emotions which may reflect in their leadership styles.

The study of Al-Jaradat (2014) resonates with that of Yearout *et al.* (2017). Yearout *et al.* (2017) quantitatively explore women's perceptions of impediments to educational career advancement from three main domains: personal obstacles; organisational structure impediments; and organisational culture impediments. The study was conducted on women from three geographical locations: rural, suburban and urban standpoints (Year *et al.*, 2017). The personal impediment encapsulates the challenges that women in educational leadership face regarding balancing their professional and personal life, and geographical immobility. The organisational structure impediment involves the challenges of hiring, promotion practices and policies, and the salary gap. The organisational culture impediment presents the effect of "the good old boys' networking and culture of power" which afford men more access to career advancement opportunities (Yearout *et al.*, 2017:5). The personal and professional; and geographical immobility impediments were found to be the highest impediments to female leaders' career progression in all three geographic strata studied by Yearout *et al.* (2017:5). The implication here is that all female leaders, regardless of

their context, are faced with the challenges of balancing professional and personal life; and movement from one place to another for professional development. The organisational structure challenges of hiring, promotion practices, and salary gap are mostly associated with female leaders in the urban area. The organisational culture and culture of power challenges are ascribed to female leaders in the three geographical locations (Yearout *et al.*, 2017:6).

The study of Yearout *et al.* (2017) is significant in the context of this study as it encapsulates rural, urban and suburban locations. Also, the study acknowledges the interface of different challenges that women in educational leadership positions face.

Derks *et al.* (2016) have used the 'queen bee' phenomenon to present the women's impediments to career advancement. Derks *et al.* (2016:465) describe the queen bee phenomenon as "the consequences of the gender discrimination that women face at work". Derks *et al.* (2016:456) attribute the 'queen bee' traits to the reproduction of gender hierarchy at the workplace. Although the queen bee phenomenon might present a derogatory label as it can be used to describe women who "pursue individual interest and success in male-dominated domains", it is a female response to organisational threats (Derks *et al.*, 2016:465). Hurst *et al.* (2016:64) assert that the queen bee phenomenon is a situation whereby some successful women in the organisations inclined the advancement of the other women based on self-interest, achievement protection and maintenance. The opinion of Hurst *et al.* (2016) resonates with that of Derks *et al.* (2016) who assume that women might display counter stereotypical masculine attitudes and behaviours in the hope of being judged as an individual. Although the study of Derks *et al.* (2016) is theoretical, it is significant to this study as it can be used to further the understanding of gender inequality from the perspective of women.

Mentoring has been presented as one of the factors affecting women's career advancement to leadership positions (Yet-Mee *et al.*, 2013; Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; Bynum, 2015; Searby *et al.*, 2015). Abalkhail and Allan (2015:153) have presented a lack of mentoring as a contributing factor to women's career advancement. Searby *et al.* (2015:98) suggest that mentoring itself can be a challenge as female leaders may find it challenging to find mentors and have access to informal support and advice that might ensue from mentoring. Accordingly, Yet-Mee *et al.* (2013) cited that women may miss a career advancement opportunity due to a lack of mentoring.

Bynum (2015:69) views mentoring “as a way of providing direction and support for women who aspire to advance to leadership positions”. Copeland and Calhoun (2014) describe mentoring as a means of accessing career opportunities and leadership positions. Searby *et al.* (2015:99) present mentoring as an accepted phenomenon centred on the professional development of individuals. Subsequently, mentoring involves guidance and assistance from a more experienced person, and a lack of it suggests an impediment to women’s career advancement (Montgomery, 2017).

Allred *et al.* (2017) qualitatively investigate the perspectives of seven women who have ascended educational leadership in South Texas on why women do not serve in educational leadership positions, mainly, at district level. Allred *et al.* (2017) find the work and family balance and work-fit challenges to be an impediment to women’s career advancement to educational leadership positions. Even though the women studied by Allred *et al.* (2017) point out the influence of their family support systems on their career advancement, they overemphasise the challenge of combining job and family issues. For instance, raising and rearing children and pursuing credentials, earning higher degrees such as PhD in sustaining their leadership positions.

The work of Allred *et al.* (2017) is significant to this study because it is from a naturalistic perspective seeking to construct shared meanings from the different experiences of women in an educational leadership position at district level. Women’s different experiences in the study represent women in educational leadership positions’ views of their aspirations, motivations, challenges, and successes. These different experiences are all central to understanding women’s experiences of career advancement into an educational leadership position as they suggest the importance of the intersectionality of Crenshaw (1989) and inequalities regimes of Acker (2006) in understanding women’s experiences (see 2.2.3). For instance, women’s experiences from the motivational and aspirational perspectives present why women are motivated and aspired to involve in educational leadership. Some of the women’s experiences here are that women are concerned with excellence, love for children and desire for educational attainment and success. As such, women are aspired to contribute to the factors that could enhance their involvement in educational leadership positions. The fact that the study acknowledges the underrepresentation of women at the top echelon of educational leadership and that women should tell their own stories is very crucial in understanding this present study. The work does not only illuminate this study theoretically; it methodologically influences it.

Yet another factor that can constitute a challenge to women's career advancement to leadership positions is the leadership styles. Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014:57) believe that effective leadership styles can influence employees' performance and organisational productivity. Leadership styles refer to approaches aimed at motivating followers (Uzohue *et al.*, 2016:20). Furthermore, Uzohue *et al.* (2016:20) refer leadership styles to "different types of method assumed by a leader in a particular situation" to achieve organisational "goals and objectives".

Mohammadkhani and Gholamzadeh (2016:276) investigate the effect of leadership styles on women's beliefs about the glass ceiling as a barrier to women's career advancement. Mohammadkhani and Gholamzadeh (2016:281) find that the glass ceiling is not necessarily the reason for women's inability to advance their career to leadership positions; rather, the leadership styles have a significant impact. Mohammadkhani and Gholamzadeh (2016) measured the components of transactional leadership style, transformational leadership style and *laissez faire* leadership style. Mohammadkhani and Gholamzadeh (2016) then found that transformational leadership style is significant in understanding the glass ceiling as a barrier to women's career advancement. However, the application of appropriate leadership styles is emphasised as an antidote to barriers being faced by women on their career path. As mentioned by Mohammadkhani and Gholamzadeh (2016), leadership is the process of influencing others to achieve goals and objectives set by the organisation.

Given the above discussion, it could be said that women are faced with different challenges on their career path. However, different scholars have used metaphors such as glass ceiling, inequality regimes, and labyrinth to understand the challenges. In the subsequent section, these metaphors will be presented to understand this study better.

3.4.1 Glass ceiling as a depiction of impediments to women's career advancement

Glass ceiling has been used to depict the barriers women face on their career path (Osinbajo *et al.*, 2013; Gupta, 2018). According to Gupta (2018:83), glass ceiling is one of the most enchanting metaphors for depicting barriers that women face on their career pathway. Glass ceiling, as a depiction of barriers to women's career advancement, can be described as a multifaceted phenomenon as it encapsulates "varied barriers that women face on their career path" (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013a:486). As suggested by Osinbajo *et al.* (2013:51), glass ceiling involves different forms of discrimination, gender stereotypes, name-calling and sacrifices that women must make

due to the societal expectations. For instance, gender stereotyping, gender discrimination and performance stress. Abidin *et al.* (2016:203) mention that the glass ceiling barriers include “common institutional restrictions and social or cultural perceptions” about women as they advance in their career path.

Osinbajo *et al.* (2013:50) mention the subtlety of the glass ceiling and suggest that women often do not realise it until they experience it. Likewise, Gupta (2018:83) mentions the subtlety of glass ceiling and maintains that “no advertisement would specify that a woman should not apply for a position.” The glass ceiling, according to Gupta (2018:83) is different from formal barriers such as education qualifications or working experiences; it is an invisible barrier.

Although women’s representation has increased as we now have women in various leadership positions, there is still gender disparity. Women face a glass ceiling barrier in all spheres of the workforce. Chisholm-Burns *et al.* (2017:312) mention the effect of the glass ceiling on individuals and organisations as a phenomenon that can hinder women from reaching leadership positions and thwart the actualisation of diversity in the workforce. According to Carli (2015:293), the menace of the glass ceiling remains systematic.

Moreover, it has become a norm that women need to work harder than their male counterpart before they can advance in their career (Gorman & Kmec, 2007). Jean-Marie and Martinez (2007:45) find that women, unlike men must prove to be the best. This, according to Gorman and Kmec (2007:828), is due to different stricter performance standard levied on women. The implication here is that it might be easier for women to enter the workforce but climbing the ladder to the upper echelon could be challenging as a result of gender stereotypes strengthened by the beliefs that men are more capable than women (Gorman & Kmec, 2007:840).

As mentioned by Booysen and Nkomo (2010:286), gender stereotype is one of the possible ways of describing the glass ceiling being faced by women on their way to leadership positions. From gender stereotype beliefs, leadership roles are ascribed to men as they are perceived to be capable of being leaders. Although Carli (2015) observes that associating leadership to masculine traits is decreasing in less male-dominated contexts, effective leadership is still associated with an agency as a result of “descriptive and prescriptive” gender stereotypes (Gipson *et al.*, 2017:35). Gipson *et al.* (2017:35) mention that descriptive gender stereotypes tend to dictate that women are communal while prescriptive gender stereotypes prescribe that women should be communal. Seemingly, men

are viewed as those who have the appropriate traits suitable for leadership positions; for instance, it relates to the beliefs that men are masculine while women are feminine (Carli, 2015). Gender stereotypes have consequences on women's leadership. According to Carli (2015:293), the consequence of gender stereotypes is that they paint women as lacking agentic competence and as a result they are discriminated against as leaders. As observed by Carli (2015:293), it appears that women are held to a higher competence compared to their male counterparts, in a sense that men are often favourably evaluated when it comes to competency or job performance. Seemingly, adopting agentic traits does not erode discrimination against women, as women who adopt agentic traits are often penalised (Carli, 2015:293).

Different scholars such as Obamiro and Obasan (2013:80) have alluded to the increased number of women in occupations, professions and jobs previously reserved for men. Despite family-friendly policies to attract and retain women in the workforce, women are still faced with the glass ceiling syndrome as women still experience challenges on their career path. Obamiro and Obasan (2013:82) believe that women are often left out when it comes to career advancement even when they have the same educational qualifications and work experiences with their male counterparts.

Osinbajo *et al.* (2013:56) in their empirical study find that the glass ceiling has a noticeable effect on women's career advancement into leadership positions. Although the study has explored the glass ceiling in the police force in Nigeria, it suggests the influence of gender stereotypes; gender bias and cultural norms which prescribe and describe what is expected of a female child and the effects on women's career path and decision to take leadership positions.

Recognising that a few women have been able to advance their career in some instances, Glass and Cook (2016) reveal the circumstances in which these few women have been able to break the glass ceiling. Glass and Cook (2016) explain that women are more likely than men to be promoted to high-risk leadership positions and often lack the support or authority to accomplish their strategic goals. Ryan *et al.* (2016) mention that often women are faced with what they referred to as a glass cliff. Glass cliff presents women's appointment to dangerous positions (Ryan *et al.*, 2016). Although women have been observed to break the glass ceiling in the workforce due to their access to a few leadership positions, Ryan *et al.* (2016) argue that most of these positions are high-risk positions referred to as glass-cliff. Ryan *et al.* (2016:445) refer to the glass cliff as "the propensity for women to be more possible than men to be considered as candidates for risky

positions.” This notwithstanding, men are still considered as the best candidates for decision-making positions. Next, the metaphor of inequality regimes will be presented.

3.4.2 Inequality regimes as a depiction of impediments to women’s career advancement

Acker (2006:441; 2009:201) has viewed barriers to women’s career advancement from the perspective of “inequality regimes.” Acker (2006:441; 2009:201) refers to inequality regimes as the analytical approach to understanding the persistence of gender inequality in organisations. Considering the persistence of gender inequalities in organisations, Acker (2009:200) suggests inequality regimes as “a more accurate metaphor to depict the barriers that women face on their career path as it concerns gender, race/ethnicity and class.” Following feminist theorists such as Crenshaw (1989) and Watkins (2000) who argue for the inclusion of the experiences of women of colour and their varied lived experiences, Acker (2006:442; 2009:200) employs the notion of inequality regimes. The notion of inequality regimes is used to capture the complex and interlocking practices, processes, actions and meanings that result in the persistence of inequalities in all spheres of organisations (Acker, 2006; 441; Acker, 2009:201) (see 2.2.3). The focus of Acker (2009) is the intersectionality of women’s varied experiences in the workplace. Acker (2006:443; 2009:201) believes that there is a difference in the degree of inequality because of different organisational practices and processes and how the employees perceive these (Acker, 2006:443). The belief here entails how things are done in organisations in terms of decision-making and task performance. Acker (2006 & 2009) uses inequality regimes to connect gender, race, and class as the bases for the persistent inequality in organisations. Inequality in the organisation is referred to as follows:

systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organise work; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and benefits; pay and other monetary rewards; respect; and pleasures in work and work relations (Acker, 2006:443; Acker, 2009:202).

The bases of inequality refer to the presence of the class, gender, and race and how these are produced in organisation (Acker, 2006:444; Acker, 2009:202). Class captures “power relations, class structure and unequal production and distribution of resources in the organisation” (Acker, 2009:202). The organisation is depicted as a context in which these resources are produced and distributed, that is, where the production and distribution of goods and services occur (Acker,

2009:202). The class further presents power relations between superiors and subordinates. Here superior class power relations with employees which are often consistent with power relations in the broader society is stated as a frame of reference; this entails power relations in family and marriage where women are seen as caregivers (Acker, 2009:202). Gender is referred to as socially constructed differences between female and male and the beliefs and identities that support difference and inequality in organisations (Acker, 2009:444). According to Acker (2006:444; 2009:203), gender used to be closely related to class, for instance, the stereotypical beliefs which view men as ideal leaders and women as subordinates. Here the image of an ideal leader is characterised by display of agentic behaviours such as “strength, aggressiveness and competitiveness” (Acker, 2006:445). The race is conceptualised “as socially defined differences justified by physical characteristics, culture, and historical domination and oppression” strengthened by cultural beliefs. (Acker, 2006:444). Historically, race and class are believed to be often integrated as people of colour were restricted to the lowest level positions based on their race or ethnicity (Acker, 2006:445; Acker, 2009:203).

Although women are now represented in the workplace as it is believed they have broken the glass ceiling, the problem persists as they are still faced with gendered and sexualised entrenched barriers (Acker, 2006:444; 2009:203). For instance, work organisation is perceived to be in favour of an ideal worker as this has put women in a disadvantage situation due to other obligations such as family responsibilities and care work (Acker, 2006:449). Acker (2006:444) views factors such as: the invisibility/visibility of inequalities, the legitimacy of inequalities and mechanisms of control and compliance as hindrances to protest inequalities. The invisibility/visibility of systematic inequalities refers to the degree of awareness of inequality in organisation, i.e. how inequality is perceived and understood by individuals in organisation (Acker, 2009:210-211). According to Acker (2009:211), how individuals perceive or understand inequality varies depending on the “position of the beholder.” As stated by Acker (2009:211), “one privilege of the privileged is not to see their privilege”, this entails the denial and avoidance of the existence of inequality by a privileged group (Acker, 2009:211). The legitimacy of inequalities refers to the acceptance of power inequalities as part of organisation; this entails stereotypical beliefs about people’s capability based on race and gender (Acker, 2009). Mechanisms of control and compliance refer to class control that maintains power relations between managers and employees for achieving organisational goals (Acker, 2009:212). This presents the maintenance of status quo as strengthened by “organisation process and practice that perpetuate inequalities” (Acker,

2009:213). Organisation controls are believed to be possible through hierarchical organisational power, race and gender.

The study speaks to the issue of varied barriers that women face on their career path. It shows the intersectionality of class, gender and race. The study further accentuates that class intersects with gender and race in that class creates an unequal distribution of women in organisational hierarchies (Acker, 2009:203). This is based on power relations shaped by gendered and sexualised attitudes and assumptions of an 'unencumbered worker' which exert men as ideal workers and dictate appropriate jobs based on femininity and masculinity and sometimes race (Acker, 2006:448; Acker, 2009:203). The next section will present the metaphor of labyrinth.

3.4.3 Labyrinth as a depiction of impediments to women's career advancement

Like Acker (2009), Eagly and Carli (2007a:3) have viewed impediments to women's career advancement into leadership positions beyond the glass ceiling and suggest the notion of the labyrinth as an alternative metaphor for understanding these. To present a better understanding of labyrinth, Eagly and Carli (2007a:3) trace the barriers to women's career advancement to what they term as "concrete wall." Eagly and Carli (2007a:3) equate the notion of the concrete wall to "absolute overt barriers and clear-cut norms that excluded women from participation in social, economic and political spaces, for instance denial of right to vote, access to education and work" (Eagly & Carli, 2007a:1) (see 2.2.3.1). To further conceptualise the labyrinth, Eagly and Carli (2007a) also render an understanding to the notion of glass ceiling. They view glass ceiling as "an absolute barrier that prevents women access to high-level positions" (Eagly & Carli, 2007a:4) (see 3.4). Eagly and Carli (2007a:1) agree that the prejudice and discrimination that hinder women's career advancement persist but suggest that "the idea of glass ceiling has lingered too long", thus needs to be altered.

Eagly and Carli (2007a:7) concern is that glass ceiling can be misleading due to some flaws as it is believed that "it speciously implies that women have equal access to entry-level whereas women are faced with different challenges at every level of their career". This includes the failure to recognise the diversity and complexity of these barriers and proffer diverse strategies to combat them (Eagly & Carli, 2007a:7).

Additionally, Eagly and Carli (2007a:1) believe leadership are no more monopolised by men as we now have women in leadership positions. The implication here is that the situation of women, as well as the challenges they face, have changed and these have, in turn, affected their leadership roles. According to Goethals and Hoyt (2017:x), changes in women's leadership roles raise important questions regarding how women lead and how their leadership is perceived. The changes in women's situation and the changes in the challenges they face are believed to have led to insurmountable and complicated challenges, but the good news is that despite the challenges, women have been able to "navigate the labyrinth" that hinder them in leadership positions (Eagly & Carli, 2007a:27). Recognising that the path to career advancement exists, Eagly and Carli believe that this path can be steep as it entails a lot of "puzzles, full of twists and turns, both unexpected and expected" (Eagly & Carli, 2007a:6; 2007b:2).

The metaphor of labyrinth is used to capture the complexity of challenges that women face on their career path. They include vestiges of prejudice, resistance to women's leadership, leadership styles, family demands, and underinvestment in social capital (Eagly & Carli, 2007b:2-10). The vestiges of prejudice are linked to discrimination that women experience at all levels of their career path – not only at the top position as enunciated by glass ceiling (Eagly & Carli, 2007b:3). The resistance of women's leadership concerns the widely shared beliefs that associate leadership traits with men; this is strengthened by the inherent dichotomy between women and men. For instance, the beliefs that women are communal while men are agentic (Eagly & Carli, 2007b:3) (see 2.2.2.2). In contrast to women who are expected to be "affectionate, helpful, friendly kind and sympathetic, men are expected to be aggressive, ambitious, dominant, and self-confident" (Eagly & Carli, 2007b:3). It is believed that due to the dichotomy between what is expected of women and men; women are faced with criticisms which have led them to a 'double-bind position' (Bierema, 2016:116). Unlike their male counterparts who could assume any personality "if women are communal, they will be criticised for lacking agentic attributes, and if they are agentic, they will be criticised for lacking communal attributes" (Eagly & Carli, 2007b:3). As a result of this dichotomy women are faced with the double-bind problem which in turn affects their leadership styles (Eagly & Carli, 2007b:3). Although Eagly and Carli (2007a) consider being communal as good news for women as their styles appropriate the new valued model of a leader who acts as a good coach or good teacher, noticeably, this assertion is evident in the characteristics of a transformational leader (see 2.2.4).

However, Goethals and Hoyt (2017:xi) have led another credence to the issue of communal and agency, as they believe that women as well as men could possess the characteristics of any of the two. They suggest that being communal and agentic, i.e. being androgynous can be beneficial for leadership roles (Goethals & Hoyt, 2017:xi). For them, this might suggest a “flexible set of interpersonal skills that can be deployed in situations calling for leadership.” Central here is whether there is a difference between the leadership styles of women and men as women are faced with various challenges (Goethals & Hoyt, 2017:xi) (see 2.2.4). Family demands present the pressure from the home front as “women continue to be the ones who provide more childcare and domestic responsibilities than men” (Eagly & Carli, 2007b:5). The pressure of combining work and family responsibilities has deprived women of opportunities to socialise and network with colleagues. The importance of the idea of labyrinth to this study is that it has revealed that challenges being faced by women are multifaceted and that women face barriers at every level of their career path. In the next section, the concepts of individual, society and organisation will be rendered as a means of consolidating the multiplicity of the barriers that women face.

3.5 CONCEPTUALISING IMPEDIMENTS TO WOMEN’S CAREER ADVANCEMENT FROM INDIVIDUAL, SOCIETAL AND ORGANISATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Reflecting on the multiplicity of the challenges that women face on their career path has made it essential to understand these challenges from individual, societal and organisational perspectives. Fagenson (1990), and other recent scholars (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013b; Allen et al., 2016) have viewed impediments to women’s career advancement from individual, societal and organisational domains.

3.5.1 Individual

In this study, the concept of the individual is underpinned by the theory of self-concept and relates to women’s self-perception (see 2.2.1). This entails identity and self-esteem. Identity is defined in terms of the roles that individuals occupy, “the social categories or groups they belong to, and the individual characteristics that define them as unique persons” (Stets & Burke, 2014:412) (see 2.2.1). As stated in section 2.2.2, central to identity is the influence of the power of the other in forming self-concept. Identity defines who one is as an individual (Oyserman *et al.*, 2012:69) (see 2.2.2). Self-esteem in this study concerns the emotional and evaluative dimensions of self-concept; these concern individuals’ self-worth, self-efficacy, and authenticity (Stets & Burke, 2014:419)

(see 2.2.2). The most important thing here is that identity and self-esteem dimension of self-concept explain who an individual is as a person in society. From the individual domain's point of view, gender roles and how we perceive ourselves are shaped by society and organisation which both play a vital role in women's career advancement to leadership positions. Allen *et al.* (2016) traced the bases of gender roles and self-concept to how society and the organisation perceive women; and the expectations of the society and organisation from women regarding family-related issues and their career situations.

3.5.2 Society

The societal domain is underpinned by the theory of social role as enshrined in societal expectations of women (Allen *et al.*, 2016). Society plays a vital role in the formation of individuals' identity and self-esteem, and this has led to how one perceives leadership and then constitutes individual barriers to women's career advancement (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009). As Onyango *et al.* (2016:28) put it "individual barriers exist in the person either through their own experiences, exposure, values and preferences or may be imposed by others through their prejudices, biases and perceived differences."

Even though women's willingness to or preference for attaining leadership positions may be significant, the influence of the society and organisation is crucial. A typical illustration of how women are perceived is explained by the gender-centred perspective narrative of Akpinar-Sposito (2013b) in which women have been described to possess traits that are not in conformity with leadership positions but as a caregiver and men described as a provider and ideal worker. Evident here is gender power relations (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009). What women are currently witnessing from these perspectives is not only gender-centred but inconsistent suggestions of what women should do and not necessarily do to advance to leadership positions (Allen *et al.*, 2016). These perspectives illustrate how society places the onus for changing, adapting or assimilating on women instead of demanding systemic changes to accommodate women better (Allen *et al.*, 2016).

3.5.3 Organisation

The organisational domain is informed by the transactional-transformational leadership theory in this study. This is strengthened by organisational structure that depicts power relations in job placements and suggests placing of more men than women in top management positions where

decisions are made (Akpinar-Sposito, 2013a:489). As formulated by Fagenson (1990:269), “organisation structure shapes and defines women’s behaviours on the job as well as their destiny.” However, organisation “recruitment, hiring and promotion processes are often held to be informed by the images of the successful manager” (Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017:3). More specifically, the image of an ideal worker or leader as stated before is characterised by display of agentic behaviours such as “strength, aggressiveness and competitiveness” (Acker, 2006:445) (see 2.3 & 3.4). The structure of organisation supported by societal and cultural beliefs suggests the behaviours of organisations towards women and often creates barriers that women face on their career path to leadership positions (Chabaya *et al.*, 2009; Akpinar-Sposito, 2013b; Yousaf & Schmiede, 2017).

3.5.4 The implication of individual, societal and organisational factors on women’s career advancement

While the individual factor presents gender constructs that are associated with women behaviours and perceptions of career advancement to leadership positions, the societal factors emphasise how women are portrayed in and by society, which includes their expected roles and positions, vis-à-vis men. The organisational factor presents gender relations in organisations and portrays how women are perceived in organisations. The interconnection and relationship between these three factors present the foreground of the multifaceted barriers that women face on their career path. In the next section, I will present the strategies proffered by scholars to combat these impediments.

3.6 FACTORS THAT CAN COMBAT IMPEDIMENTS TO WOMEN’S CAREER ADVANCEMENT

According to Yet-Mee *et al.* (2013), researching barriers that inhibit women’s career advancement might help to increase women’s participation in leadership positions. This includes the appropriate analysis of such barriers as it might help understanding different challenges that face women on their career path. Eagly and Carli (2007:1) affirm that one cannot proffer a solution if one has misdiagnosed a problem. Examining different challenges faced by women, scholars such as Yet-Mee *et al.* (2013); Abalkhail and Allan (2015); Allen *et al.* (2016) and others have suggested different strategies that can be used to help women in advancing their career.

Yet-Mee *et al.* (2013:22) find “work-life balance as a predictor barrier to women’s career advancement”. Although they point out the role of managers as they can hinder the implementation

of work balance policies in an organisation, with increased concern for balancing multiple family demands and work, it is perceived to be one of the strategies for combating challenges that women face on their career path (Yet-Mee *et al.*, 2013:23). Work-life benefits, according to Yet-Mee *et al.* (2013:28), entail different policies and programmes designed by organisations for supporting women, for instance, flexible working hours, and onsite childcare. For Eagly and Carli (2007:7), the implementation of work balance policies can allow women to stay in their jobs during the child-rearing period.

Although as found by Chabaya *et al.* (2009), the level of education does not necessarily suggest women's career progression as they may choose not to apply for positions as a result of family responsibilities, but this does not erode the role of education. Kalungu and Bing (2018:68) perceive education as one of the factors that can influence women's career advancement; it is believed that top level jobs are tied to a high level of education as low educational levels may hinder women from entering the workforce.

Abalkhail and Allan (2015); Lee and Young (2015); Bynum (2015); and Montgomery (2017) have emphasised the importance of mentoring. Abalkhail and Allan (2015:156) mention that apart from the provision of personal support and modelling, mentoring might open more comprehensive access for career opportunities for women. According to Lee and Young (2015), mentoring is reciprocal; even though its goal is to provide support to the protégé, the mentor can also benefit from the protégé-mentor relationship. Montgomery (2017:1) mentions mentoring as "one of the chief elements contributing to career advancement; this includes provision of skills development, psychological and social support". Accordingly, Hurst *et al.* (2016:64) assert that mentoring alongside with networking are "essential instruments to advance women's career prospects". According to Eagly and Carli (2007:7), mentoring and networking could assist women to in building social capital. It is believed that organisations could help in this respect in that they could help connect women with an experienced person who takes an interest in their career and wishes to serve as a mentor.

Bynum (2015) and Montgomery (2017) have conceptualised mentoring from two perspectives: the formal and informal mentoring. The formal mentoring is cited as "a structured form of mentoring established and endorsed by an organisation" (Bynum, 2015:70). Hurst *et al.* (2016:64) conceptualise "formal mentoring alongside networking as the ways of encouraging supportive

interactions between women in the organisation". Montgomery (2017:6) asserts that a mentoring relationship is "often dyadic as it may or may not be based on identified personal factors or complementary characteristics of the mentee or mentor". Formal mentoring involves the pairing of an experienced and a skilled junior colleague where they both maintain a mentor-protégé relationship. Often pairing of mentor-mentee can be based on "selection criteria" based on the needs of the protégé (Lee & Young, 2015:55). Here mentors are assigned to the mentees (Montgomery, 2017).

Thomas *et al.* (2015:145) have suggested the traits of informal mentoring such as likely compatibility between mentor and protégé, the length of the relationship and the ability of the mentee to cater for the specific needs of the protégé as its advantage over formal mentoring. Bynum (2015) acknowledges informal mentoring as a common form of mentoring and categorised it into three domains: peer mentoring, family support mentoring and collaborative mentoring.

Peer mentoring, as mentioned by Bynum (2015) is a form of informal mentoring that involves mutual connections and interactions among colleagues; it encapsulates moral support. Searby *et al.* (2015:105) find that this form of mentoring is a career "enhancing activity" A family support mentoring involves encouragement and support that one receives from a family member, for instance spouse, parents and friends. Collaborative mentoring means several different professional forms of support from experienced people. Searby *et al.* (2015:105) affirm the importance of collaborative mentoring, as one cannot learn all she needs from a single mentor. Here the importance of seeking diverse perspectives is reiterated as one may tend to learn from various standpoints because learning from varied experiences people are viewed to be important as one advances in her or his career (Searby *et al.*, 2015:105).

Copeland and Calhoun (2014) find that having the combination of formal and informal mentoring could be beneficial, although it was noted that relationship with an informal mentor is 'informal' and as a protégé one can call her mentor when faced with difficulty at any time. Here having an excellent and cordial relationship with one's mentor is significant as this might have a positive effect on how one relates with one's mentor. Although Block and Tietjen-Smith (2016:306) recognise the importance of men's mentoring but suggest that women should have access to other women who have been able to advance to educational leadership, as this might increase the number of women in educational leadership positions.

Abalkhail and Allan (2015:153) have brought a contextual understanding to the discourse of mentoring. Abalkhail and Allan (2015) investigate the contexts of Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom and find that while women in Saudi Arabia have attributed mentoring to their family members, the women in the UK have credited mentoring to the workplace. The mentoring perspective from Saudi Arabia is more informal and family-oriented while mentoring from the perspective of the UK women is either formal, or formal and friendly and the workplace-oriented. If family mentoring is significant in women`s career advancement, there is a downside to it “as not all women have family support or strong family influence” (Abalkhail & Allan, 2015:157). The importance of contextual understanding of this study lies within different experiences of women in educational leadership at the district office, based on their different cultural backgrounds.

Uzohue *et al.* (2016:21) suggest “the need to understand different leadership styles as it might increase one`s knowledge to lead effectively”. They have presented different forms of leadership styles; they include amongst others autocratic leadership style, bureaucratic leadership style, participatory leadership style, *laissez faire* leadership style, transactional leadership style, and transformational leadership style (Uzohue *et al.*, 2016:21).

- (i) Autocratic leadership style: This has been referred to as “an extreme form of transactional leadership” (Uzohue *et al.*, 2016:21). The autocratic leadership style depicts power relations between leaders and followers. It presents the supremacy of leaders over followers as the leaders can make decisions without consulting the followers. It is believed that the autocratic form of leadership styles can be advantageous to the organisation as the leaders could make and implement decisions quickly (ibid). This form of leadership style is often useful in a situation where there is a need to make urgent decisions to circumvent crisis in an organisation. However, it is believed that a leader`s non-consultation might lead to resentment from the followers.
- (ii) Bureaucratic leadership style: According to Uzohue *et al.* (2016:21), the bureaucratic form of leadership style is centred on strict rules and regulations. Here leaders and followers alike are obliged to strictly conform to certain rules and regulations to get tasks done. This form of leadership is believed to be beneficial in a risky environment where risky tasks are performed (Uzohue *et al.*, 2016:21).

- (iii) Participatory leadership style: Participatory leadership style, also referred to as democratic leadership style, centres on the involvement of leaders and followers in decision-making. Here both leaders and followers set and achieve organisational goals in togetherness.
- (iv) *Laissez faire* leadership style: This form of leadership depicts a degree of freedom accord to followers (Uzohue *et al.*, 2016:21). It is believed that this form of leadership can be damaging if a team member lacks the appropriate skills and motivation to work successfully.
- (v) Transactional leadership style: This form of leadership style is centred on transactional relationships between leaders and followers. The style involves contingent rewards in terms of praise and punishment (Uzohue, *et al.*, 2016:21). Based on clear setting, it is believed that this form of leadership can help in achieving organisational goals (Uzohue *et al.*, 2016).
- (vi) Transformational leadership style: Transformational leadership “as the name implies, concerns transformation of followers” (Uzohue *et al.*, 2016:21). This form of leadership depicts a leader’s ability to motivate, inspire, mentor and influence the subordinates to achieve organisational goals.

Acknowledging that it is essential to understand different styles of leadership, Uzohue *et al.* (2016:25) have however argued for a transformational form of leadership as it emphasises leaders’ capabilities to motivate and influence followers to achieve organisational goals.

Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) find that leadership styles might have a positive effect on organisation in terms of job satisfaction and goals achievement regarding productivity. Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014:57) conceptualise an effective leader as “the one who can exert influence on the followers to achieve the goals”. They point out the reciprocal relationships within leadership style, organisational culture and job satisfaction. In a way, an organisational culture, leadership styles and organisational performance have interrelationships function and relation as one determines the viability of the other. Although Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) believe that different leadership styles might affect an organisation; they emphasise the effect of transformational leadership style in an organisation. Similarly, Abu-Hussain and Essawi (2014:50) cite that “transformational leadership correlates with job satisfaction and job performance” of the employees.

Abu-Hussain and Essawi (2014) studied the leadership styles and emphasised transactional and transformational forms of leadership styles. The two leadership styles are conceptualised from the individual values orientation standpoint based on the belief that individual values might affect their behaviours and approaches to leadership (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014:49). The transactional leadership styles, they conceptualise as a “pragmatic value orientation” and the transformational leadership as a “moral value orientation” (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014:49). The pragmatic value as supported by elements such as “accomplishments, compliance with organisation rules and regulations, aggressiveness and others depict the nature of transactional leadership” (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014:49). The moral value orientation buttressed by elements such as interrelationship, friendship, caring and others depict the nature of transformational leadership (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014:49). While the pragmatic value orientations spell out the organisational need, the moral value orientation depicts the individual value orientation. The two are viewed as an integral part of leadership as they influence leaders’ styles. Although the two represent leadership styles, transformational leadership is associated more with organisational effectiveness (Abu-Hussain & Essawi, 2014:56; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014:58).

The study of Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014) and that of Abu-Hussain and Essawi (2014) corroborate each other because they both underscore the effects of leadership styles on organisation success. The significance is that they both present different effects of leadership styles; they include amongst others, job satisfaction, job performance, ethical behaviour, effectiveness, job-related tension and others as the crucial aspects that are needed for employees’ good living.

Bantwini and Letseka (2016:333), in considering the context of education in South Africa regarding national and global expectations, mention the importance of leadership styles in achieving a “desired successful education reform”. For instance, the necessity of meeting the varied needs of learners irrespective of their background as well as the need to face the challenges of new and constant education policy. This includes the necessity to ascertain “worldwide recognition” and to “cope successfully with a changing and competitive reality” (Bantwini & Letseka, 2016:337). Here the belief is that the contribution of leadership is needed for successful education reform as they link the successful education system in a competitive world to a leadership style. Particularly the transformational leadership style, as it is believed that transformational leadership, through its inherent characteristics, would be able to build a

constructive culture and permit a successful education system. However, considering the nature of transactional and transformational leadership and their styles, the focus of this study is the combination of the two approaches to better understand women's experiences of educational leadership at education district level.

3.7 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the context of the education district to understand women's experiences of educational leadership at the district office. To better understand the factors behind the persistence of the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership, the chapter captured the challenges being faced by women. Working within feminist theory as an analytical approach to understanding women's situation better (see Chapter 2), this chapter presented different metaphors that have been used to understand women's challenges: glass ceiling, inequality regimes, and labyrinth. To some extent these metaphors reflect the complexity of the challenges being faced by women on their career path to leadership positions. Using these metaphors to capture the complexity of these challenges is essential, as they have provided basis for this study. However, it is thought that despite the complexity of these challenges; they are either rooted in the self-concept; social role and leadership theories (see Chapter 2). Accordingly, these challenges were situated within the concepts of individual, society and organisation; this is to better understand the essence of the empirical aim of this study. In the next chapter, I will present the research design, methodology, and methods used to implement the qualitative study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN, METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research design, methodology and methods used to implement this qualitative study. Qualitative research design and methodology with a hermeneutic phenomenology approach were followed to obtain an in-depth understanding of women's experiences of career advancement at district level in the North West Province Department of Education and Sport Development. The research question informed the choice of qualitative research design and methodology. The choice of research design and methodology was also informed by an interpretive notion of the world that aims at people's lived experiences and the construction of their social world.

The chapter deals with the following topics:

The philosophical assumptions and paradigm/worldview are explained. These include the ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions, followed by a discussion on the nature of qualitative research, the research design and approach (hermeneutic phenomenology), methodology, methods, researcher's role, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations.

4.2 PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Knox and Burkard (2009:570) noted the importance of philosophy and suggested that all research methods should be based on philosophy. According to Creswell (2013:16), philosophy "means the use of abstract ideas and beliefs that inform our research." Punch (2014:14) presents philosophy as "a way of looking at the world." This understanding is based on a set of assumptions, namely: (i) ontology, (ii) epistemology, (iii) axiology and (vi) methodology (Creswell, 2013; Punch, 2014). Ontology presents the "nature of reality and its characteristics" (Creswell, 2013:20). Qualitative research is centred on "multiple realities based on participants' different experiences" (Creswell, 2013:20). Epistemology suggests the nature of knowledge regarding the "relationships between knowledge and what can be known" (Punch, 2014:14). Axiology is value laden as it presents the stance of the researcher (Creswell, 2013:20; 2016:21). It also regulates the "ethical issues to be

considered while planning a research” (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017:28). The methodology presents how we discover and acquire knowledge (Punch, 2014:14). Our view of the nature of the world informs how we perceive and gain knowledge, for example acquiring and interpreting data, and our approach toward research participants (Knox & Burkard, 2009:570). According to Bhattacharjee (2012:17), our view about the nature of the world as rooted in our belief systems or paradigms will dictate how we design and conduct research. According to Sefotho (2015:23), people’s view about the world will provide a better understanding of a research method and align the focus of their study”.

4.2.1 Interpretive paradigm

This study is based on the interpretive paradigm informed by a feminist lens. Interpretive paradigm serves as “a set of assumptions and orientations to the study” (Donmoyer, 2008:591). One of the main characteristics of the interpretive paradigm is an “understanding of human life from within”, and that is what constitutes the focus of this study (Nieuwenhuis, 2007:58). The knowledge of human life, however, is based on people’s lived experiences and the construction of their social world through shared meanings and interactions, e.g. women in educational leadership positions’ construction and shared meanings of their career advancement.

De Villiers (2005:12) points out that the main concerns of interpretivism are to “find new interpretations and underlying meanings and to adhere to the ontological assumptions of multiple realities that are time and context-dependent”. According to Sefotho (2015:27), the interpretive paradigm forms the basis for accepting multiple realities in research. In the same way, Pham (2018:4) views the interpretive paradigm as a way of seeing the world from multiple perspectives as it provides the basis for an in-depth description of individuals’ social context. The acceptance of various realities and detailed description of participants’ background are fundamental to this study since it aims to explore and describe people’s varied lived experiences.

4.2.1.1 Feminist theoretical lens

This study engages in the interpretive paradigm as a philosophy through the feminist theoretical lens. While the interpretive paradigm embraces multiple realities and in-depth descriptions of participants’ backgrounds, feminist theory embraces the analysis of women’s different lived experiences of their context. The lived experiences in the context of this study can be

conceptualised to encapsulate “women’s diverse situations and the institutions that frame those situations” (Creswell, 2013:29). Although feminist theory varies, its main principle as entrenched in the notion of intersectionality is the “acknowledgement of the multi-layered experiences of women’s situation or location despite their differences and commonalities” (Kutu, 2013:53). The acknowledgement of individual women’s multi-layered experiences is significant to this study.

Understanding that the premise of this study is to allow women to voice their own story, the feminists’ theoretical lens is chosen (1.4 & 5.2.2.1). Although “feminist research can be conducted by men, the purpose of feminist research is to give voice to women’s experience and integrate reflexivity” (Neher, 2016:3). Often, predominant in feminist research is “the theme of domination in the feminist literature and gender domination within a patriarchal society” (Creswell, 2013:29). Psychogios (2007:171) views feminist research as “an attempt to help all dominated groups have input into organisational theories, and it is to ensure the involvement of the researcher and participants” in knowledge production.

4.2.1.2 Significance of an interpretive paradigm and a feminist theoretical lens to this study

Different lived experiences of the participants "based on detailed analysis of their everyday practices" using thematic and framework analysis have provoked multiple realities ingrained in different perspectives, views, beliefs, ideas, and values (Flick, 2015:24). From an interpretive perspective, participants were able to “construct the meaning of the phenomenon under investigation in different ways”; this is due to their varied experiences (Scotland, 2012:11). Also, from a feminist perspective, the study has been able to understand and analyse these participants’ varied experiences.

4.3 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The study adopts qualitative research as an approach to understand women’s experiences of educational leadership at district level. According to Creswell (2013:4), qualitative research as an approach explores and understands the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Figure 4.1 presents the nomenclature of qualitative research and how qualitative research as an approach was used in this study.

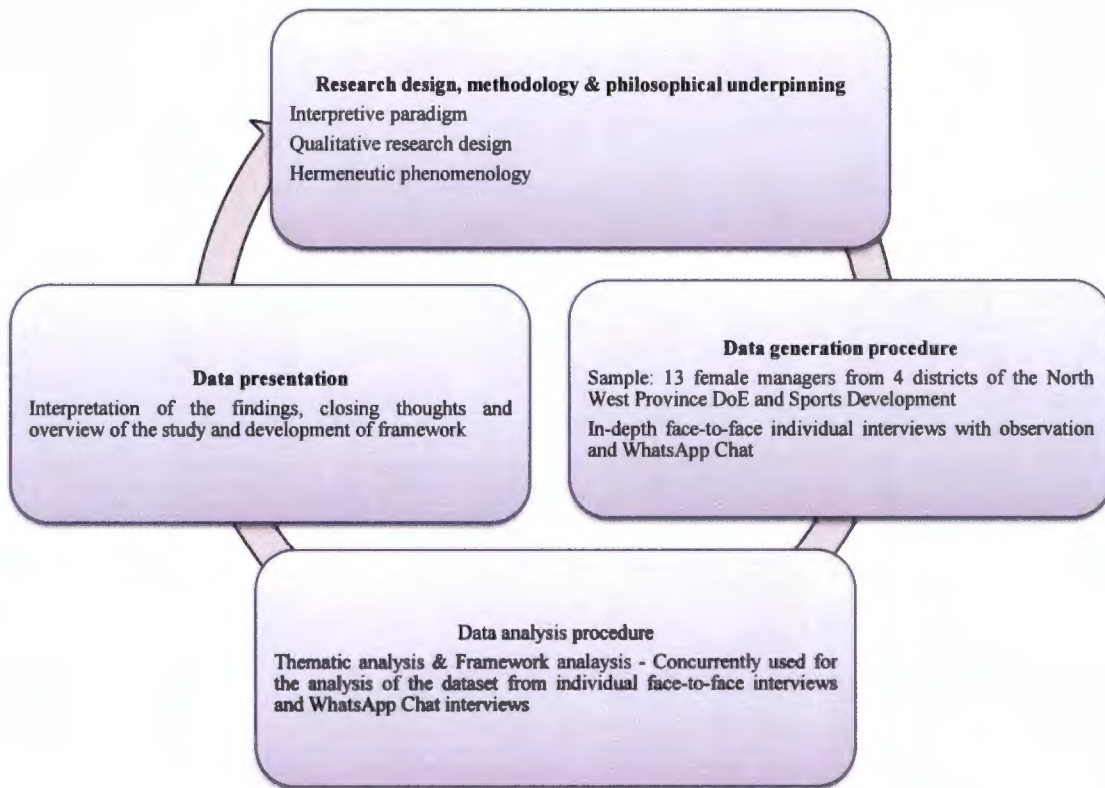


Figure 4.1 Research design, methodology and methods (Source: Author).

The researcher’s preference for a qualitative research approach is based on her philosophical orientation, the research questions and aims of this study (Hancock *et al.*, 2009:4; Hendry, 2009:73; Fassinger & Morrow, 2013:74) (see 1.5 & 1.5.2). Creswell (2009:2) suggests that the choice of study design is based on researchers’ philosophical assumption. In this study, the researcher attached value to an interpretive paradigm as her philosophical assumption. According to Hancock *et al.* (2009:4); Hendry (2009:73); Fassinger and Morrow (2013:74) our philosophical assumption includes consideration of the research aim and questions, as they determine the form of inquiry (see 1.4; 1.4.1 & 1.4.2). The above explains the importance attached to the research questions and the study aim. The appropriateness of the research method in the study is regarded as of paramount value. According to Jootun *et al.*, (2009:42) and Birchall (2014:1), an appraisal of the relevance of a research method regarding the research question and aim therefore needs to be undertaken.

Based on the position of Birchall (2014:1) that “qualitative inquiry quite effectively, allows the researcher to explore meaning, interpretations, and individual experiences” this study employed a

qualitative research with hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodology to explore the experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district level in the North West Province Department of Education and Sport Development. The researcher engaged in the exploration through interviews with thirteen female managers and WhatsApp Chat with three of the thirteen female managers who volunteered to participate in further discussion to clarify their experiences of mentoring. To understand, unpack, and present the collected data, I employed thematic and framework analysis concurrently. I engaged in an interpretive paradigm because it constitutes the methodological perspectives for understanding the study. In the next section I will explain the nature of qualitative research as an approach for this study.



4.3.1 The nature of qualitative research

According to Hancock (2009:4), the intent of qualitative research is to “broaden and expand our understanding of how things came to be the way they are in our social world.” Creswell (2013:45-49) presented different perspectives to understand the nature of qualitative research, Table 4.1 depicts the perspectives.

Table 4.1 Perspectives on qualitative research

Characteristics	Elements
Natural setting	Social context/site
Researcher as a main instrument	Researchers’ involvement
Multiple methods	Multiple Data
Complex reasoning	Inductive and deductive analysis
Participants’ meanings	Prioritisation of participants’ voices
Emergent design	Process is prone to change or alteration
Reflexivity	Researchers’ position or standpoint
Holistic account	Multiple perspectives of a phenomenon under study
Extensive time	Longer time in the field

(Adapted from Creswell, 2013:45-48).

Table 4.1 presents the characteristics of qualitative research based on Creswell (2013:45-48). The first tenet of qualitative research is that it must occur in a natural setting. This entails researchers' involvement as a key instrument in collecting data directly from participants through different methods of data collection, e.g. interviews, documents or observations employing open-ended questions (Creswell, 2013:45). The use of multiple methods of data collection is to ensure capturing multiple data based on participants' varied experiences. Capturing of multiple perspectives here is believed to require complex reasoning as researchers are expected to engage in inductive and deductive logical reasoning using different methods of data analysis (Creswell, 2013:45). Inductive and deductive reasoning entails "building patterns and categories and organising them into abstract points." (Creswell, 2013:45). According to Creswell (2013:45), building patterns and categories involves rigour as researchers need to go back and forth between data source (ibid). Participants are required to describe the problems or issues under investigation. Here, researchers' meanings are to be put in hold to ensure that the voices of participants are heard (ibid). Qualitative research design is presented as emergent; this is because the initial plans cannot be strictly held on to (ibid). Here it is believed that all phases of qualitative research design can change or shift during the research process. Reflexivity is described as another characteristic of qualitative research (ibid). Reflexivity concerns how researchers present themselves in terms of their prior experiences (ibid). It is believed that prior experiences might influence research as it could inform why researchers embark on a study (ibid). In qualitative research, it is expected that researchers give a holistic account of their study, this entails reporting multiple perspectives to one's study by interacting with participants and capturing the complexity of the interactions. It is believed that this could be achieved by allowing people to tell their stories.

However, qualitative research is believed to be time-consuming as one needs to spend extensive time in the field (Creswell, 2013:49). This could be described as a disadvantage, but the significance of spending a long period of time is that it would allow for collaboration with participants. These characteristics have served as a guide for this study. This is evident in the process of the study.

4.4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

Qualitative research methods are used in this study. Qualitative research methods, according to Hammarberg *et al.* (2014:499), are useful in obtaining "meaning and perspective from the

standpoint of participants”. Qualitative research methods involve the selection of site(s) and a small group of people to investigate their beliefs, views and opinions concerning a phenomenon through document analysis, video recording, photography, observations.

I used qualitative research design, methodology and methods because this study explored people’s experiences. According to Hancock *et al.* (2009:7) the primary concern of qualitative research “is the development of explanations of social phenomena to help us to understand the social world we live in and the reason things are the way they are”. From this perspective, the significance of qualitative research design, methodology and methods lie in its ability to “unveil the multidimensional nature of certain situations, settings, processes, relationships, systems, or people” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013:140). Mohajan (2018:24) describes qualitative research “as a sort of social action research that emphasises how individuals interpret and make meaning of their experiences”. As cited by Mohajan (2018:24), qualitative research is “exploratory in nature as it answers the why and how of a phenomenon”, in this case, women’s experiences of career advancement. The qualitative approach is suitable for this study which deals with experiences, as the meaning of this phenomenon can only be best understood from participants’ viewpoints. The objectives of this study are, amongst others, to explore the factors behind the persistence of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions and to investigate the factors that can help the attainability and sustainability of women’s career advancement to educational leadership positions. These involve the development of a framework for understanding and enhancing women’s career advancement to educational leadership.

4.4.1 Participants and site selection

Careful selection of participants and sites are critical to qualitative research endeavours. Research is never neutral, and there is always a context (Williams, 2003:3). From a qualitative perspective, data are collected from participants’ social or natural setting (Creswell, 2009:4). Importantly, a researcher will select a research participant and site “to accomplish a particular purpose and gain the most applicable insight” into his or her study (Hanson *et al.*, 2011:377). Accordingly, to gain relevant insight to this study, I purposely selected the four districts in the Department of Education and Sport Development at North West Province and thirteen female managers who were in senior positions at education district office, using criterion strategy. The Department of Education and Sport Development deals with all schools from Grade R to 12; and the rationale for choosing

districts from the North West province was based on its diverse nature in terms of ethnicity, religion, and culture as these could help to generate a multiplicity of meanings based on different perceptions and views. Therefore, the sites and the participants were appropriate for the study since they provided the “relevant information needed for the in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation” (Petty *et al.*, 2012:380).

The North West Department of Education and Sport Development (DoE) comprises four districts: (i) Ngaka Modiri Molema; (ii) Kenneth Kaunda District (iii) Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati; and (iv) Bojanala District. The four districts were selected for the study. The selection of the four districts was to collect data that cut across the province and thus provide more nuanced findings that would reflect the accurate picture of the province. The initial proposal was to engage with twelve women managers in the study, but eventually, thirteen women participated, i.e. three women each from three districts and four women from one other district. I included the fourth woman in the fourth district due to her position and experience.

Out of the thirteen participants, only one was interviewed in her home; this was as suggested by the participant because she was on leave during that period. The other twelve participants were interviewed in their various offices. I used pseudonyms to represent the four districts; this is to ensure anonymity. These pseudonyms are used throughout the sections on analysis, interpretation and presentation of findings. The participants were able to provide a strong understanding of women in leadership and decision-making positions.

4.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Ratner (2008:516) presents research methodology as “assumptions, rules and methods employed by researchers to avail their work open to analysis, critique, replication, repetition, and adaptation; and to choose appropriate research methods”. It also reveals “actions to be taken in the study and the reasons for these actions” (Ratner, 2008:516). Hence a research methodology presents a guiding principle to a research study; including why and how research is conducted.

There are different methodological approaches to qualitative research. Creswell (2007) presented five different major approaches to qualitative research: Ethnographic approach, Narrative inquiry approach, Grounded theory approach, Case study approach and Phenomenology approach. The ethnographic approach focuses on “studying of culture sharing group of people with the same values

and beliefs” (Creswell, 2007:68), and includes the shared experiences of a specific geographical location or religion (Hancock *et al.*, 2009). Hence, integral to ethnographic research, is the “description of culture and social interactions of a particular group or subgroup” (Lichtman, 2014:100). The focus of the narrative inquiry is the exploration of human experiences “as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals” (Creswell, 2007:54; Creswell, 2013:13). The grounded theory focuses on theory generation from collected data obtained through a social process or practices from people as ingrained in their actions and interaction (Creswell, 2007:63; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013:146). While the case study emphasises the study of one or more cases within a specific context, the phenomenology approach stresses the study of people’s lived experiences of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007:73; Creswell, 2013:14). The case study approach aims “to obtain an in-depth understanding of single or multiple cases within a bounded system,” e.g. a school setting or context. The purpose of phenomenology is to “describe and understand the essence of lived experiences of people who have direct experiences of a phenomenon” such as career advancement into educational leadership positions (Lichtman, 2014:101). The appropriateness of any of these qualitative research approaches lies in a researcher’s worldview, research questions and the study objectives (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013:140). For instance, investigation of a culture tends to engage a research approach such as ethnography that can provide rules and methods of obtaining data from a group of people (Creswell, 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Lichtman, 2014). Also, an attempt to investigate people’s history or biography will require a researcher to engage in a narrative inquiry approach that provides an exploration of human experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals (Creswell, 2007:54). Likewise, investigating people’s experience of a phenomenon as reported in this study requires the application of phenomenology methodological approach.

4.5.1 Hermeneutic phenomenology as a methodological approach

I employed the hermeneutic phenomenological research approach in this study as a guide to understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Creswell (2007) perceives hermeneutic as a form of phenomenology. According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013:140), phenomenology in its broadest sense implies “a person’s perception of the meaning of an event, as opposed to the event as it exists external to the person”.

Bhattacharjee (2012:109) conceptualises phenomenology as a “research approach that emphasises the study of conscious experiences as a means of comprehending the reality around us”. Creswell

(2007) identifies two forms of phenomenology: transcendental phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology.

Transcendental phenomenology, according to Creswell (2007:60), emphasises bracketing out of one's experiences and the collection of data from several participants who have experienced a phenomenon. From this perspective, the researcher tends to suspend personal experiences and takes a fresh look towards participants' experiences of an event (Creswell, 2007:59). While the description of participants' experiences is vital to transcendental phenomenology, we cannot overemphasise the role of bracketing.

Hermeneutic phenomenology is solely based on the lived experiences of persons who have direct experiences of a phenomenon. It includes the description and interpretation of participants' experiences. I chose hermeneutic phenomenology in the study as a methodological framework to explore, describe, interpret and have a nuanced understanding of the women's experiences of educational leadership positions at district office level. According to Lichtman (2014:115), hermeneutic is closely related to phenomenology as it assumes to represent the science of interpretation and explanation. It further presents "an interaction or link between the researcher and what is being interpreted" (Lichtman, 2014:114). The appropriateness of hermeneutic phenomenology research approach to this study lies within the researcher's worldview, research questions and the study objectives that were all based on the understanding of a phenomenon from individuals who have direct experiences (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013:140).

According to Kafle (2011:197) hermeneutic phenomenologists seek to "uncovering the better understanding of a phenomenon." Furthermore, hermeneutic phenomenology presents the "description and interpretation of the meaning of phenomena as experienced by participants" (Padilla-Diaz, 2015:104). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2013:150), hermeneutical phenomenology intends to understand an experience from the participants' viewpoint. Understanding experience from the standpoint of participants is a vital component of this study. For instance, it has helped to "understand the meaning of the stories" of women's experiences of their career advancement to educational leadership positions at the district office (Snape & Spencer, 2013:12).

4.5.1.1 Theoretical perspectives for understanding phenomenology

Moran (2000) views phenomenology as a radical way of doing philosophy. Kafle (2011:181), conceptualises phenomenology as a “philosophical movement and a range of research approaches”. Phenomenology as a philosophy, according to Lichtman (2014:114) presents “lived experiences and the essence of the lived experiences”. Phenomenology, as a research approach, offers different ways of engaging with research. Padilla-Diaz (2015:101) suggests that the philosophical foundation of qualitative research is rooted in phenomenology as a philosophy. The theoretical perspectives for understanding phenomenology in this study stem from the standpoints of Husserl, a German philosopher who is generally acknowledged as a father of philosophy and his student, Heidegger, who emphasises the issue of hermeneutic or interpretation (Moran, 2000; Lichtman, 2014). Although different scholars such as Immanuel Kant, Georg Wilhelm, Friedrich Hegel and Ernest Mach have been associated with phenomenology, the work of Husserl brought phenomenology into the limelight as phenomenology is viewed as a new means of doing philosophy (Moran, 2000).

The theoretical framework for understanding phenomenology in the study includes lived experience, the essence of the experience, bracketing and description and interpretation. Lived experience as engrained in Husserl’s perspective on phenomenology presents direct engagement with the world (Moran, 2000:6). Bhattacharjee (2012:109) conceptualises lived experiences from the perspective of phenomenology as a “source of all knowledge”. The principle of lived experience is integral to this study because it focuses on the selection of an experience or event (Lichtman, 2014). The purpose of lived experience, according to Patton (2002:106), is the “core meanings mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced.” The core of lived experiences is valuable to this study due to its focus on a mutual understanding of women who are in educational leadership positions at district level. The term ‘bracketing’ based on the work of Husserl denotes a suspension of preconception or prejudgment; this involves circumventing of “misconstructions and impositions placed on experience in advance” (Moran, 2000:4). This principle is valuable to this qualitative research as it has freed the researcher from all forms of prejudices that could have constituted misjudgement in the course of describing, analysing and interpreting the data from this study. The principles of description and interpretation become essential principles to this study as they present “systematic reflection and analysis” of the phenomenon under investigation (Bhattacharjee, 2012:109).

4.5.1.2 Motivation for hermeneutic phenomenology approach to the study

The motivation for engaging with hermeneutic phenomenological research methodology in the study is “to understand and interpret the lifeworld or the experience of the selected participants as it is lived” (Kafle, 2011:191). This understanding includes the selected participants’ “perspectives of their particular situation” as women, regarding their experiences of the phenomenon under investigation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013:145). Hermeneutic phenomenology approach becomes significant to this study since it is aimed at “lived experiences” and has thus helped to provide an in-depth understanding of how the selected participants attain and sustain educational leadership positions despite the barriers they encountered daily as women (Lichtman, 2014:112). From the hermeneutic phenomenology perspective, Kafle (2011:191) states that understanding the lifeworld requires “that we explore the stories that people tell of their experiences, often with the help of some specific hermeneutic or method of interpretation.”

4.6 PROCESS OF EXPLORING WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP POSITIONS AT THE DISTRICT OFFICE

Ethical procedures were duly followed in the study (see Appendices 1 & 6). Letters to seek permission to conduct research were obtained from the Faculty of Education’s (Acting) school director of postgraduate studies (see Appendices 2 & 3), the letters allowed the researcher to seek consent from the department of education. The process of achieving the aim of the study is explained below.



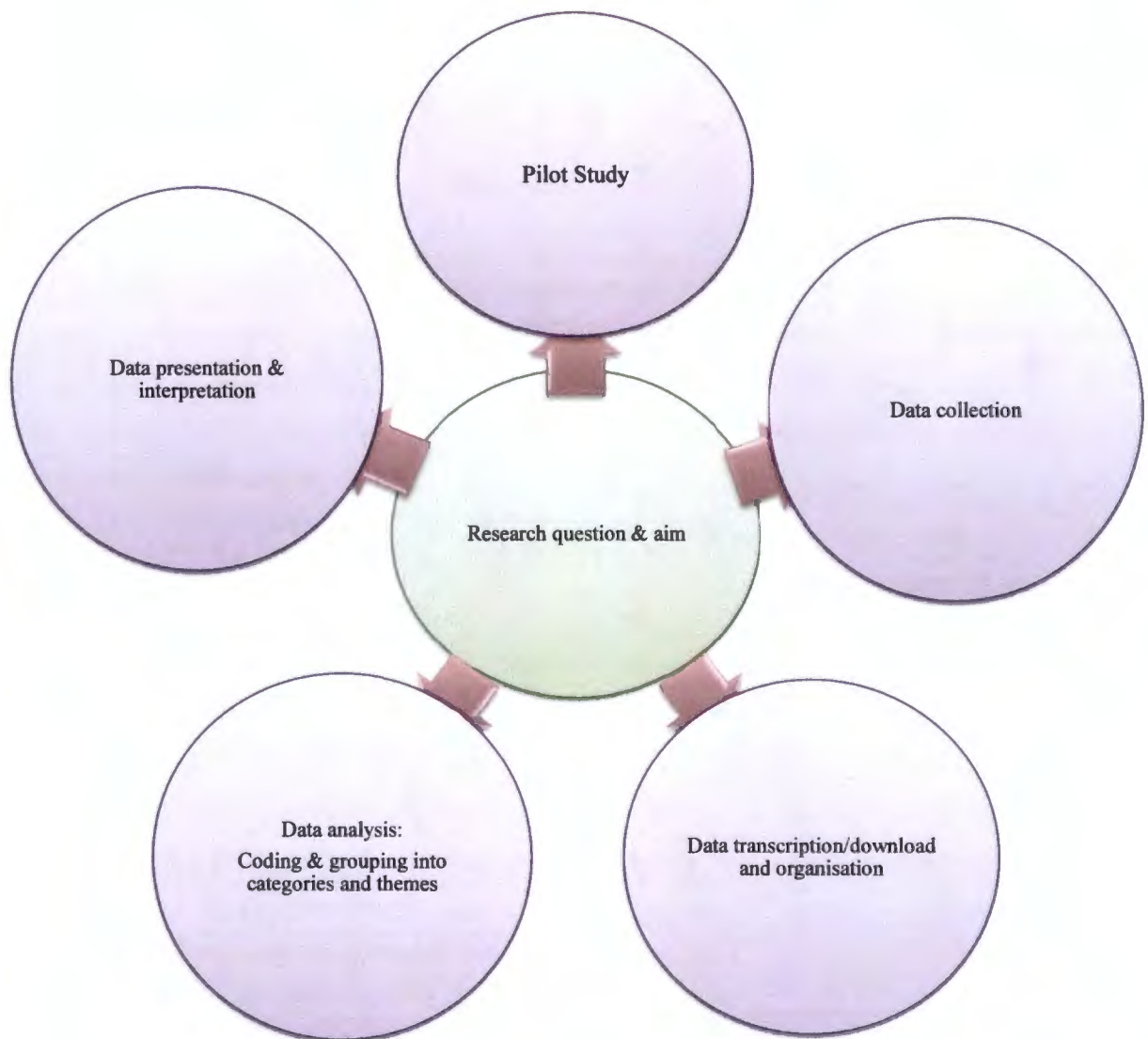


Figure 4.2 Example of the empirical process (Source: Author).

4.6.1 Setting the scene

Prior to the execution of this study, a pilot study was carried out. A pilot study is a ‘small-scale’ exploration conducted before the main study and the purpose is to test the relevance of interview questions for practicality, to gain the insights of experts, determine the clarity of interview questions and enhance participants’ selection as enunciated by Majid *et al.* (2017:1076-1077).

The data from the pilot study was not analysed because its primary purpose was to have a preliminary idea of what the main study would look like and importantly to review the interview questions before commencing this study.

4.6.1.1 Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted by the researcher in December 2017. Two participants who were in leadership positions were purposely selected. The two participants were identified as PP1 and PP2. The two females selected for the pilot study were in higher education leadership. The aim of the pilot study was conveyed to the participants from the onset. The consent to participate in the pilot study was signed by two participants who voluntarily contributed to the study. The participants also completed the biographical information form. The pilot study was guided by eleven questions, which were later streamlined into ten questions used in the main study. The pilot interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes.

The pilot study was significant to the main study because it helped to review and improve the interview questions before commencement of the main study. It helped with time management as I was able to determine the approximate duration for each question. The interview process provided a guide as to how to conduct the main study interview. Also, the pilot study provided a sense of familiarity with interview questions and allayed my fears. For example, interacting with senior academics who are professors has built confidence in me, and as a result, I was able to interact well with my study participants.

4.6.2 Data collection methods

Snape and Spencer (2013:4) identify different forms of data collection strategies that include: observations, in-depth individual interviews, focus groups, biographical methods such as life histories and narratives. In this study, I employed in-depth individual interviews with observations, using “face-to-face strategy”, and supported by a WhatsApp communication technology using WhatsApp chat (Creswell, 2016:114).

4.6.2.1 Informed consent and permission to use a voice recorder

The data collection process started with greetings and introduction. According to Halej (2017:3), research participants should be given adequate information about the methods, aim and objectives

of the given study they are involved in. I explained the purpose of the study and assured participants that the exploration was not to evaluate them but to explore their experiences of educational leadership, how they have been able to acquire and sustain their positions.

Subsequently, a consent form entailing the purpose of the study and brief on the data collection process was distributed to the participants to read for further understanding and signature. The researcher sought permission to use a voice recorder from participants before commencement of the interviews. Of the thirteen participants engaged in the study, only two objected to the use of a voice recorder and their objection was based on prior experience of being recorded and comfort. Reflecting on the principles of ethics such as withdrawal and autonomy, I abstained from pressurising the participants (see 4.7).

4.6.2.2 In-depth face-to-face individual interview

The use of an interview is one of the main methods of collecting qualitative data (Hancock *et al.*, 2009:16). Interviews present “a powerful way to understand people” in qualitative research (Al-Yateem, 2012:31). Alshenqueet (2014:39) presents interviewing as an essential way of providing detailed descriptions of individuals and events in their natural setting. According to Babbie (2017:318), an interview is an interactive act between an interviewer and a respondent. An in-depth individual interview guided by the semi-structured protocol with open-ended questions was utilised to explore women’s experiences on career advancement to educational leadership positions. I used open-ended questions as suggested by Turner (2010:756) and Chenail (2011:256) “to provide the participants with ample opportunities to reflect and make meanings of their views” on career advancement to educational leadership positions in their respective district offices.

Creswell (2007) highlights the major problem that can be associated with the use of open-ended questions to include difficulty with the coding of data and appropriate reflection on the overall responses by the interviewer. As observed by Turner (2010:756) for instance, participants may tend to bring in different information that may at first glance seem irrelevant, but probably allow participants to contribute as much comprehensive information as they desire. Also, “the goodness of qualitative research lies in what it promises to do well” (Hanson *et al.*, 2011:375). This includes the researcher’s ability to understand the participants and their contexts; analyse and interpret these accurately, bearing in mind the research questions and the aim of the study.

The open-ended questions for the interview were divided into three categories based on the research aim and objectives (see Appendix 8). These include (i) individual factors that might influence career advancement; (ii) societal factors that may influence career advancement; and (iii) organisational factors that may influence career advancement. Accordingly, biographical information of participants was sought to aid the analysis and interpretation of the ensued or collected data from the three identified categories upon which the semi-structured protocol was based (see Appendix 7). While the biographical information section offered an insight into participants' context, the individual, social and organisational factors provided in-depth information on participants' perceptions, feelings, and opinions about career advancement to educational leadership positions.

(a) Capturing of data from in-depth individual face-to-face interviews

The researcher conducted in-depth individual face-to-face interviews. The data from the interviews were captured using a digital voice recorder. A semi-structured interview protocol was chosen to enhance the provision of detailed perceptions and descriptions of participants' experiences on the career advancement in the educational leadership positions. Doody and Noonan (2013:30) gave insights into semi-structured interviews, which served as guides to the study based on the following:

- Develop appropriate interview guides that are very interactive, and can be used to generate similar interviews that will lead to the interactive conversation;
- Flexibility, e.g. use of open-ended questions;
- Organise the topics and questions to cover the research questions and the empirical aims of the study;
- Plan for any difficulty that may arise, e.g. phrasing of complex and sensitive issues; and
- The open-ended questions must be clear and neutral.

The above insights are significant as they did not only provide appropriate data collection strategies for the study but also helped to collect rich and in-depth data. Alongside the in-depth individual interviews, observations of the participants were made using field script notes. Ritchie

(2013:35) suggests that observation affords a researcher the opportunity of recording and analysing behaviours as they happen, even though not as a member of the study population.

(b) Strategies applied for capturing individual face-to-face interviews in the study

The in-depth individual face-to-face interviews used for this study were guided by questions aiming at exploring women's views, opinions and understanding of career advancement to educational leadership at district level. For example, participants were asked questions such as: reflect on and describe how you perceive yourself as a woman and how your perception has affected you as a female manager in an educational leadership position? What are your views and opinions of societal expectations from a woman in a management position in educational leadership? Describe how you have been able to sustain your position as a senior/ manager in educational leadership.

Eleven of the interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder while two interviews were handwritten using field notes based on participants' preference as they objected to being recorded. Capturing participants' responses utilising field notes took longer than recording as we needed to work slowly to ensure that all responses were written accurately. Also, time was taken to fill all the missing gaps in the course of writing. Considering the role of ethics as rooted in the participants' right to participation, I was obligated to write down the two participants' responses. In addition to participants' voices, their facial expressions and hand gestures were also observed for "obtaining a deeper shared meaning of participants' experiences" (Onwuegbuzie *et al.*, 2010:699). The face-to-face interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes per participant.

As pointed out by Moore and Llompart (2017), the process of data collection starts before visual or audio recording as one needs to establish a relationship with participants. The journey towards the data collection was not smooth as one needed to arrange an appointment and rearrange an appointment due to the selected participants' tight and unplanned activities attached to the roles of educational leadership at the district office. Occasionally I would have to drive 260 kilometres to participants' social context two to three times before I could meet them; eventually, the data was successfully collected. Reflecting on the process of data collection in the study, one can conclude that the qualitative data collection process is tedious and requires patience.

4.6.2.3 WhatsApp networking

WhatsApp networking using a WhatsApp chat was employed in the study. Bouhnik and Deshen (2014:219) refer to WhatsApp as “a smartphone application for instant messaging.” According to Bouhnik and Deshen (2014:219) WhatsApp has become a popular means of communication in the new millennium. Although WhatsApp is a new development, its immediate ways of conveying messages and enhancing communication are gaining attention and cannot be overemphasised. These features make it appropriate to this study, and it has not only provided great insight to this study but has also contributed to the consolidation of ideas that might contribute to shared knowledge and meaning making and therefore, enhance shared understanding.

(a) Capturing data from WhatsApp Chat

During the face-to-face interview, I requested the participants to further contribute through WhatsApp chat. I explained the purpose of the WhatsApp chat. Three of the participants showed an interest in contributing further to the study using WhatsApp chat.

The WhatsApp chat involved asking the question on an identified issue that needed more in-depth insight. WhatsApp chat is essential to this study as it helped to provide more detailed insight into the understanding of appropriate forms of mentoring. The topics of the conversation emerged from the content of the in-depth face-to-face interviews.

(b) Strategies used for capturing WhatsApp Chat interviews in the study

WhatsApp chat was conducted with three participants who agreed to partake in a further interview during the individual face-to-face interview. A follow-up question was sent to the three participants through WhatsApp broadcast platform. The question that guided the WhatsApp chat is: Which form of mentoring would you prefer as an individual: formal/informal or both and why?

The WhatsApp chat was intended to be a group chat. I posted the interview question on the broadcast platform on WhatsApp networking for the participants, but they responded to it individually. I did not pressurise them to engage in a group chat due to the issue of ethics, which stipulates the right to participation, protection of identity and maintenance of confidentiality (see section 4.7). Most importantly, I reflected on the issue of informed consent. According to Halej (2017:3) “participants should be given free consent from undue pressure”, although the original

purpose was to bring the participants together “to share and integrate ideas” through the platform. However, I was able to obtain useful information that enhanced the study (Fattah 2015:117). I downloaded the responses to the interview question into a word document for analysis.

4.6.2.4 Data transcription/download and organisation

The individual face-to-face interviews captured using a digital voice recorder was transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Data transcription was done immediately after data collection. It took approximately 7 hours to transcribe each data set.

Transcription involves “the transfer of an audio or video recording into written mode”, and this entails “registering speeches” such as participants’ responses in writing (Dresing & Schmieder, 2015:19). The transcription was done to make the data available for analysis. This includes referring to verbal and non-verbal communication in the form of gestures and dialects to make meaning of participants’ responses during data analysis.

The data captured using WhatsApp chat was downloaded through electronic mail (Gmail), following these steps:

I first did a copy and paste of the WhatsApp message into iPhone notes app; then saved the copied message on iPhone notes app; thereafter I pressed the share button on iPhone notes app and sent the copied chat to Gmail service. From there I downloaded the chat into a word document.

The transcribed and downloaded data were read several times to ensure familiarity with the text; this was followed by organising the transcribed data into columns and rows based on interview questions. In the next section, the data analysis and interpretation strategies will be explained.

4.6.3 Data analysis methods

According to Bengtsson (2016:8), the process of data analysis presents “a reduction of collected data volume, identifying and grouping of categories to seek understanding”. Thematic and framework analysis were concurrently used to methodically reduce the data for the study. Smith and Firth (2011:55) describe thematic analysis as “an interpretive process, whereby data is systematically searched to identify patterns to provide an illuminating description of the phenomenon” such as career advancement. Thematic analysis as an “interpretive process” (Smith

& Firth, 2011:55) was used to “analytically identify and analyse patterns and categories” found in the data (Clarke & Braun, 2006:6; Stuckey, 2015:7). Ward *et al.* (2013:2426) have observed framework analysis as a pragmatic form of data analysis for real-life investigations such as women’s experiences of career advancement. The framework analysis was used to identify “p priori issues” rooted in the literature, research aim and questions that guided the study (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009:76; Stuckey, 2015:7; Mogliacci *et al.*, 2016:168).

The two analytical frameworks were employed concurrently to complement each other in this study. Following Braun and Clarke (2006:16-23) and Clarke and Braun (2013:123-124), the process of data analysis involved identifying six steps that served as a framework to carry out the process of analysing the collected data for this study. Figure 4.3 depicts the defined steps.

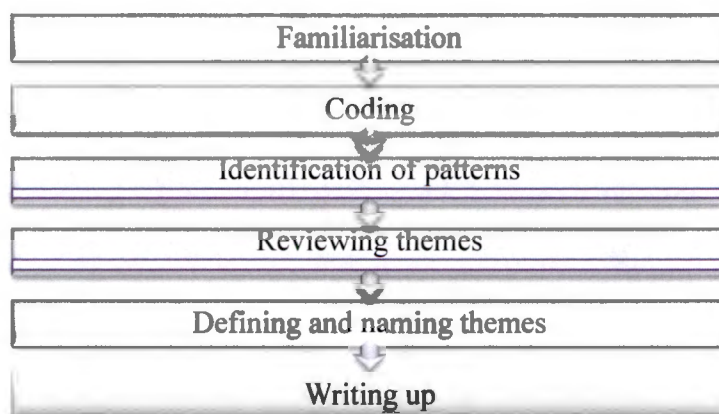


Figure 4.3 Data analysis process (Adapted from Braun & Clarke, 2006:16-23; and Clarke & Braun, 2013:123-124).

The depicted steps in figure 4.3 are explained next:

- (i) **Familiarisation:** This stage involved listening, transcribing, reading and re-reading of the data corpus from individual interviews, reading and re-reading of data collected from WhatsApp chat for an in-depth understanding. During this process numbers were assigned to each participant for identification.
- (ii) **Coding:** The coding of the dataset was done manually using Microsoft Word as a tool. During this process, I presented the data set as tables wherein I created columns and rows for each participant’s responses. Also, numbers were assigned to each line of the

data unit for easy references as the analytical process continues. The process of coding commenced with open coding whereby a text colour highlighter button was used to identify potential patterns in the form of words, phrases, paragraphs and sentences that explained the meaning and interpretation of women's experiences of career advancement in educational leadership positions at the district office. Here, after coding and re-coding, I assigned a unique code to each unit of data; this is as suggested by Saldana (2013:5) based on the aim of the study. Specifically, individual responses in each dataset were coded separately, such as phrases and sentences that represented the main questions and aim of the study.

- (iii) Identification of patterns: The process involved identification, collation and creation of consistent and meaningful patterns into different categories and themes based on the data corpus, research questions and aims; and the unique attributes of each data (Braun & Clarke, 2013:223-225). During this process, rows were created for the pithy label to identify the critical features of the data that answered the research questions and thus achieved the aim of the study (Braun & Clarke, 2013:223).
- (iv) Reviewing themes: This stage involved reviewing and filtering of different patterns and categories in a systematic order to make sure that themes 'work' in line with the coded extract and full dataset. This phase involved reflection and creativity, as I ensured that the identified themes provided an understanding of the study. At this stage, new table and "visual thematic map" were created under the identified themes for the organisation and feasibility of different patterns that ensued from each participant's response in this study (Braun & Clarke, 2013:232).
- (v) Defining and naming themes: This phase involved describing and naming the generated themes in this study. It also included the writing of an in-depth analysis of each theme in the study to identify the essence of each theme and construct a concise, punchy and informative name for each theme within the data.
- (vi) Writing up: Writing-up in this study involved weaving together the analytic narrative and data extracts from the participants' responses. This phase allows the researcher to tell the readers a coherent and persuasive story about the data and contextualising it to existing literature.

While the thematic analysis focuses on the patterns and themes in the data corpus, the framework analysis serves as “piori issues” based on the research questions and aim (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009:76). The Piori issues herein present an initial coding framework that originated from the questions and the study aim, such as the broad preliminary headings for the identified patterns and themes. According to Srivastava and Thomson (2009), one should maintain an open mind about the concepts and themes expressed by the participants while acknowledging the importance of priori issues or themes. As a result, framework analysis only served as a guide for analysing the data set that was used for this study. The thematic and framework analysis patterns and themes were significant to this study as they have helped to ensure trustworthiness.

4.6.3.1 Data coding

Coding presents an analytic process in qualitative research. According to Theron (2015:4), code itself is considered as “a descriptive concept aiming at capturing the main content or essence of the data”. Likewise, coding in this study entails identification of the main content or essence of the data. The data for this study were manually coded using word document highlighter to identify words and phrases that depict the meaning of women’s experiences of educational leadership at district level. Thematic and framework analyses were concurrently used in the coding process. Thematic analysis was facilitated using priori based on literature, research aim and questions.

4.7 RESEARCHER’S ROLE

The researcher’s role in a qualitative study is fundamental in a research process as he or she plays more evident and significant roles in all stages of research (Brodsky, 2008:766). The researcher’s role in this study becomes apparent in all stages, for instance the initiation of the topic of inquiry and study aim as based on the philosophical and theoretical understanding of my field. The role involved identification of samples, appropriate theory, methodology and methods of inquiry. The procurement of the ethics approval became significant as one cannot commence research without an ethics approval. The value of gaining access to the participants’ setting is of equal importance concerning researcher’s role in this study; it involves my endeavours to enter the participants’ environment for data collection. The process of gaining access to participants’ setting commenced with undertaking “background research”, to “negotiate relationship” with participants (Babbie, 2017:329). For example, seeking information on female managers who are in a leadership position and making calls to seek appointments.

As a researcher in the study, I assumed the role of an interviewer and observer in the process of the interviews (Babbie, 2017:329). The aspect here is ensuring that the collected data were well-managed and well-kept. According to Sutton and Austin (2015:227), a researcher responsibility is to “protect participants and their data.” I acted like an outsider in the “unpacking and construction of knowledge” at the research site since I am not an education leader (Karnieli-Miller *et al.*, 2009:279). Also, I was responsible for creating, coordinating and directing the WhatsApp chats. Subsequently, all data collected in the study were transcribed verbatim, organised and analysed by the researcher to ensure accuracy and familiarisation with the data, and the final analysis.

4.8 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness was ensured in the study using different data collection and analysis strategies. For instance, a crystallisation approach was employed (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2009). Crystallisation, as an approach, refers to the use of different methods for data generation and analysis; this is as suggested by Ellingson (2009), Tracy (2010) and Ellingson (2014). The process of crystallisation, in the study, involved different forms of data collection and analysis strategies, e.g. in-depth interviews with observations and WhatsApp chat; and thematic and framework analysis (Tracy, 2010:844). The process of engagement in crystallisation in the study was to have a “nuanced account” of the participants’ experiences of career advancement in educational leadership to enrich knowledge (Ellingson, 2014:442).

Based on the philosophical underpinning of the study that aimed at description and interpretation of participants’ experiences, a rich, thick description approach was employed. Thick description presents a clear and detailed explanation “of the research setting, the people, and the themes in a qualitative report” such as this study (Creswell, 2016:194). Lichtman (2014:384) presents the importance of thick description and posits that “one can judge what she/he reads by the information provided about how a study is done”. The adoption of a thick/rich description was essential to this study, as it might enable readers to experience and deeply understand the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2016:194).

Hence the description involves the provision of “how the data for the study were collected, analysed, and interpreted, and by what means the results were presented” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016:246). The process also involved giving an accurate report of participants’ responses by using their words, phrases, clauses or even sentences to support the research findings.

4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Braun and Clarke (2013:61), ethics presents “our relationship with participants, academic communities, and with the wider world in which we conduct research, including our research practice”. Babbie (2017:62-63) acknowledges the importance of ethics by suggesting “the need to be aware of the general agreement shared as researchers about what is proper and improper in the conduct of scientific inquiry”. Ferdinand *et al.* (2007:520) consider ethical guidelines as a way of regulating what the researcher can, cannot, or should not do while carrying out research. The understanding of what the researcher can or cannot do have led to two different concepts of ethics: procedural ethics and ethics in practice (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Tomkinson, 2015).

Procedural ethics encapsulates formal protocol that we need to address before commencement of research (Tomkinson, 2015). The protocol involves all the guidelines stipulated by the research committee (Tomkinson, 2015) such as the principles of confidentiality, participation, withdrawal and autonomy (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013). In this study, the guidelines followed involve the faculty research committee in the evaluation of the empirical research question, research design and methodology, theoretical tradition, samples, and the methods of data collection and analysis used for the study. Accordingly, the process of procedural ethics in the study involved the following:

- (i) Application for ethical clearance from the North-West University ethics committee who scrutinised the proposal for feasibility and ethical purposes;
- (ii) The issuance of letter of permission from North-West University to the four identified districts in the North West province (see Appendix 2): (i) Ngaka Modiri Molema; (ii) Kenneth Kaunda District (iii) Dr Ruth Segomotsi Mompati; (iv) Bojanala District and; (v) the Head of the North West Department of Education (HOD) - the General Superintendent (see Appendix 3);
- (iii) Obtaining letter of approval from the (HOD) (see Appendix 5) to conduct the study in the four identified districts, and;
- (iv) Obtaining approval from the directors (see Appendix 4) of the selected districts.

This ethical clearance process entails the evaluation of consent form (see Appendix 6), which stipulated my relationship with the selected participants. The committee placed value on the

assessment of the research contribution concerning how I would contribute to my field and knowledge in general. However, the significance of procedural ethics has been criticised. For instance, it is considered as "imposed procedural guidelines that are sometimes impossible to realise on the field" due to the messiness and non-linearity of qualitative research (Tomkinson, 2015, par. 5). It is important to stress that messiness and nonlinearity are integral to research. They are "typical of real-world qualitative research" (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012:817), such as this study.

Conversely, ethics in practice presents the "relationship between the researcher and research participants" (Houghton, 2010:15). Tomkinson (2015) suggests that ethics in practice present decision-making and action-taking in the research field. This process, however, is based on some fundamental principles (see Appendix 6). Different scholars such as Babbie (2017); Braun & Clarke (2013:61); Bryman (2012); Christians (2011); Creswell (2007); Flick (2015); and Leedy & Ormrod (2013) have all provided shared principles that could guide a successful research implementation. These include informed consent, voluntary participation; no harm to the participants; informed consent; confidentiality and anonymity; respect of autonomy.

- (i) Informed consent: Informed consent was sought from the participants before commencement of the in-depth interviews such as the permission to use technology devices, including a digital voice recorder and WhatsApp chats.
- (i) Protection from harm: The norm of protection from harm could include physical or psychological harm to the participants, the researcher and other individuals in the research environment. Although Hanson *et al.* (2011:381) suggest that qualitative research "rarely involves a physical intervention or imposes physical risks, but it may have social or psychological effects on the participants", for instance harm to participants' reputation while dealing with sensitive issues such as illness, abuse, divorce, addiction, and so forth. This study did not cause harm to the participants. The problems of integrity, honesty, and respect for the participants were highly considered.
- (ii) Respect for autonomy: Regarding the compliance of freedom, participants in this study were treated with ultimate respect; and they were well informed about the purpose of the study. Moreover, they could decide for themselves whether to partake in the study as I sought their consent before commencing with the study. I also informed them that

they could withdraw at any given time in case they did not wish to participate (Leedy & Ormrod, 2013; Punch, 2006).

- (iv) **Privacy and confidentiality:** This study placed value on the participants' privacy and confidentiality; it used pseudonyms to represent the participants' names wherever it was necessary to identify them by names. For instance, I used Participant 1; Participant 2; Participant 3, etc. for identification. Although it is recognized that the findings of the study will be made public, participants' identity remained anonymous; hence data for the study were kept confidential. In this study, all the participants were treated equally as no one was unfairly treated or discriminated against either due to her ethnicity, gender or language etc.

Both procedural ethics and ethics in practice are significant to this study as they stipulate how I carried out this exploration at the research site and related with the participants. It follows from the above discussion that ethics approval is obligatory in a research process. It paves the way for undertaking hermeneutic phenomenology research such as this study.

4.10 SUMMARY

The aim and purposes of the study were achieved by adopting qualitative research. The chapter described a qualitative research design, methodology, and methods. The paradigm that informed the study was explained. The nature of qualitative research, qualitative research design and methods were also explained. Additionally, the study presented hermeneutic phenomenology approach as the study methodological framework and how it applied to the study. The process followed in conducting the research was explained, this entails describing the researcher's role, the study trustworthiness and ethical considerations that were followed in the study.

CHAPTER 5

PRESENTATION OF DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter described the research methodology and methods used for this qualitative study. I explained the philosophical underpinning of the chosen methodology and methods. This chapter presents the analysed data and interpretation of findings. The main research question that guided the study is: What are the career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions and the meanings attached to the experiences? Moore and Llompart (2017:403) have pointed out the importance of the research question: the “research question is to guide researchers towards needed data”. The presentation deals with the following issues: the nature of women’s experiences of career advancement in educational leadership positions at district level, the factors that can impede women’s career advancement to educational leadership positions, and how women in educational leadership positions at the district office attain and sustain such positions.

The research explores the career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at the district office. The exploration is to provide insights into the selected participants’ varied lived experiences of their advancement to leadership positions at the education district office. This endeavour is to identify the contributory factors that can promote women’s attainment and sustenance of educational leadership positions.

I conducted in-depth face-to-face interviews and WhatsApp interviews with thirteen purposively selected participants. Thirteen participants were involved in the individual face-to-face interviews, and three of them were involved in WhatsApp interviews. Initially, the intention was to have three participants from each of the four education districts in the North West Province; four participants were obtained in one of the districts. As a result, a total of thirteen participants contributed to the study.

5.2 PARTICIPANTS' CONTEXT

The thirteen female managers who participated in the study were Sub-district Managers, Chief Education Specialists, Human Resource Managers, Circuit Managers, Curriculum Coordinators, Institutional Governance Support Services (IGSS) and Sport and Recreation Managers. Pseudonyms were also used to identify participants to ensure anonymity. I referred to the participants as Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3 and so forth.

Table 5.1 Job profile of participants

Participants' position	Summary of participants' position	Number of participants for each position
Sub-district Manager	The overall head of education sub-district office	3
Chief Education Specialist	Overseeing curriculum matters at district level	3
Human Resource Manager	Recruitment and wellbeing of educators at district level	2
Circuit Manager	Responsible for school management and school principals	2
Institutional Governance Support Services (IGSS)	Responsible for school governing board at district level	1
Curriculum Coordinator	Responsible for curriculum implementation at sub-district level	1
Sport and Recreation Manager	Overseeing sport and recreation activities at district level	1

Table 5.1 depicts the brief general description of the designation of the female managers who participated in the study. Three women are Sub-district Managers and Chief Education Specialists,

respectively. Two are Human Resource Managers and Circuit Managers, respectively, while one each is the Institutional Governance Support Services (IGSS) Manager, Curriculum Coordinator and Sport and Recreation Manager.

5.2.1 Participants' biographical information

This section presents the biographical information of the study participants.

Participant 1 is the chief education specialist. She began her career as a classroom teacher and has been in educational leadership for more than ten years. Alongside her professional life, she has an elderly mother in her care.

Participant 2 is the acting chief education specialist. She started her career as a classroom teacher, rose to the position of school principal before joining the district office. She has more than seven years' working experience in educational leadership. Besides her professional responsibilities, she is a wife and has a young child in her care.

Participant 3 is the deputy director in charge of sport and recreation. She started her career as a classroom teacher. She has been in educational leadership for more than seven years. Besides her professional responsibilities, she is a mother.

Participant 4 is the deputy director in human resource management. She started her career from the corporate world and has been in educational leadership for more than seven years. She is a mother and aunt.

Participant 5 is the sub-district manager. She started her career as a classroom teacher and has been in educational leadership for more than ten years. Participant 5 is a wife and mother.

Participant 6 is a curriculum coordinator. She started her career as a classroom teacher. Participant 6 has more than ten years of working experience in educational leadership. Alongside her professional responsibilities, she is a wife and mother.

Participant 7 is the Institutional Governance Support Services (IGSS) manager. She started her career as a classroom teacher and has been in the educational leadership for more than ten years, in conjunction with her professional responsibilities, she is a mother.

Participant 8 is the chief education specialist. She has been in educational leadership for more than ten years. She started her career as a college tutor. Alongside her professional responsibilities, she is a mother.

Participant 9 is the acting circuit manager. She started her career as a college tutor and has been in educational leadership for more than ten years. Participant 9 is a mother who has children in her care.

Participant 10 is a sub-district manager. She started her career as a classroom teacher. She has been in educational leadership for more than ten years. She is a wife and mother.

Participant 11 is the circuit manager who started her career as a classroom teacher. She has been in educational leadership for more than ten years. Alongside her professional responsibilities, she is a mother.

Participant 12 is a human resource manager. She has been in educational leadership for almost ten years. Besides her professional responsibilities, she is a mother and grandmother.

Participant 13 is a sub-district manager. She started her career as a classroom teacher. She has more than ten years of working experience in educational leadership. Besides her professional responsibilities, Participant 13 has her elderly mother in her care.

It can be construed that participants in this study are female managers in the positions such as Sub-district Manager, Chief Education Specialist, Circuit Manager, Human Resource Manager, Institutional Manager, Curriculum Coordinator and Sport and Recreation Manager. Many of the female managers have more than 7 years' working experience as a manager and all but two of them started their career as a classroom teacher. The biographical information of the participants reveals that many of the participants have personal responsibilities; for instance, many of them have children, while a few have elderly parents in their care. The purpose of this study is to allow women in an educational leadership position at the district office to share their experiences of educational leadership regarding how they have been able to attain and sustain their leadership position, including challenges attached to the position.

5.3 PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This section presents the findings and interpretations of the in-depth face-to-face individual interviews and WhatsApp chat conducted in this study. Ten themes emerged from the study. I discuss each theme in turn. The themes are from individual face-to-face interviews and WhatsApp Chat interviews:

(i) Themes from individual face-to-face interviews

Theme 1: Roles and responsibilities of educational leadership

Theme 2: Participants' self-perception

Theme 3: Participants' views on support system

Theme 4: Participants' perception of societal expectations

Theme 5: Participants' experiences of educational leadership position acquisition

Theme 6: Participants' perceptions of how they think their subordinates view them

Theme 7: Participants' perception of the challenges of educational leadership

Theme 8: Participants' perception of equal opportunities, decision-making and goal achievements

Theme 9: Women's perception of educational leadership sustenance

(ii) Theme from WhatsApp interviews

Theme 10: Perception of the form of mentoring

I present the themes in the form of tables showing different codes that led to categories that constitute each theme. Subsequently, each theme will be interpreted and supported by an excerpt from participants' responses.

5.3.1 Findings from individual face-to-face interviews

This section presents the findings from individual-face-to-face interviews.

Table 5.2 Roles and responsibilities of educational leadership

Code	Category	Theme
Recruitment and selection; equity plan; human resource and admin & Educators' wellness	Human resource and management	
Professional training; teacher development; training of school principals and SGB	Professional training and development	
Training & sport and recreation activities	Sport and recreation	Roles and responsibilities of educational leadership
School governance and administration & School improvement plan	School governance and management	
Management of curriculum needs; curriculum activities; curriculum support and services; curriculum coordination; curriculum monitoring & coordinating curriculum coordinators, collection and analysis of data, tracking learners' performance & provision of interventions	Curriculum activities and learners' performance	
Community engagement	Community engagement	

Table 5.2 presents participants' roles and responsibilities as female managers in educational leadership at district level. According to DBE (2012:10-12), the functions of educational leadership are (i) support (ii) accountability and (iii) public information (see 3.2.1). Participants

were asked to describe their office context and what they do. The purpose of asking this question was to understand the context and the roles of educational leadership at district office better. In response to the question, the following categories were identified: human resource and management; professional training and development; sport and recreation, school governance and management; curriculum activities and learners' performance; and community engagement. The identified categories form the underpinning features of participants' perceptions and experiences of educational leadership context at district level.

(i) Human resource and management

The category of human resource and management indicates that participants were responsible for human resource and management. Describing the roles attached to human resource and management, Participant 4 states:

“I am also responsible for human administration issues as well as human resource management issues. This entails ensuring that recruitment selection is done according to applicable legal prescripts, not only in terms of selection. I am also responsible for equity plan - employment equity plan in terms of the previously marginalised group.”

In her response, Participant 12 adds

“I am responsible for making sure that the appointment of the educators is correctly done. We are also responsible for the AA section” (Affirmative Action).

From the above statements, it appears that participants are accountable for gender (in) equality issue. It can be said that they take cognisance of the Affirmative Action policy, which aims at ensuring gender equality. Participants' statements further show that leadership at district level do not only assume human resource and management role of recruitment. Instead they are leaders who emphasise the issue of equality with consideration for the previously disadvantaged who are mostly black people and women. According to Archibong and Adejumo (2013:15) (see 3.3.2), the purpose of affirmative action in South Africa is to redress gender inequality and discrimination experienced by the previously disadvantaged people. This is also in line with the GPF, NDP and SDGs, which all aim at achieving gender equality (see 3.3.2).

Also, the wellness of educators appears to be paramount to the participants. For example, Participant 4 mentions:

“I am also responsible for the wellness programme because when you employ an individual or a worker you do not only employ his hand or her hand, you employ him in totality in terms of attitudes and in terms of emotions.”

Participant’s 4 statement has further indicated the significance of educational leadership at district level to the education system in this study, as it is believed that some educators “might have health issues that could affect their presenteeism then impact on productivity” about learning and teaching (DeStigter, 2018:6). Based on my reflection on the above statement, it can be said that participants have a comprehensive view of educators’ wellness. According to DeStigter (2018:9), educators’ wellness includes “physical, emotional, social, spiritual, environmental, career and financial perspective well-being”. According to Zuma *et al.* (2016:1), the provision of good quality education in public schools is rooted in the health, wellbeing and productivity of educators.

(ii) Professional training and development

This category indicates that participants are responsible for professional training and development. This is consistent with the stipulations of the department of basic education. According to DBE (2012:36), the role of educational leadership involves the provision of support for “professional growth of educators within an appraisal programme”. This also concerns the training and development of educators. One such example is: “I am what you called chief education specialist responsible for professional training” (Participant 1).

Another example is: “I am responsible for teachers’ development” (Participant 2). Consequently, P12 stressed “We are dealing with the training and development.”

(iii) Sport and recreation

Participant 3 views professional training and development from sport and recreation perspectives; this includes management and implementation of sport and recreation activities. She reflects:

“I am managing the implementation of sport and recreation activities - I was training the educators, and one said that game called KHO-KHO - is an Indian game, she said it is on

my workbook, but I did not know how to implement it, but now that I am part of this training, I will go back and make sure that the kids are playing it – so you know...”

“We got sport development, for in-school sport and out-of-school sport that I am responsible for and not only sport – but other cultural activities, such as music, dancing and heritage”, Participant 13 also reflects.

According to the Department of Basic Education (2009a:5), the vision of Sport and Recreation South Africa is “to promote peace, democracy, prosperity and productivity for all South African learners through healthy life-practices and lifelong participation in sport.” Likewise, the Department of Sport and Recreation (SRSA) (2012:25) has linked sport and recreation to social inclusion, prevention of conflict and combatting anti-social behaviour. One of the goals is “to encourage physical education and recreational and extramural school sport activities” (DBE, 2009a:5).

Although the roles and responsibilities of district office involves sport and recreation, it becomes apparent in this study that sport and recreation are perceived as ‘other’, one such instance is where a participant states: “I would be number last because the core function of education is the curriculum for us is others” (Participant 3). One can argue that treating sport and recreation as other can pose a barrier to “the rights of the child to play and participate in sport (GCIS, 2015:367). Treating Sport and recreation as other is also contrary to the School Sport Policy Framework which states that school sport ‘shall be integral, extramural and extracurricular of the holistic education programme” (DBE, 2009a:7).

(iv) School governance and management

The findings reveal that the participants in this study are to support governance and management. The findings are in line with the expectations of DBE (2012:10) in policy on organisation, roles and responsibilities of education district which mandates the district office in supporting school principals and educators to ensure quality learning and teaching. One such example is:

“... develop both the educators and school management - and school governance and generally concerning the - the - the smoothness of - of teaching and learning (T/L) at schools - that the environment is conducive. Generally, we are looking at having no interruptions at the level of schools, getting the reports from principals - working on them. I coordinate activities that are expected to be carried out within the circuit. I check the status - general

status of schools in the circuit. check whether the monies are utilised proficiently - check the infrastructures of schools, provision of human resource, learners' performance - whether there is a need for intervention or whether the targets were not reached. We have to look at interventions and the general governance of the schools and the school management, and the other things is to get to know the developmental needs and work on them" (Participant 9).

The above statement reveals the role of the education district in ensuring that infrastructures are in order. There is no doubt that infrastructure is fundamental to education. According to Khumalo and Mji (2014:1522), infrastructure forms an integral part of education in that infrastructure affords learners and educator alike the opportunity of accessing learning and teaching.

The findings also reveal that the participants investigated in this study are to support the School Management Team (SMT), Representative Council of Learners (RCL) and School Governing Bodies (SGB). This is evident when participants say:

"We train School Management Team (SMT), the Representative Council of Learners (RCL) and School Governing Bodies (SGB) member in schools - of their roles, functions and their duties and on policy development and implementation because we are working with schools' development and legislative framework" (Participant 7).

The above statements are to ensure school management and governance. This is to assist in providing a conducive environment for learning and teaching. For example, the SMT, RCL and SGB form an integral part of South Africa's education system. According to Samson and Julius (2015:5), the central role of SMT is to "provide leadership within and outside school environment". The RCL as a legislative body is established to involve learners in school decision-making. Accordingly, the SGB is found to include parents, learners' educators and community in school governance and decision making (Mansfield & Stwayi, 2017:76). This includes School Safety National Monitoring Strategy (SSNMS) (DBE, 2009b:20). The DoE (2009b:22) further identifies the five primary areas of SSNMS; they include physical infrastructure, support to management and teachers, learner support, partnerships and curriculum support. The areas encapsulate the roles of stakeholders such as SMT, RCL and SGB in such issues as "decisions on school safety, discipline procedure, partnership building with the community" and others towards the creation of an enabling environment for learning and teaching (DBE, 2009b:22). As stated by

the DBE (2009b:23), an enabling environment is “where learners can learn, and educators can teach in a welcoming environment, free from any form of intimidation, violence and fear”.

It can be said that the training of the SMT, RCL and SGB form a significant part of the educational leadership role as this might influence their function as education stakeholders who hold decision-making positions towards conducive learning and teaching environment. This entails, for instance, the training of school leaders concerning school management and governance. This, according to the DBE (2009b:20), includes “supervision of the formation of a safe school environment, developing a negotiated school safety process based on policy”. This includes engaging with learners in the issues that concern them (Mansfield & Stwayi, 2017:76). One can argue that RCL is not only to ensure learners’ involvement in school decision-making. Instead, it is also to support the creation of an enabling school environment.

Likewise, the training of the SMT and SGB can be construed as a way of equipping them with the necessary skills to be involved in school governance and management. According to Mansfield and Stwayi (2017:78), the SGB is responsible for the everyday management of the school. It appears that the participants are not only responsible for educators’ professional training and development but also for the training and development of the School Governing Body (SGB) and learners’ representatives for effective school management and governance

(v) Curriculum activities and learners’ performance

Many of the participants emphasised that they were responsible for curriculum activities and learners’ performance. “I am responsible for curriculum activities within the district”, Participant 1 states. Reflecting on her role of educational leadership, Participant 8 says: “I am responsible for curriculum support, coordinating all the curriculum coordinators in the sub-district.” For Participants 6, her responsibility is to “monitor curriculum of schools from Grade R-9, I monitor the implementation of the curriculum”. Participant 13 says “I got 2 Circuit Coordinators; one for FET and one for GET, and under them, I got 15 and 12 subject specialists respectively that are explicitly looking at Curriculum implementation at schools.

Participant 9 also asserts:

“... Like getting the performance of learners, we expect to - primarily we are looking towards having the learners performing – so the main clients for us is the learner who has

to perform, so our focal point is learners' performance - and motivate our learners. We can see that our learners are very more challenged, so in most cases I will go to schools and speak to learners as I find them being the recipient of the institution. If you leave them out and concentrate on the teachers, we will be working on - in a void so - my main target is getting these people specifically - with regards to the educators. We have what we called the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), so immediately we get their reports from the IQMS, the educators will indicate their development areas, we work on them and when we see the educators not performing during the course of the year we go back to the Personal Growth Planner (PGP) we get the educators being effective in the class and generally we have the CA (Care Assistant) who usually conducts the forum meeting where they discuss challenging areas with the educators and give directions to the educators."

Curriculum activities and learners' performance according to Participants 1 and 2 involve collection and analysis of data on learners' performance. This, according to Participants 1 and 2, is to identify underperforming learners to provide intervention. Participant 1 reflects: "We analyse (data) to inform school performance, look at the underperformed subjects for training and support". Participant 2 explains: "What I do here, number 1 is uhm - I collect uhm - data and analyse it from the sub-district, write a report and then present report during our management meetings monthly at the district office to the District Director as well as to other managers."

It appears that the purpose of collecting and analysing data according to the participants is to provide intervention for improving learners' performance. This involves the organisation of winter camp, special camp, Girls' Learners Improvement Programme and Saturday schools for learners. For example, Participant 2 states:

"There is another camp; there is the introduction of technical subjects. We are taking care of that. Now, when we are in a meeting, was it in *BBB*, as their result was projected we could see that these learners were not passing these subjects; therefore, we decided there must be a special camp; they will be attending a camp on this as well. We are as well having Saturdays' classes for these learners; we also have Girls learners programme for these learners, for girl learners, on Saturdays, but this is conducted by the sub-district."

Another good example of accountability is curriculum activities and learners' performance, for instance diagnosing and providing solutions to learning-teaching problems. This, according to

participants, is done through data collection and analysis. One such example is: “We analyse (data) to inform school performance, look at the underperformed subjects for training and support” (Participant 1). An example of such training is the organisation of winter Camp, Special Camp for Technical subjects, Saturday School and Girls’ Learners Improvement Programme (GLIP). Participants’ experiences of accountability conform to the specification of the DBE (2012:11) (see 3.2.1) in policy on the organisational roles and responsibilities. It appears that the importance of data collection and analysis here is to provide “high-quality evaluation reports” that might inform education practice (Mac Iver *et al.*, 2019:565). According to the DBE the purpose of education districts, amongst others, includes “holding education institutions in district to account for their performance; accounting to the provincial education department for learners’ performance” (DBE, 2012:11). These are evident in participants’ shared experiences. One such example is: “We attend the accountability section with other units for learners’ performance because we are held accountable - by the district; we also hold the school responsible for learners’ performance” (Participant 7).

(vi) Community engagement

It is found that educational leadership at the district office is required to keep society informed about learners’ performance and any available opportunity that might help parents to contribute to their children’s learning and teaching.

The finding confirms that participants in this study are involved in community engagement as engrained in the principles of *Batho Pele* (DBE, 2012:21) as stated in section 3.2.1. According to Moran (2002:7), as cited by Pietersen (2014:254), *Batho Pele* is “a Sesotho phrase that decodes as ‘people first’”. The principles of *Batho Pele* are to “ensure higher levels of courtesy and provide all people with better information about services” and the experiences of the participants of this study are attestations to these (Moran, 2002:8). One such example is:

“... we move out to churches to talk about elections, we brief them on what to expect and where we have certain structures that need to be formed in schools we tell them, we engage them - that there is this quality learning and teaching campaign that parents will need. Especially those who are attending churches will jump in and be part of it, so most of what is there in schools we convey to society, where there is a platform, we tell them, even at

funerals, at funerals as well, we get to engage, engage the community in the issues surrounding education” (Participant 9).

It appears that the role of educational leadership at the district office is not only to keep the community members informed about learning and teaching issues; but also, to engage them to provide a solution to any educational problems. This is an indication of participants’ involvement in transparent dissemination of education issues to society. The statement is also an indication that the principles of *Batho Pele* principles are not ‘a theoretical instrument’ as viewed by Pietersen (2014:256); they are being put into practice by the female leaders engaged within this study.

Findings regard the roles and responsibilities of educational leadership at district level have established the context and characteristics of women in educational leadership at district level. The general orientation of the theme is that educational leadership at district level is responsible for human resource and management; professional training and development; school governance and management; curriculum activities; learners’ performance; and sport and recreation activities. The findings support the attributes attached to educational leadership by DBE (2012) (see 3.2.1) in policy on the organisational roles and responsibilities of education districts. These are evident in participants’ shared experiences of their roles and responsibilities. For example, participants expressed their experiences of the notions of support while they referred to training and development of school-based educators as stipulated by DBE (2012:63) in policy on the organisational roles and responsibilities of education districts.

Experiences of accountability, according to the participants, involve the recruitment of educators according to legal prescripts. While all the roles and responsibilities of participants regarding support, accountability and public information are valued, curriculum activities and learners’ performance are generally viewed as the core duty of the district office. It can be said that the main activities of the district office are towards learners’ performance, for instance recruitment of office-based educators, general training and development, and ensuring the creation of a conducive learning and teaching environment. The role of educational leadership also includes dissemination of information concerning the core of education, for instance, distributing information among the education stakeholders about learners’ performance.

Although both school-based and office-based educators are responsible for learners’ performance, while the office-based educators are held accountable by the district office, the school-based

educators are held responsible by the office-based educators. It appears that office-based educators have a greater responsibility in the education system. What is evident from participants' responses in this study is the significance of the district office and office-based educators to the education system in terms of different forms of support being offered to learners and educators. This indicates participants' adherence to the roles and responsibilities of office-based educators. According to DBE (2012:63), the core role of educational leadership at the district office is to facilitate curriculum delivery. The findings imply that office-based educators have demonstrated the roles and responsibilities of educational leadership. This suggests the views that "learners are the primary beneficiaries of education and primary victim of inadequacies" (Mainsfield & Stwayi, 2016:30). Another significant trend in participants' experiences is that despite having different roles and responsibilities, participants have a common goal, and the common goal is the delivery of curriculum in an enabling environment and ensuring learners' outcome in terms of performance. Support from educational leadership at district level is vital in the education system for "effective implementation of school reform" (Nkambule & Amsterdam, 2018:1) (see 3.2.1).

In the next section, how the participants perceive themselves regarding their educational roles will be presented.

Table 5.3 Participants' self-perception

Code	Category	Theme
Accomplishment; Success; Competency; Confidence; Hard work	Self-esteem	Participants' self-perception
Democratic; Autocratic; Authoritative; participative; Strict; Assertive	Leadership styles	

Table 5.3 presents the perception participants have of themselves. According to Mehrad (2016:65), how we perceive ourselves can impact on our attitudes towards life and society (see 2.2.1). Participants were asked to describe how they perceive themselves and their leadership styles. The purpose of asking this question was to understand how women in educational leadership see

themselves and their leadership styles. In response to the question, two categories emerged: self-esteem and leadership styles.

(i) Self-esteem

The category of self-esteem shows that participants for this study view themselves as accomplished, successful, capable and confident leaders. It is found that participants hold themselves and their educational roles in high esteem. They do not only perceive themselves as competent leaders; instead, they view themselves as experienced leaders who have been able to bring changes to the education system. Self-esteem, according to Stets and Burke (2014), presents emotional and evaluative dimensions of self-concept (see 2.2.1). These dimensions encapsulate self-worth, self-efficacy, and authenticity (Stets & Burke, 2014:419) (see 2.2.1). The dimensions have all emphasised the role of self-perception. Self-worth aims at individual self-evaluation, for instance, it focuses on analysing an individual's motive for feeling valued and accepted by others (see 2.2.1). Self-efficacy is concerned with the motive to see oneself as efficient and agentic (Stets & Burke, 2014) (see 2.2.1). Also, as stated in section 2.2.1, authenticity is concerned with the validity of how an individual perceives herself/himself as being accepted and efficient regarding a role. The sense of self-worth, self-efficacy and authenticity are evident in this study. For instance, a sense of self-worth concerning value and acceptance is evident in a case such as: "I see myself as a diamond in a small package because we do wonder" (Participant 7). Also, participants were found to demonstrate a sense of self-efficacy when they referred to their capability to lead. One such example is:

"I can describe myself as a person who has potential, which can lead, who is not afraid of any challenge whether men are leading us to me, it does not matter, what matters is the brain that we have to move forward the system ..." (Participant 11).

Participants also associate their experiences with authenticity when they cite examples of their accomplishment, one such example is where the participants cite their abilities to make a difference, change the lives of others, increasing the pass rate of their district as their unique contribution to the education system:

"I am going to cite an example of the performance of the sub-district, I was in AAA for 5 years where I worked in a very small circuit that was underperforming but I managed to take the circuit

from 49 per cent - when I left it was a leading circuit at 86 per cent in the entire district of 9 circuits” (Participant 5).

Participant 3 does not only see herself as a perfectionist; she sees herself as an accomplished and fulfilled leader being able to change the lives of others, she states: “unless you close your eyes but every time I want things to be perfect, but I am enjoying it - when I see the lives of people changing and see them enjoying”

Likewise, Participant 10 describes herself as a perfectionist; she jokingly asserts: the people I work with sometimes even say I can pick up a mistake, when they have written - or missed an ‘S’.

Although the participants in this study appear to view perfectionism as a sense of self-esteem, they ascribe it to their success. Perfectionism has been viewed as detrimental to women’s career advancement as it might confine women to the positions they think they are capable of and qualified for and hinder them from taking risk-related posts due to fear of failure (Njobvu and Xiu (2015:276). According to Ghaemi and Sadeghi (2016:110), perfectionists often pay critical attention to failures at the expense of their successes. In other words, they often overanalyse omissions and mistakes and see themselves as failures if all goals are not achieved. The findings of Birch *et al.* (2019) correlates with this present study. Birch *et al.*, (2019:20) investigated perfectionism from a multidimensional perspective: socially prescribed perfectionism, self-oriented and other-oriented and found that self-oriented and other-oriented perfectionism might have positive effects on leaders and their subordinates. The socially prescribed perfectionism is perceived as maladaptive and concerns setting unrealistic standards. This dimension is considered negative. The self-oriented and other-oriented are perceived as adaptive and concern setting high standards for oneself and others respectively (Birch *et al.*, 2019:20). They both present a sense of accomplishment. It is believed the person with the self-oriented perfectionisms and the other-oriented perfectionism may improve their performance and that of the others by inculcating the idea of perfectionism in them especially, if they feel successful (Birch *et al.*, 2019:35).

These findings have established that the female managers interviewed in this study perceive themselves as valued, confident and accomplished leaders. According to Karellaia and Guillén (2014:204) as explained in section 2.2.1, holding a positive view about self might motivate one to lead and help one to view leading “as an attractive goal rather than a duty.” Similarly,

Middleton *et al.* (2019:496) assert that “perceiving oneself as a leader is likely to motivate leader-like activities, including effective leadership behaviours and leader development.”

Contrary to the study of Yousaf and Schmeide (2017:11) who found that women lack the leadership qualities, this study has found that women in educational leadership have self-esteem and possess the capability to lead. The findings in this study are like those of Onyango *et al.* (2016), who found that women in Kenya have confidence and ability to lead and ascend to the position of CEO. For instance, participants view of themselves as confident and experienced successful female leaders who have potential and can perform their expected roles and responsibilities diligently.

(ii) Leadership styles

This category indicates different leadership styles that participants have attached to their educational leadership roles: democratic, autocratic, assertive, participative and transactional leadership styles. One such example is the following:

“It depends on the situation - they are three *neh*, if the situation warrants me to be autocratic, I do, if the situation allows me to be democratic, I do, if the situation allows me to be *laisse faire* - this one I don't, but if I do - I will later tell the person. I allowed you because I could see the situation that you were in but don't repeat it. Because as a leader, you cannot apply only one, you apply all of them because you need - sometimes you need to relax, but people should know that this is a no-go area as you are leading” (Participant 11).

There are instances where participants have stated to be democratic and firm leaders. For example, Participant 1 sees herself as a democratic leader; she says: “I am kind of democratic in the sense that I always involve people with how - with strategies that I want to improve”. For Participant 13, she is a democratic and firm leader; she says: “I see myself as a democratic leader. I am a firm leader, but I don't take nonsense my yes is yes, and my no is no”. Participant 4 asserts: “I am assertive, I am an assertive leader.”

“I am a democratic leader – because I don't just give instruction, I lead by examples”, says Participant 6. For participant 2, she is a participatory leader who likes to ask questions to

ascertain clarity. She emphatically states, “I like to participate: I participate, I ask questions because I want to be clear.”

Participant 8 describes herself as follows: “I am a democratic person, and I believe in a win-win situation, but there are some instances where you must localise your leadership strategies for a particular gain ...”

Most participants appear to adopt more than one type of leadership styles. Apart from being democratic, it is found that they are autocratic, participatory, authoritative leaders etc. Importantly, participants are found to be situational leaders who can adopt any form of leadership, depending on the situation.

From the above statements, it can be said that participants have a theoretical understanding of leadership approach: for instance, this is evident in the use of different leadership styles as embedded in a different situation. Burgess (2016:6) has also confirmed that most effective leaders use different forms of leadership styles. The use of different forms of leadership styles is in line with the transactional-transformational leadership theory as proposed by Bass and Riggio (2006) (see 2.2.4). Bass and Riggio (2006) have combined the elements of transformational leadership such as charisma or idealised influence, inspirational motivations, individualised consideration, and intellectual stimulation, with those of transactional leadership, the contingent reward and management by exception. As stated in section 2.2.4, these involve the ability “to influence people or groups to embrace their behaviours and making decisions about human and other resources to achieve organisational goals” (Uzohue *et al.*, 2016:17).

While reflecting on participants’ self-perception about their leadership styles, it seems that the utilisation of different leadership approaches has helped them to achieve their organisational goals. For instance, being democratic and firm at the same time does not only suggest participants’ ability to supervise but their ability to motivate, inspire and engage followers to achieve the organisational goals (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015:10) (see 2.2.4). This also resonates with the findings of Naidoo and Perumal (2014:15) who found that women in educational leadership “adopt relational and inclusive leadership styles but do not have reservations in using autocratic leadership styles for effective school management”. One such example is a situation where a participant asserts that she sometimes applies “an autocratic style so that things are done according to plan and sometimes democratic so that I engage with them” (Participant 7). Another instance is a situation where a

participant was able to gain the support of her subordinates due to her ability to pressurise humbly. For example, filled with a sense of joy in her face, Participant 1 reflects on what her subordinates had once told her:

“You know what *Mme*, you know you are really making us work because you want us to do things and you are putting us in pressure in a humble way and by so doing we feel ashamed because (laughs) - because if it is done it has happened it does not mean that we really want...”

The above views are in line with those of Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) (see 2.2.4.1) who note the criticisms of transactional-transformational leadership and place them within the framework of morals and ethics. As explained in section 2.2.4.1, it can be said that underpinning participants’ ability to utilise transactional-transformational leadership styles and their different elements effectively in this study is the recognition and adoption of moral legitimacy and transparency. This entails “freedom, respect, integrity, trust, the keeping of promise and respect for all participants in the contractual agreement” (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999:187) (see 2.2.4.1). In the next section, participants’ views on support system will be explained.

Table 5.4 Participants’ views on support system

Code	Category	Theme
Sibling; parent; children; husband; partner; housekeeper & friend	Family support system	
Self-help; further education & reading	Self-development	Participants’ view on support system
Mentoring; team support & training and development	Organisational support	
Faith & prayer	Spiritual support	

Table 5.4 presents participants' opinions on support system. Participants were asked to describe different forms of support system they think might help women to advance to an educational leadership position. Four main categories emerged from this question: family support, organisational support, self-development and spiritual support. The purpose of this question is to understand participants' perception of support system and see how this understanding can inform women's career advancement to educational leadership.

(i) Family support

This study has established family support as a form of support that women need to progress in their career path. Participants referred to their parents, siblings, children, husband, partner housekeeper and friends as being supportive to them in their career path. Participants 1, 3, 7 and 11 specifically mentioned how their parents and siblings have contributed to their career growth.

For example, Participant 1 explains how her brother, parents and housekeeper have been supportive of her in her career path:

“Sometimes, when I have meetings, like with the principals and whoever. I will just ask him to come, and he will support me, and he will conduct some of the workshops with me, and that kind of support is needed.”

She further relates to her personal experience and mentions how supportive her parents were when she divorced.

“...when I got to stay here my parents came, they were there to support me 100 per cent because my father will fetch them (the children), he will bring them home, he will be helping them with homework when I come back from school then I don't have to do with the children, then I will be looking at something different but I always have somebody in the house to help with the cleaning and all that. That is how I managed to balance”.

While reflecting on the role of support system, Participant 11 asserts:

“My mom was also assisting. My mom was there for me. If my mom was not there some of the things would have suffered a lot, but my mom was there, so I was able to juggle around, my mom was there. I will phone, I am still in a meeting, and my mom was so helpful.”

Participant 4, besides her siblings support, she receives supports from her children; she stresses: “We support each other. My kids are so supportive; they are my number one supporter. Participants 3, 5, 6, and 8 referred to support from their husbands and partners. For example, Participant 3 states: “I manage to cope with personal and official issues; my family and my boyfriend, they are always there ...”

“Yes, my husband and children, they are very supportive; they are forever available to help me when they see I am under pressure; I am very fortunate.” Participant 8 says.

Participant 5 elaborates on the role of family support system: “The support that you get from the family is giving you the strength to survive in the work environment both ways; the challenges that you get from your work station are strengthening you to approach problems differently at home”. For Participant 5, the support she gets from home and office complement each other.

Participants 6 and 10 mentioned the support of housekeepers as a form of support system: For instance: “In terms of my work, the easiest thing is that you manage to have a helper at home”, Participant 6 says.

“I got a lady who is staying with me - who works for us, she is with us for 12 years, so she stays in the house, she has her apartment, so she has basically brought up my kids, but when it started, I do not have parents, so I had to take my boy to Crèche at the age of 2 (hand gesture), hum” Participant 10 explains.

According to Participants 9 and 13, friends have a role to play on women’s career advancement. Although Participant 9 has a different view about family support system because as a single mother there is no one she can receive support from - she does not receive any support from her family instead she is the one who provides support. She has a supportive friend who helps her to care for her children when she is away for work:

“... like in some instances you have to attend meetings and sleep over for two to three days ... what I would do was to request someone, a friend to take my kids to school, they will stay alone at home, but in the morning, I would have arranged with someone to take them to school.”

“... I think, *hmmm*, first you need the support of your close family and friends”, Participant13 stresses.

Also, for these participants, the family support system, underpinned by upbringing and the environment that one comes from is significant to women’s career advancement. For instance, reflecting on the words of encouragement from her father while she was still young, Participant 5 says:

“...he looked at me every day and said one day you would be a doctor and just due to the very same thought that I carried to grow up, this man was waiting for this girl in 1981, I am just about to graduate and that is due to the same thought that I carried out, the voice always sings in my heart every day.”

Participant 7 adds:

“All of us, she will encourage us to work hard and succeed in life. And I made them proud when I graduated. Both were still alive when I graduated. And I am proud to have them as parents; they gave us the gift of life, the education, the weapon. Because after completing my study, I was able to find work - and send my siblings to school and bought myself a house, a car.”

For Participant 1, being a woman does not have any effect on her as she always enjoys the support of her father; she reflects:

“Uhm, I think Uhm, from where I come from, being a woman did not affect me so much, because my father who was a learned person never made me feel that I am a woman because even when I went to do my studies - I opted for BSc then. By then people were thinking it was difficult to be doing BSc Mathematics, and as a woman but I did it, and he supported me, and I just remember when I could not make it he said, Mme, these things are made by people - you would get this from my father as a parent - and at home we were not being treated as different people.”

It is evident that most of the participants of this study perceive support from family and friends as being significant to women’s career advancement into an educational leadership position, for instance, having support from one’s parents, siblings, children, husband/partner, housekeeper and

friends while working and updating one's skills (see 3.4). According to Akpınar-Sposito (2013b), as stated in section 3.4, family support is vital to women's career advancement. It can be said that parents, specifically fathers, play a significant role in their daughters' career advancement. The participants' perceptions of the roles of their fathers in the study resonate with those of Albakhail and Allan (2016:160) who find that the role of fathers is noticeable in their daughters' career advancement.

The importance of upbringing is also evident in the study; for instance, participants' shared meaning show that upbringing can help women in their career path. It is believed that the supports that these female managers received from their parents have helped to shape their identity and has built confidence in them. As stated in section 2.2.1, identity suggests "the traits and characteristics, social relations, roles; and social group memberships that define who one is" (Oyserman *et al.*, 2012:69). Identity incorporates and signifies the present, past and future perspectives. As a result, one's beliefs of self in terms of one's perception, thinking or opinion about self are situated in the past, present and the future. The past refers to what one used to be; the present depicts what one is at present while the future relates to what one aspires to become (see 2.2.1). As stated in section 2.2.1.2, it is thought that the beliefs about self are useful since people look to their identities to make choices. For instance, it has been taught to these female managers from their childhood that there is no difference between being a female or a male, for example doing a BSc degree Mathematics when it was a male-dominated course and attaining a PhD. These findings resonate with those of KPMG on women's leadership study report (KPMG, 2016:5). According to KPMG (2016:5), women's view of leadership begins to shape early in childhood as a result of values, exposure to leadership skills and positive leadership role models. As stated in section 2.2.1.2, it is thought that the perception women have of themselves is based on the interaction between them and the other individual.

(ii) Self-development

From this category, it is evident that self-development such as further education, reading and interacting with stakeholders are integral to women's career advancement to an educational leadership position. Also, it is vital for women who aspire to advance their career to listen and be ready to learn from others. Participants emphasised the importance of self-development to women's career advancement to an educational leadership position. Participant 5 sees reading books,

studying, listening to the news, and interacting with other stakeholders and staying up to date as means of enhancing one's career path

“Studying is the best remedy. You must keep abreast of the development of the department which you are in. Not only that, my interaction with other stakeholders broadens my experiences.”

In line with Participant 5, Participant 12 reiterates her experience of self-development and relates it to education. According to her she started as a typist and received about five degrees through self-support. She states:

“...I can be able to stand my ground, whether somebody likes it or not, I can be able to stand my ground, even my growing up, I came from a poverty-stricken background, I struggled to be in the position where I am. I started to educate myself from matric level, when I lent money to go to boarding school, after my standard 8, I did typing, because by then, you know, typing was a need, knowing that immediately I would get a job but fortunate enough after doing one and a half year in commerce, I said I want to go to school and acquire qualifications, I lent money from my uncle for my studies. I used to sell sweet, polish other peoples' shoes for me to get money in the boarding school. I got about 5 degrees which I acquired on a part-time basis, I want to make a difference in my life. For my studies, we could leave earlier – my first degree - I attended part-time, we could leave earlier. Education is the door, without education you cannot say you want yourself in a higher position because it is not only what we have learnt from work that will make you take the rightful decision, we also need the book, the qualification ...”

Although she has been exposed to sport from her young age, Participant 3 did not study any sport-related programme, but she managed to develop herself and receive a degree in Sport-related courses to discharge her duty diligently:

“I think the first support is one to go back to school, go and get it formally then after that you can practise what you have (trained for) because for me to be in sport I was not trained to manage sport, when I was in school, like I was saying I was teaching Xhosa and Geography.”

For these participants, a woman who aspires to advance her career should be ready to learn, listen and pay attention to all details; for instance, Participant 2 states:

“... if I have made a bad decision and then I am told this was not supposed to be like this, I appreciate it, I remembered even when I was presenting this financial report I said I welcome all inputs because they make me better - tomorrow I am not going to repeat any mistake I have made now, I am learning, I believe a person being a long learner.”

“...before I was appointed it was difficult for me to stand in front of people and talk about sport, how do you talk about football whereas you are a woman so as the time goes on the guy who was working with me will go to meeting with me and talk, and there was a time he said, sister, this is the last meeting, you are going to take it from here. I was shaking. Some say the more you expose, that is why they say the more you do it the more you know it”, Participant 3 substantiates.

The role of networking is apparent in this study, for instance, interaction with education stakeholders. Bierema (2005:208) refers to networking as a means of building community support. Learning also becomes evident in the study as the participants refer to how they have been able to develop themselves through life-long learning. Middleton *et al.* (2019:506) suggest the formal learning and orientation to learn is important to leader’s development. It is believed that while formal learning might provide relevant information that could be useful for shaping leaders’ identity, leaders’ willingness to learn and grow could also influence their identity (Middleton *et al.*, 2019:506). This might include participants’ readiness to learn and grow and acquire skills to lead and manage sporting activities despite the initial fear which could be related to “stereotypes about female knowledge of athletics” (Garn & Brown, 2008:62). Even though it is evident from the literature and participants’ views as presented in sections 2.2.1.2 & 5.3.1 that who we are and who we want to be is associated with the perception of the other individuals about us; our active role is significant. Consequently, as an individual, you have a significant role to play in your career path, for instance acquiring skills as demonstrated by participants in this study.

(iii) Organisational support

Participants mentioned that mentoring, team support and training and development are some of the ways which can aid women in their career path. Participant 1 and 2 explained how they have helped to build confidence in their subordinates through mentoring:

“I sat with her, and we prepared a presentation together then I said Ok I would, first of all, do the introduction, you will come in and do 2 or 3 slides then I do the next, you see, by so doing she became *emmm* - confident and at the end of the presentation even if she made a mistake I enhanced what she has done, and the next one was easy for her ...”, Participant 1 explains.

Participant 2 also clarifies:



“... you see - you must give them work to do; they must make a mistake - I am mentoring them: when they started, they could not even write minutes, they struggle a lot, imagine all the reports that we are having here. I said no ways, go and make a mistake then I correct, then next time you would be better - to be confident, it becomes better if you got a mentor, somebody who will say ‘watch out this is the way to do it’. We need a mentor, very, very critical.”

Participant 9 renders more credence to the significance of mentoring in advancing women’s careers. She clarifies on how the support from her superior would affect her and others. For instance, she believes she can pass the knowledge gained through mentoring to her subordinates:

“I need the support of the one above me - for the fact that I took this challenge to him or her, it means I need assistance. But when things are thrown back into my territory, it becomes difficult, and you don’t gain that confidence; if I can gain this skill from this person, I can assist others ...”

The above statements provide insights into the significance of mentoring, as it is believed that mentoring can promote confidence-building among women. The findings are consistent with the description of transformational leadership theory by Bass (1990:22) and Bass and Riggio (2006:6-7) as stated in section 2.2.4. Transformational leadership theory suggests that followers see leaders as “role models and emulate them” because they mentor and motivate them (Bass & Riggio,

2006:6). This includes the ability to inspire and communicate high expectations to subordinates and inspire them to face challenges (Bass, 1990:22; Bass & Riggio, 2006:7) (see 2.2.4).

The category of organisational support also presents the significance of a team support to women's career advancement.

Participant 13 states:

"We do not always get the support from the highest structures but if you get the support of the people that you supervise, and I think it makes your job much easier."

Participant 3 also states: "... and the people that I am working with, my juniors ..., I got a supportive team."

The above statements reveal that team support is significant to women's career advancement to educational leadership positions. It suggests that for women to succeed, they need the support of people they supervise. According to Pitsoe and Isingoma (2014:138), teamwork is an important element of effective leadership.

Participants also mentioned the importance of organisational training and development as being essential to women's career advancement to an educational leadership position.

Participant 13 shares:

"Training helps women in management and leadership. I went on a few of those trainings; in fact, we are also trying to empower our school principals through training."

Also, Participant 7 shares her experiences:

"...when we were at school as Head of Department (HoD), we were sent for a workshop which was conducted by Masifundisani on leadership and management, and the post was advertised, and I applied due to the knowledge I have gained as the HoD and during the Masifundisani training."

While the supportive team can make the task easier, mentoring, training and development are viewed as a way of building confidence and empowering women. Notably, participants view mentoring, support team, and training and development as significant to women's career

advancement. Scholars, such as Abalkhail and Allan (2015:153); Searby *et al.* (2015:98); and Yet-Mee *et al.* (2013) confirm the importance of mentoring (see 3.6). Based on the explanation in section 3.4, it is believed that while mentoring can help women in their career path to a leadership position, the lack of it might hinder them in their career path (Yet-Mee *et al.*, 2013; Abalkhail & Allan, 2015; Searby *et al.*, 2015).

Training and development are also considered to be one of the essential means of helping women in their career path, for instance, leaders' development programmes. Gipson *et al.* (2017:39) associate leaders' development with equipping an "individual with skills and capacities." Gipson *et al.* (2017:39) view training and development as integral to organisations' current and future success in that they might help women who aspire to acquire leadership and sustain those who are already there to maintain their performance at a high level.

(iv) Spiritual support

Spiritual support emerged as a form of support system that can enhance women's career advancement to an educational leadership position. For example, Participant 9 mentions that she does not receive any family support; instead, she receives spiritual support being a Christian. She emphasises:

"I can see myself; I can do without any support from anyone because I am saying - I am a Christian and I get support from God, *yeah*, that is what keeps me going, the one who supports me."

From another perspective, while reflecting on support from her colleagues, Participant 3 says:

"If I am hurt, I will put it in the group, and they will pray, they know that I like to pray, they will say sis, this will past."

Spirituality appears to be these female leaders' source of support as they emphasise spiritual support, for instance reliance on God through prayer for strength; and the ability to balance personal and professional issues. Spirituality, according to Mayer *et al.* (2015:109), is "a connection with a higher being". Mayer *et al.* (2017:200) find spiritual support as a positive resource for women leaders. It serves as a "coping mechanism" as women tend to turn to

spirituality when they encounter work problems (Mayer *et al.*, 2017:200). In what follows, I will present the participants' perceptions of societal expectations.

Table 5.5 Participants' perception of societal expectations

Code	Category	Theme
Perceived as weak; Perceived as incompetent; Perceived as belonging in the kitchen; Perceived as who cannot make a difference	Negative stereotypical beliefs about women	Participants' perception of societal expectations
Perceived as mother, caregiver and trustworthy	Positive stereotypical beliefs about women	

Table 5.5 depicts participants' views on societal expectations. The participants were asked about their views on societal expectations about them. Two themes emerged from the question: negative stereotypical beliefs and positive stereotypical beliefs. Societal expectations are related to how women are viewed and portrayed in society (Abidin, *et al.*, 2016; Allen *et al.*, 2016; Gupta, 2018). The purpose of this question was to understand how participants are perceived by society as women in an educational leadership position.

(i) Negative stereotypical beliefs about women

Participants indicated that women are perceived as weak and incompetent. Consequently, they are deprived of leadership positions.

Participant 1 described how society usually feels about women:

“Society normally feels that women are weak, they are very weak, and we cannot handle some of the issues, especially, emmm - issues relating to - conflicts and issues relating to management and, and - yes, so that is how people feel. I have also experienced that - they regard females as not being assertive; our humility is taken as not being assertive, and that

is why they think they can play around with you and they are not aware that in some situation you are humble but pressurising.”

Participant 2 observes:

“Society, our society still needs to be educated on that; they still believe that a woman as a leader cannot do much as compared to a man; they still believe that - things are not as expected; even the society still has the perception; she is a woman - she will not be able to do it. It is only in a deputy or somewhere...”

From the sport and recreation perspective, Participant 3 elucidates:

“Firstly, when you say you are doing sport, they don’t take you seriously, they will say *arrg* - maybe someone will come and explain this thing to us, I think when they say - that is why I will say - do not judge a book by its cover, because as we move together in a programme then they say ok - this woman knows what she is talking about.”

Participants also indicated the effects of culture on how women are perceived in society.

Participant 4 asserts:

“... if you live in a culture where men should be dominant, they will pull you down to say *ah* - let’s see what you will do, she is now a leader she would not make it, men are born leaders, men are made to be a leader” - culture is what builds you in a way, but if it is the culture that prefers women in positions, they will have this nurturing character in them, they are more accommodative compared to men ...”

According to the participants, things are changing, but societal and cultural dictates that relegate women to a life of domesticity persist.

“Our culture in Africa is that women belong in the kitchen; women cannot be good leaders”. Participant 4 asserts.

“... we are still in the age that we believe, in my culture still and in your culture, women belong in the kitchen, although I think progress was made, progress was definitely made, but if you look at the figures and equity is not what is supposed to be.” Participant 13 elucidates.

Participant P11 believes that:

“Things are not as expected; even the society still has the perception; she is a woman - she will not be able to do it. It is only in a deputy or somewhere but where you are to become a head of whatever institution, it becomes a problem - when you are in a gallery and women say something the society will say this one does not have a respect, even those who are educated, even at universities who are the VCs, it is men, it shows that stereotype is still there, patriarchy is still there - it is only men who can do it better and if a woman is leading - you will get a few respect but if a male is leading - all of us - my lordship.”

Also, Participant 5 emphatically believes that:

“We still have the traditional mentality, that determines only men can go and make a difference, I am not happy with that, I am challenging the very same perception when people say its only men who can make a difference.”

Accordingly, Participant 2 strongly believes that:

“Society, our society still needs to be educated on that; they still believe that a woman as a leader cannot do much as compared to a man, they still believe that.”

From the above statements, it appears that women often find themselves in “a double bind” position which might make it difficult for them to choose whether to be humble while carrying out their leadership roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007:3). There is still a hierarchical division between women and men when it comes to leadership. The views of participants here are in line with those of Raja (2016), as stated in section 3.4. Raja (2016) contends that gender role stereotypes and traditional attitudes are societal restrictions that have shaped gender division and thus perpetuated gender discrimination and occupational separation. For example, adherence to “gender-specific role or job as a result of communal and agentic competence” tension (Koenig & Eagly, 2014:371) (see 2.2.2.2). According to Brescoll (2016:416), women compared to men are considered as communal while men are agentic. As stated in section 2.2.2.2, the significance of social role as outlined by gender-specific role is that social role is applicable to all spheres of life as women and men are expected to possess qualities appropriate to their gender. However, it can be said that women are the ones who are often prejudiced against due to societal expectations rooted in cultural and societal beliefs which propel a “glass ceiling” as viewed by different scholars such as Akpinar-Sposito (2013b); Obamiro

and Obasan (2013); Goethals and Hoyt (2017) and; Gupta (2018) to mention a few (see 3.4.1). From the experiences of the participants interviewed for this study, things are gradually changing in the South African context, but not at the expected pace. Participants have related the constraint in pace to cultural and societal beliefs that women do not possess adequate capabilities to hold leadership positions. As the participants suggest, it is pertinent to engage society in re-socialisation about the widespread misogynistic ideas about women in leadership positions.

(ii) Positive stereotypical beliefs about women

Participants indicated different instances that are related to their positive experiences. One such example is a situation where participants were being referred to as *Mme* or mother. "They perceive me, most of them as a mother. That is what I heard when people come to me - to say Ma Khumalo (Pseudonym) - they will - some of them will say you are a mother " (Participant 12).

Participant 1 elaborates on what it means to be perceived as a mother:

"... they call me *Mme*, and when you call a person a *Mme* it means mother, it means that they feel attached to me and you know with a mother you can - a mother can make you do several things."

Participants believe that women, as part of society, are expected to balance their personal and professional life. Participant 8 states:

"Society expects a lot from me as a woman, society expects a lot not only as a woman but also as a leader and at the same time society expects you to remain a mother both at work and in society and at the same time even - at church you will still have to continue with your role, you cannot fold your hands and say I am overworked so you will always have to strike the balance - if they have funeral you have to attend, you have to be there, when there are weddings you have to be there - you don't isolate yourself from the community."

Also, women are perceived to be trustworthy and caregivers:

"*Yeah*- generally women are trusted for being women, we are trusted. *Yeah*, it is not like - like other sectors where women are undermined. We are unique - like a woman can be trusted on growing a child, so they expect us to develop, to have to nurture and care, having

to be considerate on other people but there can be elements that cannot be trusted”, Participant 9 declares.

Although there are negative stereotypes against women, women have unique characteristics that cannot be overemphasised, for instance unique characteristics of being a mother, carer and trustworthy. These characteristics have presented the significance of positive interactions (see 2.2.1.2). The participants’ understanding of being a mother and carer here can be related to the view of Rahim (2010) on the concept of a looking-glass self (see 2.2.1.2). I will next present participants’ views on position acquisition.

Table 5.6 Participants’ experiences of educational leadership position acquisition

Code	Category	Theme
Qualification application: hard work & experience	Merit	Participants’ experiences of educational leadership position acquisition
Hard work and experience	Hard work and experience	

Table 5.6 indicates how the participants experience educational leadership positions’ acquisition. Participants were asked to describe how they have been able to acquire their present position. The purpose of the question is to understand how leadership position can be acquired. The categories that inform participants’ experience of position acquisition entail the elements of merit and hard work and experience.

(i) Merit

This category indicates that participants acquired their educational leadership position because they held appropriate qualifications. Participant 1 reflects on how she had acquired an educational leadership position at district level:

“... then I just completed my Master’s degree and with my experience as SES as well as a teacher I qualified because it meant to support teachers regarding their subjects and how they do all these things - I was appointed based on merit; qualifications and experiences.”

Participant 6 also reflects on how she acquired an educational leadership position:

“In terms of qualification I am qualified, in terms of experiences and the knowledge of the job, I am qualified.”

For participant 7, she applied for a leadership position at district office due to the knowledge she had gained as HOD.

(ii) Hard work and experience

Participants attach the acquisition of their educational leadership position to hard work and experience. For instance, Participants believe that educational leadership position requires hard work and experience. Participant 6 relates to how she started her career and acquired her present position:

“I was a math teacher - then I became math specialist - and then became the coordinator for the GET section - so in terms of my experience as an acting coordinator makes me have an advantage - the advantage and experience in terms of expressing myself in the interview. You cannot have this position without being a hard worker; you need to be hard-working.”

In support of the requirement for attaining leadership position, Participant 2 notes:

“Now I think I have acquired this position through hard work.”

Participant 4 briefly states:

“I got it through my hard work” For Participant 10, attaining and sustaining leadership position requires: “hard work, planning, and proper planning.”

Participant 5 shares how she acquired an educational leadership position:

“I did not have any contact; I applied like an ordinary person - and the knowledge that I gathered, the experience, the skill made me challenge women and men in QQQ to get that position ...”

For Participant 13, aside from hard work and experience, women have many sacrifices to make; for instance, they need to work double the men before they can be recognised:

“That is an easy one. I got it through hard work; I went through all the levels in education from a teacher, school principal, CM and now this position. -I think you also know you have to work double as hard and double as smart as men before you can be recognised.”

From the above statements, it is evident that participants in the study have been able to acquire their present position based on merit, for instance, being qualified to apply for their positions. The statements also show that apart from having all required qualifications, women need to work harder and smarter than their male counterparts to ascend to an educational leadership position. Seemingly, “women are required to struggle more” while competing with their male counterparts (Gupta, 2018:90). The situation of participants here can be related to the image of men as ‘ideal workers’ or leaders (Acker, 2006:445) (see section 3.5.3). Next, participants’ perceptions of how they think they are viewed by their subordinates will be presented.

Table 5.7 Participants’ perception of how they think their subordinates view them

Code	Category	Theme
Cordial relationship with both male and female subordinates & give and take	Cordial relationship	Participants’ perception of how they think their subordinates view them
Pull-down syndrome	Pull-down syndrome	

Table 5.7 presents participants’ perception of how they think their subordinates view them. According to Mead (1934:135), the self is “not initially there, at birth, but arises as a result of social interactions”, i.e. social activities and relationships with others. Participants were asked to

describe their feelings about the impression of their subordinates/male counterparts regarding their leadership styles. The purpose of the question was to understand the participants' perception of their subordinates concerning them and their leadership roles as women in educational leadership. In response to the question, two main themes emerged: cordial relationship and pull-down syndrome.

(i) Cordial relationship

The category of cordial relationship indicates that participants have a mutual relationship with their subordinates. Participant 1 relates to her subordinates' responsiveness to her educational leadership as follows:

"...and even some of my colleagues after the meeting, they will say, you know what, if not due to the way you are conducting your meetings we would not have attended, we appreciate the way you are conducting - I see them reacting the same way; the FET are all males and - I can call them, mail them, and say, can I see you this morning; I need this and that from you?"

Participants 7 and 8 link the relationship they have with their subordinates to respect. These participants link the respect they receive from their subordinates to the way they work with them, for instance, capacitating them and working with them as a team.

Participant 7 asserts:

"They respect me. That one that was here, he is Dr H, he respects me because we work as a team. I don't do things alone, I do things with them, and we work as a team."

Participant 8 supports:

"Their impression - they are very respectful, they are very cooperative, but as I said it is because I believe in making people understand what their role is, I believe in capacitating people because in most instances the people's behaviour and attitudes sometimes are caused by - displacement - We are working very closely with all my subordinates, they respect me, I respect them, they are even able to share with me their personal problems, they are able to open their house for me to visit, to go and meet their kids, yeah, to go and

meet their parents, their wives even in some instance when they even have social problems they end up involving because of the trust they have in me.”

Participant 11 also reiterates the notions of respect and mutual relationship: “people should be able to work with you harmoniously, especially when I visit the school. I do respect them in their own capacity as leaders.”

The views of Participant 5 are closely related to those of Participants 7, 8 and 11. Participant 5 believes that relationship is reciprocal, even though you may have people who are not cooperative:

“What you give to the subordinate, at times you get back if you preach and if you are a visionary preacher, the talk, it is easy to get it back, and it cannot be 100 per cent”

For Participant 6, subordinates’ views are varied as you will have those who cooperate and those who do not assist: “Their views are different - there are those who have the pull-down syndrome and those who are supportive.”

The views of Participant 6 resonate with those of Participants 2 and 13. For example, Participant 2 believes that her subordinates “are fine except one or two who, like I said, felt like maybe this should have been given to somebody.”

“You know in all places you always have people that carry you and those you must carry, and in this office, I have that as well, I have those that feel that I am not a leader, but I am very proud to say they are in the minority - I have never seen any of them openly defy me, but we have differences, yes, you know we have our differences, we discuss, but no one has openly defied me.” Participant 13 confirms.

Although it cannot be overemphasised that some subordinates may not be cooperative, it is evident that the amount of respect a leader gives to her subordinates may sometimes determine the relationship they will have with them. It can be said that respect in this study has suggested a means of ensuring teamwork. According to LACCD (2013) respect in an organisation can “boost productivity, reputation, recruitment, retention and effectiveness.” Aside from ensuring teamwork, it appears that respect might influence organisational goals. For instance, it is evident in this study as demonstrated by the participants, that there is a relationship between respect and organisational

goals. For example, it is evident in this study that participants were able to work harmoniously with their subordinates due to the measure of respect they have shown towards one another.

(ii) Pull-down syndrome

This category shows that despite participants' experiences of cordial relationship with many of their subordinates, there are still a few instances where subordinates are not cooperative.

Although Participant 5 believes that respect is give and take, she believes that female leaders don't often enjoy the support of other women:

“... you know one thing with men, when they see you have been appointed to that position, they would support you, but 80 percent of this element that will demean you are basically women that are supposed to support you, so there is this element in women, women are also supporting men to pull you down, so if you are not vigilant, if you are not a visionary, if you are not secure as a woman it will be easy for you to go down.”

According to Participant 8, “Women will be more criticising than men, and some women will have negative influence - just to pull people down, I don't know what is problem with women, what is wrong with us as women, sometimes we are - as women not of all us will be supportive, some women will say you are not better than me, some women will be influenced, they get influenced - and just to show people, just to pull you down.”

It is evident from this category that female leaders, despite the experiences of cordial relationship from their subordinates, are still being resented. In line with Naidoo and Perumal (2014:12), participants have used the term 'pull-down syndrome' to describe the challenge of resentment being experienced from subordinates, particularly, female subordinates. In what follows, I will present various challenges being faced by women in an educational leadership position.

Table 5.8 Participants' perception of the challenges of educational leadership

Code	Category	Theme
Human resources; Non-human resources; unplanned activities	Lack of social resources	
Women as their own devil	Antagonistic attitudes from fellow women	Participants' perception of the challenges of educational leadership
Lack of acceptance	Lack of acceptance	
Work-life balance	Managing social and professional responsibilities	

Table 5.8 presents participants' views on different challenges being faced by women on their career path to an educational leadership position. Participants in this study were asked to reflect on different forms of challenges being faced by them as women in educational leadership. The purpose of the question was to understand diverse types of challenges underscoring educational leadership at district level. Three major categories emerged to form participants' views of educational leadership challenges at district level. They include lack of social resources, antagonistic attitudes from fellow women, lack of support from other women and Managing social and professional responsibilities

(i) Lack of social resources

This category indicates that participants in this study are faced with a lack of social resources. By way of describing her experiences of lack of social resources, Participant 3 states:

“... some of the challenges they are not changing lack of resources, you want to do more but because of the red tapes you cannot move. like, you know - I want to do more for my

team, but there will be some red tapes - hindering things that will say no, you cannot do this.”

Also supporting the issue of lack of social resources, Participant 5 shows her concern. She asserts:

“In terms of the work and the expectations – I do not have a printer, projector – we are using one projector for 40 officials – myself – GET management, FET and Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) unit; and Institutional Governance and School Services (IGSS) office.”

Also, having more than specified schools, for instance having 586 instead of 300 schools at most is stated as a challenge:

“We have 586 schools. This is not ... even according to the structure – the highest- we must have been about 300, but we have 586, they said - unfortunately so ... obviously we are not coping, but you have to make ends meet, even though we are not coping.” Participant 8 emphasises.

Although Participant 5 was able to cope with the issue of human resources, it appears that the issue of lack of social resources is also evident in her leadership, she states:

“I am working very hard with the number of people that I have; I did not have any extra additional members given to my sub-district.”

Participant 13 offers credence to the issue of resources as she believes that it is not too peculiar to women:

“I think as I explained earlier our biggest frustration is that we don’t get to our core business and there is so much data and reports that I feel sometimes, I am not appointed as an administrator, I am appointed as a manager, as a leader, and that is human under resource - it is not gender-based. I think our biggest challenge as leaders in our positions - *Mmm*, I don’t think it is only female leaders, is unplanned activities and uncoordinated activities that disturb our core duty.”

It appears that lack of social resources forms part of the challenges being experienced by women in educational leadership at the district office. Scholars such as Derks (2016); Raja (2016);

Moorosi and Bantwini (2018) and others have pointed out lack of resources as part of challenges being faced by office-based educators at education district office. This is evident by the number of schools being overseen by one of the district offices and the proportion of staff assigned to a projector. According to DBE (2012:18), as stated in policy on the organisation, roles and responsibilities of the district office, each education district should not have more than 300 schools. However, it appears that the department of basic education has not fulfilled its promise on school visitation due to lack of human resources (3.2.1). As stated by participants, having more than the stipulated number of schools harm their leadership as they sometimes fail to visit all the schools due to lack of resources. These findings are consistent with those of Al-Jaradat (2014) who points out the challenges such as lack of the educational supplies and services that women need to function in an organisation as a hindrance to women's career advancement (see 3.4). Furthermore, they can be called to attend to other unplanned issues.

(ii) Antagonistic attitudes from fellow women

Participants identified antagonism from other women as one of the challenges to female's leadership. Participants observed that women often gossip about one another:

“You find those women who will expect you to join them when they want to talk about their senior who is a woman, and why would you join them, they are managers, they are women - so why? - We must deal with ourselves, our perception as women and appreciate other women, honestly and support them and complement them where we can, so, *yeah* - (breaths in) my dear. I think, I think, males are better. Honestly, I think they are better than dealing with women managers” (Participant 10).

For Participant 11:

“Only very few that are very supportive, the support from the women is very few, that is why mostly you find that we can gossip about you as a leader, and when you look at people who gossip about you as a leader, when you look at those who gossip about you - it is women. The man who cannot do the job, they will never say anything about him or gossip about him, they will say that man is good.”

Participants mentioned that some women sometimes prefer male leadership to female leadership. Participant 2 asserts:

“Even some of the women - they would want a man to be appointed over and above a woman that is how we are - so we are still having - because she is a woman, she will not make it.

While reflecting on her experiences of how she was treated by other women, Participant 4 relates to the emotional trauma she received from a woman she had previously worked with: “women are their own devil.” The view of Participant 4 resonates with that of Participant 13, who views women as the biggest enemy of the other women.

“I sometimes feel that women are the biggest enemy of the other women. Because we don’t want our fellow ladies to excel, we will take the opportunity sometimes to say she is not good enough; a male can do it better. I perceived it here often, the fact that I am white has never been a problem to me” - participant 13 stresses.

Participant 12 also shares her concern and offers some advice; she asserts:

“You know (*laughs*) we as women, we are the ones who are bringing other women down, we are pushing them down instead of pushing them up, last time when we were in a women’s conference - I said as a woman when you are in a leadership position, try to bring up that person who you see that is coming instead of bringing that person down ...”

Aside from the fact that women don’t often lend helping hands towards other women’s career advancement, it appears that women prefer male leaders as compared to female leaders. As a result, women would rather support male leaders instead of female leaders. What is of significance here is the issue of support among women. The participants’ view of support can be related to the idea of ‘conscience raising’ and ‘sisterhood’ as the bases for feminist theory (Code, 2000:xix) (see 2.2.3). As Hurst *et al.* (2016:61) opine, the idea of “sisterhood is to ensure unity and support among women, especially it is expected that women in positions of power will serve as role models for others and then enhance women’s representation in leadership positions” (see 2.2.3).

(iii) Lack of acceptance

Aside from not being preferred as leaders compared to male leaders, it appears that female leaders are sometimes faced with a lack of acceptance, for instance being a woman and being black.

Participant 2 mentions:

“I know for sure there were men who they thought they should have been appointed instead of me or maybe a white person, a white person because this was occupied by a white – they would even say it, these white people - white people they are good in curriculum or the assessment.”

Participant 12 also mentions:

“It was so difficult for them to accept me, they are even, even today, they are still not accepting, and they have not accepted that I am the HRM. It is a position which belongs maybe to the whites.”

From the above statements, it appears that apart from occasional prejudices based on gender, female leaders experience discrimination based on race. Also, reflecting on participant 13 who does not view race as a challenge while she says: “the fact that I am white has never been a problem to me,” implies that the challenges experienced by women in leadership position vary and intersect (see 2.2.3). As Zulu (2017:198) aptly asserts, intersectionality is multifaceted, as it encapsulates “gender, class and race” and women, the black women in the South African context are the most subjugated. At the core of this assumption is that prejudices based on gender and race can lead to misunderstandings about the capabilities of women and preference for males’ leadership in certain positions of power (see 2.2.2.1).

(iv) Managing social and professional responsibilities

Another crucial challenge identified by the participants as an inhibitor to women in an educational leadership positions concerns the juggling of family and professional responsibilities. For instance, participant 2 emphatically shares the experiences of managing social responsibilities such as family and church along with official responsibilities:

“... at home it is a bit challenging for me, especially in this new position, it is challenging *umm* - but *umm* -I manoeuvre, I manoeuvre, but it is not easy, I must tell you, because when

you arrive home, sometimes, I leave the office very late in the evening and going home, I must still cook, I must be a wife, and a mother to my kids, you know, I am also a treasurer in the church, at times I have to sit with a report here, and there is another report that I want from my work - that is why I said *heh* ... the church one is seasonal *mos*, but at home - that is where a challenge is because sometimes these kids, if you don't mentor them, if you are not with them now and then - you will end up losing them."

Apparently, female leaders often feel that they are lacking in their familial responsibilities and this coupled with the burden of societal expectations imbues them with a sense of guilt and incapability. For example, participant 3 expresses the guilt of not being there for her children: "Uhm I am failing as a mother, that *yeah*, most of the time I am at work, I am working every weekend, *uhm* - my kids are always complaining."

"Though it is not easy for the kids because one comes late – work over even at home" Participant 5 states.

"I am not playing my role here as a mother; I am concentrating a lot at work, even my husband once said it - since you are appointed we don't see you most of the time because I am always on my laptop - I am always busy, but you feel for a man, I need to do this thing, tomorrow - it is a meeting", Participant 2 expresses.

Although they only have aged parents to care for, Participants 1 and 13 believe it can be challenging to manage social and official responsibilities, for example, Participant 1 asserts:

"Imagine if I have smaller children and *Uhm*, I need to take care of them, take them to school, all the errands because sometimes I need to travel to Wolmaransstad, Rustenburg so if you have people you need to take care of, it is a problem. So sometimes my problem is my mother, who I need to help because I need to take care of her."

In correspondence to Participants 1 and 13, Participant 8 mentions how she cannot leave her present district to seek promotion elsewhere because of her aged parents:

"I am saying I cannot go back to District GGG for a post, my parents are very old, and they are over 80, both of them."

The above statements indicate that the onus of family responsibility rests upon women. According to Wood and Eagly (2012:458), people tend to carry out gender roles as they endorse specific social roles (see 2.2.2). This has contributed to gender-specific roles and in part contributed to challenges being faced by women on their career path. It is evident in this study that managing personal and professional responsibilities can be challenging for women in an educational leadership position, for instance caring for children and aged parents. These findings support those of Al-Jarad (2014:151) and Yearout *et al.* (2017:5) who found that juggling between personal and professional; and geographical immobility form impediments to women’s career progression (see 3.4).

Although there has been increasing indication that enormous numbers of women are now entering the workforce, women are still faced with different challenges that have led to their underrepresentation in leadership positions (Allen *et al.*, 2016; Andric, 2015; Cimirotic *et al.*, 2017; Derks *et al.*, 2016) (see 3.3). Women in educational leadership are no exception; “even in the age phases where the larger majority of the workforce is female” (Lumby & Azaola, 2014:30) (see 1.1 & 5.4.8). Various challenges being faced by women appear to stem from self-concept, social role and leadership theories and strengthened by notions such as the individual, society and leadership styles. Analysing different experiences of women, Eagly and Carli (2007a & 2007b) have ascribed these forms of challenge to the labyrinth. It is believed that labyrinth goes beyond the glass ceiling as it is considered that women have been able to break the glass ceiling.

Table 5.9 Participants’ perception of equal opportunities, decision-making and goal achievements

Code	Category	Theme
Gender (in)equality and politics	Gender (in)equality and political interference	Participants’ perception of equal opportunities, decision-making and goal achievements
Lack of enthusiasm and confidence	Lack of enthusiasm and confidence	

Table 5.9 depicts participants' views on an equal opportunity, promotion, goal achievement and gender (in)equality. Participants were asked whether they were achieving their set goals and were afforded equal opportunities regarding promotion compared to their male counterparts. They were also asked to relate to their experiences and state why gender inequality still exists in educational leadership positions. The purpose of this question was to understand the reasons for the persistence of gender disparity from the perspective of women in educational leadership at district level. Two main categories emerged from the participants' responses: Gender (in)equality and political interference; and lack of enthusiasm and confidence.

(i) Gender (in)equality and political interference



While many participants in this study believe that they are achieving their goals as female managers, it appears they do not all have equal opportunities compared to their male counterparts in terms of promotion. It appears that the policy on gender equality is not being implemented as expected, mainly due to political influence. However, several participants refer to politics as a detriment to achieving gender equality in educational leadership at district level:

"I am achieving my goals. Not how much hard-working you are, it depends on how influenced you are, your political background, it used to be like that those years - when you are hardworking promotion is easy, but nowadays promotion is not as easy as it used to be, it is not about hardworking - it depends on who you are and your background", Participant 8 states.

"Not yet (gender equality) - About the promotions we don't have because *umm*, I remembered in one of - we were in CCC, we were discussing a post, there was a lady who applied for this post and people were saying she belongs to a certain group, at the end the lady got the post - we are just saying it - we are not implementing it as we expected, the percentage is too little", Participant 2 notes.

"The politicians, they are interfering in the administrative activity. That is why men are still there. In the long run, that is why I was saying to women; we are not growing, nationally, provincially; women are still in the minority, yes. Women are still in the minority and us as women until we stand up and voice out our positions, we will still be there" Participant 12 asserts.

“We don’t - I think maybe politics also plays a lot of roles in SA” Participant 10 adds.

In this regard, Participants question the significance of Affirmative Action:

“I will be honest. Most of the promotions are done politically, I am not saying it is wrong, but if you say Affirmative Action it must be a perfect fit...”Participant 4 asserts.

“What the constitution did to women, we are pursuing the equity, but that mentality rubbed off some of the women to say affirmative action can make us better. It should not be affirmative action, it should be at first start with very same women - making a difference, we are equal to men, I believe we are, but it is how we want people to perceive us, and that is the reason basically why the AA thing that I do not want, was brought to some of the women differently and change their mentality to say that even when they don’t match the requirement they can be taken to that level. ... Regardless of the AA, we have what it takes to make a difference, and we are equal to men, nothing makes us less than male”, Participant 5 argues.

In line with the argument of Participant 5, Participant 10 asserts:

“I don’t think there can be a stage where I am judged on non-performance or underperformance simply because I am a woman, I am a manager I did not manage to do I-2 it would just be because I am a manager not because I am a woman and I think even us - we should not put this thing of women upfront much, we should not say when we are told to do 1, 2, & 3 and say – as a woman, I will not be able to do it”.

“I am achieving my goals. Why I am saying so if I look into - in NW we are 19 SDMs, of which I think 3 or 4 are females or a bit more, I am not too sure about the number, we are plus or minus 4. ... my sub-district is always in the top 5 in matric and in this district since I have been appointed we have always been the first, whatever my male counterpart can achieve. I guarantee, I would try at least to get there”, Participant 13 emphatically states.

Few of the participants believe they have equal opportunities compared to their male counterparts in terms of promotion. It is, however, apparent that the participants were advantaged not only because of equity policy. Instead, they possess the skills and qualifications needed for the post:

“I think as a woman I have an opportunity – so when I applied there was only one manager, they wanted to balance the gender” Participant 7 responds.

“I got more than they have. In terms of how equity is being used, I am the only female among four males. The position is given to me because of the qualities and skills that I possess. I got the qualities – skills and qualifications needed for the post. It is not myself alone – I think there were three women and two men – it was because I am a female, it is because of my quality - I am meeting my targets”, Participant 6 states.

It is evident that participants in this study perceived themselves as equal to their male counterparts but did not often have equal opportunities compared to their male counterparts. The policy on AA is in place and beneficial to a few of the participants but is not implemented as expected. Here the role of politics and power relations is evident (3.4; 3.4.2). For instance, this is evident in a statement such as “I am achieving my goals. Not how much hard-working you are, it depends on how influenced you are, your political background” (Participant 8). This could be related to maintenance of status quo as strengthened by “organisation process and practice that perpetuate inequalities” (Acker, 2009:213) (see 3.4.2). According to Sampson *et al.* (2015:188) women who seek educational leadership positions are often faced with the politics of power and the frameworks of power.

(ii) **Lack of enthusiasm and confidence**

Participants mentioned a lack of enthusiasm and confidence as one of the factors contributing to gender inequality in educational leadership at district level. Sharing her experiences in lack of enthusiasm and confidence, Participant 2 says:

“Some of us women we are not *arrg* - some are not outspoken or confidence you are acting in a position - she said no I am not going to apply, I don't want that position - we must not be reluctant and now what I am seeing from women is that - now I am ok, I am not this and that, too many responsibilities, you don't have life you don't have that. We need to believe in ourselves.”

From the same perspective, Participant 3 asserts:

“I think we don't believe in ourselves; – self-esteem is everything. I think maybe we don't know how to express ourselves.”

“The behaviours from males and some of the females are introvert; they cannot stand out for themselves, the inferiority complex, it is weakening us, and self-esteem is still very low,” Participant 4 adds.

Participants in this study perceived that women’s lack of interest and confidence to apply for positions is one of the reasons that underpinned gender inequality in educational leadership. This view relates to those of Chabaya *et al.* (2009:241) who observed that women exhibit low self-esteem due to stereotypical beliefs as enshrined in gender socialisation which explains “perceived gender roles in terms of what woman can do or not do.” In what follows, I will present the participants’ perception of educational leadership sustenance.

Table 5.10 Women’s perception of educational leadership sustenance

Code	Category	Theme
Confidence; Capability	Self-esteem as a means of sustaining educational leadership	
Hard work; Passion; Self-development	Hard work and self-development as a means of sustaining educational leadership	
Mentoring; Teamwork	Mentoring and teamwork development as a means of sustaining educational leadership	Women’s perception of educational leadership sustenance
Respect, Mutual relationship	Respect and mutual relationship as a means of maintaining educational leadership	
Use of Policy	Reliance on the use of policy as a means of sustaining educational leadership	

Table 5.10 presents participants' understanding of how women can sustain an educational leadership position. Participants were asked to describe how they have been able to maintain their leadership position. The question aims to provide suggestions that can influence women in sustaining their leadership position. Various categories emerged as a result of the issue: self-esteem, hard work, teamwork and mentoring, respect, maintaining a mutual relationship with others; and reliance on the use of the policy.

(i) Self-esteem as a means of sustaining educational leadership

Participants described elements such as competency and confidence as integral to the sustainability of educational leadership position. Participants from these perspectives do not only share different experiences; they offer suggestions.

Participant 2 states:

“I have noticed, *arrg* when you are there, we are seated here, you are presenting, we are judging you but if you don't have the confidence you will shiver and that is where people - some of them will say, this woman is not fit for this position, or women are not fit, you see, this must be deputy, but if you stand up there and you make your story, you tell them your story – actually they will know, you know - that is how I sorted most of the things, to be confident, it becomes better.”

Participant 5 further emphasises:

“You will realise that out of the 3 sub-districts in the District GGG, I am the only (emphasis) woman who is leading the sub-district and other gentlemen are in positions but acting positions and you will notice that District GGG is a vast (emphasis) sub-district of 153 schools competing against gentlemen who are allocated number of schools less than 100, when I am at 153 tantamount to the size of two districts.”

Likewise, Participant 12 views sustainability from the perspective of capability:

“*hmmm* - I - what has been keeping me, the first thing is productivity, the work that I am doing, it is not about how much people praise you.”

It is evident from this category that self-esteem elements such as confidence and capability can help women to sustain educational leadership positions. Confidence appears to be integral in sustaining an educational leadership position; this includes competency to present one's story while making a presentation. In line with Karelaia and Guillen (2014) and Middleton (2019) this study views self-esteem as a means of motivation to acquire leadership position (see 2.2.1 & 5.3.2.1).

(ii) Hard work and self-development as a means of sustaining educational leadership

Participants in this study viewed hard work as a means of sustaining educational leadership at district level. This category, although underpinned by hard work, encompasses the love for one's job and self-development.

Participant 10 notes that "hard work, planning, proper planning" is integral to leadership position sustenance. For Participant 4, ensuring leadership sustainability encapsulates "hard work, ignoring issues, and focusing on your job."

Although women as well as men need to work hard to sustain a leadership position, it appears that women need to double their effort compared to men, Participant 5 shares:

"It takes a person to develop and work hard to ensure that you push your background, that you do not like far away, you are from a poor family, you cannot, I do not think there is anyone who will like to stay in poverty, but it takes a girl and boy to work to move from that environment. We must work hard and double the effort; we have to do it twice when men are doing it once because we are facing the challenge of saying that women cannot make it so whatever portfolio you are given, whatever position you are given, you get there, you give your best, you double your effort, you don't get there and do ordinary things. You do special, extraordinary things that can make people see the difference ... Whatever I have done, I think it was what contributed to the kind of leader I am; I don't believe, I don't subscribe to the notion - the perception that until you have a relationship with the gentlemen, it is then you get a position. I started with my part-time studies in 1986 after being appointed as a teacher from a training college. I am a rare breed; I am not from any college of education, I am not from the university, I started from the then college of

education, training college where we used to do the methods of teaching, where we used to do the chalkboard.”

Participant 7 shares how her love for her job and team sustains her:

“... my strength is that I enjoy my work, and I do it with passion and like working with the team.” Likewise, Participant 13 relates leadership sustainability to a passion for one’s work: “... and then my desire to achieve. And that is my purpose in life. I think that is keeping me.”

It is evident from the above statements that hard work is significant to women’s career advancement to an educational leadership position. Hadden (2017) suggests that hard work is important for anyone who wants to be different.

(iii) Mentoring and teamwork as a means of sustaining educational leadership

Participants mentioned mentoring and team support as one of the factors that can be used to sustain women in an educational leadership position. Participant 3 indicates: “As I will still say ... through team support and my family, they always ask me, are you still enjoying what you are doing?” Participant 13 also refers to team support as one of her strengths: “The support – I-, first of all, got from my team; I got a lovely team that kept me going.”

Participants also refer to mentoring as one of the factors that can sustain women in educational leadership positions. Participant 2 shares the experience of her supportive mentor: “My mentor used to say go out there, go and make mistakes. Do not be afraid to make decisions.”

Although Participant 9 does not have any mentor, she believes having a good mentor whom one can learn from personally and intellectually can help sustain women in an educational leadership position:

“Only mentoring can work, having a good mentor, learning from this person, so we are exposed to other people we cannot learn from. I don’t have any mentor, there are people who call themselves mentors, but I am not learning anything from them, I want somebody I can learn from, from personality to intellectual things, that I could look up to; you need a model.”

In line with Abalkhail and Allan (2015); Searby *et al.* (2015); and Yet-Mee *et al.* (2013) this category indicates that team support and mentoring can help women sustain educational leadership positions, for instance, having a supportive mentor whom one can learn from personally and intellectually.

(iv) Respect and mutual relationship as a means of maintaining educational leadership

This category indicates that participants view respect and reciprocal relationship as a means of sustaining a leadership position. For example, Participant 9 reflects on the notions of respect and mutual relationship:

“If you respect, if you show respect ...*yeah*... they will respect you... *Uhm*, truly, respect is earned - when you see them ... some are older than me. I would respect their age, and I would also respect their experience because others are aged, but they have no experience in this leadership and management position, but I will respect what they have, their age”

Participant 5, while reflecting on the notion of respect and mutual relationship, refers to the word of God, she believes that with humility, one can advance into an educational leadership position:

“You know - humility, the word of God gets it: you should humble yourself; you will be exalted, and that is the way to go, in every position when you get in. you get this element of empathy, you earn it and it is how people will perceive you as a very whole manager, complete, with all these elements that are contributing to you to be a 360 degree manager.”

For Participant 2, it appears that respect is shared, she explains: “if women also can stop being pompous when we lead because us we become pompous we don’t respect other women when they are leaders, you must respect other women when they are leading, you respect men, you must also respect women when they are leading.”

In support of the Participant 2 view, Participant 1 concisely states: “respect comes with respect.” Furthermore, she shares:

“I work well with them even if there are any of them that do not want to agree with wha I say I will treat her with respect. continue to rogue her in the project, treat her with respect...”

Participant 7 adds:

“We have representatives from the department, from stakeholders and again working with the SGB, you need to be warmth because those parents come without any training, so we have to impact knowledge on them on how to govern our schools.”

According to Roberts (2013:56) leadership is established through “interpersonal skills, social awareness, mutual respect, and trust.” Also, from this category, it appears that sustaining educational leadership requires one to have a good working relationship with and respect for subordinates and all the education stakeholders. Fernando *et al.* (2010) found that ability to work mutually with others is significant to women on their career path. Accordingly, Kelsey *et al.* (2014:7) found that building relationships and focussing on participatory leadership are vital to women’s successes in educational leadership.

(v) Reliance on the policy as a means for sustaining educational leadership

Participants mention the use of policy as a means of maintaining educational leadership. For participants, the use of policy has also helped their leadership in decision-making. For example, Participant 6 mentions: “...so what I do is just to use the policy so that everybody abides with the instructions given by me.”

For Participant 5, adhering to policy and interpreting it appropriately has helped her to survive the management of over 2,000 members of staff:

“What has made me survive as a leader is because I do not compromise policy - you bring favouritism that is where you are going to have conflict in management, but if you stick to policy, the department has the policy, but make sure that you read the policy of the department. You must make sure you can interpret them properly, if you encourage practising as you do, remember you are not only working with 52 subordinates that I am having, you also have principals. I roughly have 2,426 teachers around here so you can imagine the number of women that are looking up to me for support daily.”

Participants 12 mentions:

“I gave them advice and they are supporting because they are based on policy. Most of the time, I aligned myself with policy, and I tell them the consequences, and if you do not do this, this will be the consequences.”

Participant 13 shares:

“I work according to policy, and you work within your policy and do your work - I am fine, I make a decision easily and stand by it - I tell people this is why I decide it; these are my reasons, so I do not have problems in taking decisions. Sometimes it is, sometimes it is not but ... it is a difficult question - in a small group, the people that I directly manage, I think I speak with authority, and I carry my mandate.”

From this category, it is evident that participants can make decisions and sustain their educational leadership due to their ability to interpret and use policy. From a policy perspective, according to Selart (2010:37) decision-making is informed by cautionary principles which suggest the issue of individual rights and equity as supported by the constitution. This entails appropriate interpretation and implementation of policy, recognising that every individual has rights. In the next section, I will present the emerged theme from WhatsApp chat interviews conducted with three participants who volunteered to participate in the further interview.

5.3.2 Findings from WhatsApp interviews

This section presents the emerged theme from the WhatsApp chat interview.

(i) Participants' perception of forms of mentoring

This section presents the participants' views on types of mentoring. Participants were asked the following question: Which form of mentoring would you prefer as an individual; formal or informal or both. Can you please justify? The study has established that mentoring is significant to women's career advancement to an educational leadership position. The findings support the view of Bynum (2015:69) who conceptualises mentoring “as a way of providing direction and support for women who aspire to advance into leadership positions” (see 3.3).

According to Bynum (2015) and Montgomery (2017), mentoring can be conceptualised from two perspectives: the formal and informal mentoring. Likewise, participants in this study have conceptualised mentoring from both formal and informal perspectives. For example, Participant 2 writes: “I think both.” Participant 7 also writes “Both.” Participant 9 also mentions: “Both approaches of mentoring.”

The findings also resonate with the view of Copeland and Calhoun (2014) who describe mentoring as a means of accessing career opportunities and leadership positions (see 3.3). One such example is: “Effects of activities as carried out by the mentor will positively impact on personal development as a mentee. Own informal observations will add to development” (Participant 9). Accordingly, Abalkhail and Allan (2015:156) mention that apart from the provision of personal support and modelling, mentoring might open wider access for career opportunities for women (see 3.3).

This study indicates that formal mentoring is evidence-based while informal mentoring is relational. For instance, this is evident when a participant states: “Formal is recorded and has evidence that something is/was done to assist the mentee. Informal, I think the advice given to the mentee will sink to his/her heart and will not want to disappoint the mentor by not implementing the recommendations” (Participant 7).

This study reveals that even though formal and informal mentoring have their unique characteristics, they complement one another. One such example is: “There are times when there is a need for a relaxed environment between the mentee and the mentor such as open discussions, observations, giving own opinion. And of course, there are basic skills that one needs to learn via formal guidance” (Participant 2). This statement is consistent with the view of Copeland and Calhoun (2014) who find that combining formal and informal mentoring could be beneficial, although they place more emphasis on the importance of informal mentoring. It appears that both formal and informal mentoring have a role to play in women’s career advancement. However, the informal form of mentoring seems to be informed by relationship while formal mentoring is evidence-based.

5.4 SOME WORDS OF ADVICE FROM PARTICIPANTS

At the end of the individual face-to-face interviews, participants were asked to offer words of advice on women's career advancement. The objective here was to gain further insight that might help to inform women's attainment and sustenance of educational leadership positions. Based on participants' lived experiences, they offer some words of advice.

For Participant 13, a woman who aspires to advance to an educational leadership position should never give up on their goals or be intimidated. She believes that a woman should acquire all the necessary skills and work smarter. She says:

“Go for your goals, never give up. Never let others intimidate you and strive for what you believe in. Be on top of everything, whether it is accounting, auditing - you must know what it is all about, the ladies - because we must work so much smarter if they get that backup, that is it. Never let your dreams go and, work for what you have and claim your rightful place.”

Likewise, Participant 10 suggests that women who aspire to advance to an educational leadership position should go for their goals:

“They must go for it, they must not look at themselves as women, I think that is another thing, we should look at ourselves as human beings, with the same opportunities - be able to apply for the same job, and we must not go in there and say because we are women we got a better chance, we must go in there and say this is what I can do, be able to judge what we bring to the table not because of gender.”

Participant 1 suggests that elements such as humility, respect, integrity, and seeking others' advice are integral to women's career advancement to an educational leadership position. She believes that with these elements, one can go far as a woman. She asserts:

“Make sure you advance your programmes. Manage with humility and respect; you can really go far. Create opportunities for people to advise you; it is also important to be open to criticism that is one thing. And you must just keep on pressing and have integrity and in ... what I mean by integrity is to say, this is who I am and this my value, to value ourselves in the organisation and make sure you uphold, live by that. Do not be rude, for example to

say that I am a supervisor, and I am a liar, do not lie about anything, live by your words, integrity must be there. If you say this will happen - make sure it happens, if it does not, go back to people and tell them, you have a problem - that you cannot get a project done due to financial constraints, For example, I had a programme, I went back to the people to tell them about the problem I encountered, for their advice; we need to change our approach to get the work done.”

Participant 9 adds that a woman who aspires to advance to an educational leadership position should be ready to learn from others: “My advice would be they should be ready to learn; they should not lean only on what they know because as people talk or communicate their issues – that is where we learn. Generally, personality and character can help us.”

It is evident from participants’ views that elements such as humility, integrity, respect; and capability are integral to women’s career advancement – also seeking advice from others and going for their goals without being intimidated.

5.5 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS DURING THE INTERVIEWS

A few observations were made during the individual face-to-face interviews employed for this study. First, engaging with individual face-to-face interviews in the study provided me with the opportunity to engage with participants in their context. During the interviews, I observed the issue of unplanned activities as raised by one of the participants. For this participant, it is always a challenge as people in educational leadership at district level do not often have time to do their core duties due to unplanned activities. Based on observation, in my view, these participants are often involved in impromptu activities. The issue of unplanned activities is evident in how the participants cancel appointments based on unscheduled briefings and assignments. Although I recognise that the participants engaged in this study have superiors, it appears that they do not have much control over their daily activities.

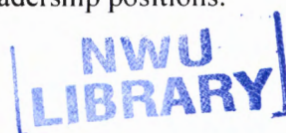
Importantly, the interviews in this study serve as a means of interacting with female leaders who are in the community of practice of educational leadership. They are experienced personnel who, for instance, have the expertise of educational leadership and the core of education, learning and teaching at district level. Korstjens and Moser (2018:122) suggest identification with and engagement in the most relevant characteristics as one of the means of ensuring trustworthiness in

qualitative research. In line with the view of Ryan *et al.* (2009:310), interviewing participants face to face in this study has provided me with the opportunity to observe participants' body language and facial expressions to make meaning of their views.

I observed that the interviewer and interviewee relationship during the interviews was cordial. I felt welcome by all the participants. For participants, the interview serves as a time of reflection. For example, for Participant 7, asking about how she perceives herself and educational leadership role was amusing but a reflexive time, (she laughs).

Reflecting on her successes regarding learners' performance, Participant 10 points to different medals and accolades her district has received under her leadership. Reflecting on her determination, participant 5 refers to her office, which is under construction filled with dust. The significant of observation to this study is that it helped to further understand the participants' context in relation to their experiences of educational leadership positions.

5.6 SUMMARY



The description of participants, their context, and how the data for this study were collected and analysed are presented. The data analysis and findings are also presented. The presentation is based on the participants' responses; this is to ensure a detailed explanation of their experiences of career advancement to educational leadership at the district office. As stated in section 4.7, the aim of presenting a thick description of participants' voice is to ensure trustworthiness and enable readers to experience and deeply understand the phenomenon under investigation (Creswell, 2016:194). It involves the presentation of participants' verbatim responses in terms of words, phrases, clauses or even sentences to support the research findings. In the next chapter, I will present a discussion of the results. Subsequently, the framework for understanding and enhancing women's career advancement in educational leadership will be presented.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 presented, analysed and discussed the findings of the study concerning women's experiences of career advancement in educational leadership positions at district level in the North West Province, South Africa. The discussion acknowledged the persistence of gender inequality in educational leadership and highlighted the role of women in educational leadership positions at district office level. These women were office-based educators. Studying the lived experiences of these women in district educational leadership positions may contribute to a better understanding of how women attain and sustain leadership positions, and this understanding might help bridge the gender gap in educational leadership.

This chapter presents an overview of the study, a synthesis of significant findings and recommendations based on the findings, limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, and concluding comments.

6.2 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study embarked on a qualitative (hermeneutic and phenomenological) research to understand the experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district level (see 3.2.1). Gender inequality in leadership positions is well-documented, and it is acknowledged in this research. Hence, understanding the factors that have contributed to the persistence of women's underrepresentation in educational leadership positions, specifically within the context of the district education office level, became paramount (see 1.1). It was important to highlight the roles of the district education office in order to provide a context for the study of women's leadership experiences within that level. The study was intended to allow women to tell their own stories as their stories are often told from men's perspectives (Kapasi *et al.*, 2016) (see 1.4). The act of reflecting on and relating the lived experiences of their career advancement to educational leadership positions—might reveal the potential for further progress (see 1.4 & 3.4). The study utilised a few theories to form the theoretical underpinning. These were: self-concept theory, social role theory, feminist theory and transactional-transformational leadership theory (see 2.2). The main concepts used in the study were, amongst others, 'glass ceiling' 'inequality' 'regimes'

‘labyrinth’, ‘individual’, ‘society’ and ‘organisation’,. As already mentioned, a hermeneutic phenomenological qualitative research design situated in an interpretive paradigm and supported by a feminist lens was employed. (see 1.8, 4.3 & 4.3.1). All four education districts of the North West Province Department of Education and Sport Development were selected for the study. Thirteen female managers, three from three districts, and four from the fourth district were purposely selected (see 4.4.1 & 5.2.1).

In Chapter 1, the background and motivation of the study were presented. The problem statement and the research questions with the aim and objectives of the study were articulated. The philosophical paradigm and methodological framework that supported the study were explained. The chapter also presented the layout of the entire study.

Chapter 2 presented and explained the theory of self-concept, social role theory, feminist theory and transformational-transactional leadership theory as the theoretical foundation for the study. The motivation for engaging with these theories was provided. The criticisms of the theories, as well as their significance to this study, were explained.

Chapter 3 presented the relevant literature that enhances the understanding of this study. In the literature, the understanding of the district office, the nature of women and various challenges being faced by women in leadership, specifically educational leadership were presented. The literature involves the presentation of concepts such as ‘glass ceiling’ ‘inequality’ ‘regimes’ ‘labyrinth’, ‘individual’, ‘society’ and ‘organisation’, the concepts were used to understand the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions.

Chapter 4 presented qualitative research design and methodology as an appropriate framework for this study. It introduced the interpretive paradigm as a philosophical framework supported by feminist lens using hermeneutic phenomenology methodological approach. The roles of the researcher, justification for the trustworthiness of the study and the ethical consideration were equally presented.

In Chapter 5, the analysis of the data for the study was presented in the form of tables. Finally, the findings and discussion of the findings of the study were presented in the context of the theoretical and conceptual framework, as discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

6.3 SYNTHESIS OF SIGNIFICANT FINDINGS

This section presents a synthesis of significant findings based on the research questions as set out in chapter 1 (see 1.5).

Following are the findings relating to each of the objectives summarised as key points in 6.3.1, 6.3.2 and 6.3.3.

6.3.1 Characteristics of women including their experiences of educational leadership positions at district office level

The findings indicate that participants in this study are accomplished; successful, competent, confident and hard-work female managers. These elements are evident in how the participants describe themselves and their leadership. Participants' self-perceptions show that they hold themselves at remarkably high esteem.

The findings also indicate that the participants are democratic, autocratic, participative, strict and assertive leaders. These elements further explain how the participants perceive themselves and their leadership.

Holding self at remarkably high esteem in this study does not only present a sense of self-worth, but it also suggests a sense of self-efficacy and authenticity as entrenched in self-concept theory. (see 2.2.1). The essence of self-concept theory in this study aligns with the views of Mehrad (2016:62) as stated in section 2.2.1.2. Mehrad (2016:62) perceives that the main factor behind the view and thinking about self is self-concept. The perceptions, views and opinions of the female managers engaged with in this study are informed by their self-concept. Karelaia and Guillén (2014) emphasise that self-concept has a direct effect on women in leadership positions (see 2.2.1.2 & 5.3.1). Accordingly, I argue that the beliefs, views and opinions that the female managers in this study have about themselves have propelled them to excel in the educational leadership positions. For example, many of them did not hesitate to refer to their achievements and relate them to learners' performance in their respective districts. From this study, it is evident that the female managers are cognisant of the application of both transactional and transformational leadership styles for effective management and leadership as they used them intermittently based on the situation. The essence of participants' self-perception and their leadership styles is the understanding of their identity as leaders and how they have been able to manage and lead

successfully in their specific positions. For instance, in relating to themselves as democratic, distributive, participatory and at the same time autocratic etc. indicates that these female leaders use different leadership styles as supported by different elements of transactional-transformational leadership approach (see 2.2.4). According to Amanchukwu *et al.* (2015:10), one can use transformational leadership components when there is a need to motivate, inspire, and engage followers to achieve organisational goals. For instance, the female leaders in this study have been able to follow transactional approach to manage and maintain organisational activities such as selection and recruitment of educators' support in managing and governing schools (see 2.2.4). Also, they have been able to follow the transformational approach to achieve organisational goals and vision through their ability to motivate, inspire and engage followers (Amanchukwu *et al.*, 2015:10) (see 2.2.4.3 & 5.3.2).

6.3.2 Persistence of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions

Key factors behind the persistence of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions that emerged in this study are lack of confidence and enthusiasm, management of social and professional responsibilities, negative stereotypical beliefs, lack of social resources, pull-down syndrome, gender inequality and political interference.

Lack of confidence and enthusiasm and management of personal and professional responsibilities suggest challenges from the individual perspective. The negative stereotypical beliefs suggest a challenge from the societal perspective. Lack of resources, lack of support from other women, gender inequality and political interference, are from organisational perspective.

From the individual perspective, the findings indicate a lack of confidence and enthusiasm as the challenges being faced by women on their career path. Although none of the women interviewed for this study has perceived herself as someone who lacked confidence, based on their shared experiences they believe some women indeed lack confidence as they are often reluctant to take responsibilities or show interest in applying for vacant positions even when they act in those positions (see 5.3.1). Njobvu and Xiu (2015:280) link low confidence to the problem of self-perception. The essence is that display of low confidence might undermine women's capability and ability to lead. Accordingly, the study finds management of personal and professional responsibilities as another form of challenge being faced by women on their career path, as women must maintain a balance between their personal and professional activities (see 5.3.1). According

to Gupta (2018), “having a career is still a challenge for women due to family responsibilities.” For instance, cooking after long hours at work, caring for one’s children and caring for elderly parents, as found in this study, form an essential part of these female leaders’ experiences and these experiences signify challenges being faced by women in their career path (see 5.3.1). The implication is that women would need to care for their children, their elderly parents, and at the same time, meet their professional obligations.

Factors that have contributed to the persistence of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions are also situated within society; they include the perception that women are weak, women are incompetent, women belong in the kitchen, women cannot make a difference. These elements have suggested negative stereotypical beliefs about women’s leadership. Although there are positive stereotypical beliefs about female leaders as mothers or ‘*mme*’ who are expected to care for and nurture children, there are also negative stereotypical beliefs concerning them (see 5.3.1). The findings indicate that society still perceives women as weak and incompetent. The findings also indicate that society still believes that women belong in the kitchen. Arguably, culture has a more significant role to play when it comes to challenges being faced by women as the participants believe that our culture in Africa still holds that women belong in the kitchen (see 5.3.1). The essence here is that the intersection between gender and culture is still a persistent challenge (see 3.4.2). It can be said that what opposes women here is societal expectations, which are based on the ‘agentic and communal perceptions’, as stated in section 2.2.2.2. According to Eagly (2002); Dulin (2007); Wood and Eagly (2012), the agentic and communal domains have been used to differentiate male and female in the family and workplace (see 2.2.2.2). The essence of challenges arising from societal expectations is that the way women are perceived by society might harm their leadership roles as “women can view themselves as less leaders” (Hoyt, 2010:490).

The findings have also revealed the existence of organisational challenges faced by women on their career path to educational leadership positions. It is noteworthy that a few of these challenges are not peculiar to women in educational leadership, as men are also facing them. For instance, according to participants, lack of social resources, human and non-human, are some of the challenges encountered by educational leaders in their daily work. Shortage of equipment such as printers and projectors might impact on the expected quality of work (see 5.3.1). This also includes the escalating number of schools under one of the districts. Instead of having 300 schools, the

district appears to have 580 schools as against the structure of the department of basic education as stated in policy on organisation; roles and responsibilities of education district (see 3.2.2 & 5.3.1). The experiences of women in this regard justify the notion of the glass cliff. From the glass cliff perspective, it is believed that although women have been able to break the glass ceiling, women are occupying a riskier position than men (Ryan *et al.*, 2016:445)

Also ubiquitous in the challenges ascribed to the organisation in this study include the pull-down syndrome (see 5.3.1), lack of support from other women (see 5.3.1), and lack of acceptance of female leaders (see 5.3.1). The results indicate that even though men sometimes show resistance to women's leadership based on gender and race, they are more supportive than women as women are viewed to lack support towards each other as they sometimes prefer male leadership (see 5.3.1). The varied experiences of participants concerning gender and race has revealed the role of intersectionality, and evident is that women experiences vary and that black women are still faced with subjugation based on their gender and race (see 2.2.2.1 & 5.3.1).

Although it is found that participants in this study perceive themselves as equal to their male counterparts in terms of skills and capability, they believe that they often do not have equal opportunities compared to their male counterparts due to political interference (see 5.3.1). The policy on AA is in place and beneficial to a few of the participants but is not implemented as expected (see 5.3.1).

6.3.3 The attainability and sustainability of women's career advancement to educational leadership positions

The findings of this study have revealed varied factors that can assist women in attaining and sustaining educational leadership positions. As the factors behind the persistence of underrepresentation of women into educational leadership are informed by the notions of individual, societal and organisation equally, the elements for enhancing women representation are informed by these notions across the study.

From the individual stance, factors such as self-esteem, hard work, self-development and spirituality, leadership styles are found to be significant to women's career advancement. Self-esteem has been referred to as an integral part of self-perception (see 2.2.1). Participants in this study have demonstrated that the elements of self-esteem such as competency, capability and

confidence are significant to women's career advancement into an educational leadership position (see 5.3.1). Equally, participants believe that hard work, experience, and self-development and leadership styles can help women to attain and sustain an educational leadership position (see 5.3.1). These involve exerting enthusiasm to learn and acquire the needed qualifications; and show love for one's job (see 5.3.1). The findings indicate that spirituality is significant in women's career path as they often relate to God through prayers for support (see 5.3.1). The essence of spirituality in this study is that prayers can be used as a coping mechanism for women on their career path. The findings also reveal that the ability to use different leadership styles based on the context is an important factor for attaining and sustaining an educational leadership position (see 5.3.1). The essence of using different leadership styles is that for one to be motivated as an individual, one needs to understand different leadership styles as entrenched in the transactional-transformational leadership approach.

From the societal perspective, many of the participants referred to the role of a family support system. This involves helping with childcare and giving moral and mental support (see 5.3.1). Also ascribed to societal factor is the role of upbringing, e.g. parental role in shaping identity and building confidence in women (see 5.3.1). The essence is that the beliefs we have about ourselves stem from the individual and individual others, such as parents (see 2.2.1 & 5.3.1).

The study has also revealed that organisational factors such as mentoring, team support and training and development, are integral to women's career advancement. The findings indicate that formal and informal mentoring is significant to women's career advancement as they complement each other (see 5.3.1 & 5.3.2). Mentoring is identified as a means of promoting confidence and self-building among women (see 5.3.1 & 5.3.2). The findings also indicate that team support is significant to women's career advancement. The findings indicate that team support can assist in achieving organisational goals (see 5.3.1). Training and development emerged as significant factors in women's career advancement in this study; participants refer to how training and development programmes have helped them to attain and persist in educational leadership positions (see 5.3.1).

Additionally, respect and mutual relationship have featured as paramount in this study. It is acknowledged that women might face different organisational challenges such as lack of acceptance, lack of support from other women. Participants believe that maintenance of respect

and mutual relationship with colleagues, subordinates and other stakeholders in education can help women to attain and sustain an educational leadership position (see 5.3.1). Accordingly, participants mention reliance on the use policy as a means of maintaining an educational leadership position. This involves their ability to interpret policy appropriately and fairly for decision-making purposes. The essence is that the use of policy requires fairness and transparency.

At the same time, participants in this study propose different strategies that can help women in attaining and sustaining an educational leadership position. They include the following:

- Go for your goals, never give up;
- Never let others intimidate you, and strive for what you believe in;
- Be on top of everything;
- Look at yourself as a human being;
- Work smarter;
- Manage with humility, respect and integrity; and
- Be ready to learn (see 5.4).

6.4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

Given the multifaceted nature of women's experiences, this study suggests that situating women's varied experiences within the individual, societal and organisational domain might help to manage the challenges that are located within the experiences. Not only would situating women's experiences within the individual, societal and organisational domains make these challenges manageable, but it might also alleviate them.

It is also suggested that studying women's varied challenges within the individual, societal and organisational domains would provide researchers with an in-depth understanding of women's experiences of their situation. This could be achieved through interaction such as the individual face-to-face interviews and WhatsApp Chat interviews conducted in this study. Such interviews may serve as a time for reflection for women researchers and women in leadership position.

While this study, from the individual perspective, has revealed first-hand experiences internal to women, the societal and organisational perspectives have revealed the experiences that are external to them. Based on the findings from the individual perspective, it is suggested that the perception individuals have of themselves is important. Thus, women should hold themselves at high esteem and be enthusiastic. It is believed that female leaders in this study can acquire and sustain their present positions because they believe that they are capable. Hence this study recommends that women should always show a sense of capability, authenticity, and accomplishment.

This study supports the previous studies which argue that the number of women in a leadership position has increased although not as expected. It is high time society begins to appreciate and support women; supportive family and friends are important for women's career advancement. Society should also avoid stereotyping women. The organisation should also stop perceiving women as weak or incompetent based on their race and communal nature. Rather, they should embrace them. Additionally, a supportive organisational environment is needed for women's career advancement; this might involve intensification in training and programmes aimed at women's development. Females in this study have mentioned how different leadership programmes and self-development programmes have helped to shape them. This should include appropriate implementation of policies that aim at gender equality. Again, women should support one another, maintain a cordial relationship, and encourage mentoring and networking, as this might widen opportunities for women and help bridge the persistence of gender inequality. Finally, women should embrace different leadership styles as this might help them in all situations.

6.5 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY TO KNOWLEDGE

This study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding women's career advancement and experiences of educational leadership as well as the theory and practice of educational leadership. From an ontological perspective, the deeper understanding of the nature of the truth about women regarding their experiences of leadership has been revealed because of the account of how they perceive themselves and their educational leadership. From an epistemological perspective, these women, through their stories, have been able to co-create knowledge and contribute to the existing knowledge in educational leadership. From an axiological perspective, the values attached to women's voices in knowledge creation and contribution is evident; this includes a woman researcher in educational research investigating women who are in the community of practice

(office-based educators at district level) in this study. Importantly, the study has revealed that women subscribe to different values that are necessary for successful educational leadership. From a methodological perspective, exploring the individual woman has provided a more in-depth understanding of women's experiences of educational leadership at district office level and beyond.

The study has contributed to the development of a model to enhance women's attainment and sustenance of educational leadership positions with the aim of bridging the persistence of gender gap in educational leadership. The use and amalgamation of different theories and notions have provided an in-depth foundation for understanding of women's career advancement and experiences of educational leadership positions and have served as the basis for the Individual, Society and Organisation Leadership (ISOLeAD) model. The elements of the ISOLeAD model have provided different strategies that can be used to enhance women's attainment and sustenance of educational leadership positions.

6.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The main limitation of this study is the restricted sample size. This is characteristic of studies on female leaders as this group is generally underrepresented in this category. However, qualitative studies also do not normally deal with large sample sizes as do quantitative studies. What could be considered by some as a more serious limitation would be that the subordinates of these female managers are not given a voice regarding how they perceive the leadership styles of their managers. The perspectives of subordinates might have added value in identifying elements that could contribute to women's successful educational leadership.

Having said that, it is important to reiterate that the aim of this study was to explore the career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district office level, and as such, only the women themselves can describe their experiences and not anyone else.

6.7 FURTHER RESEARCH

An exploration of subordinates' experiences of women's educational leadership could contribute to discourses on women's experiences of educational leadership. Such exploration could involve both female and male subordinates who would share their experiences of how they perceive

women's leadership and then suggest views that can help women attain and sustain an educational leadership position.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to explore women's experiences of career advancement in educational leadership at district level. The study agrees with previous studies that found that women's experiences are varied, and the intersectionality of these experiences is acknowledged. It is found that there are many impediments to women's career advancement. This study has identified barriers such as lack of self-esteem and enthusiasm, management of social and professional responsibilities, negative stereotypes as a result of societal expectations. These challenges include lack of acceptance of women's leadership, support from other women in the organisation, pull-down syndrome, non-adherence to policy, lack of social resources and others. However, this study has found that despite all these challenges, the female managers studied were able to acquire and sustain leadership positions. The findings indicate the importance of self-esteem, and identity as dimensions of self-concept as important to women's career advancement. The findings indicate that the female managers hold themselves at high esteem. They identified themselves as successful, competent, capable, and valued individuals. The findings indicate that the participants assume different leadership styles enshrined in transactional-transformational leadership theory. The findings indicate that the participants were able to acquire their positions due to their abilities to follow different leadership styles such as democratic, participative, autocratic, transformational etc. The findings indicate the importance of support system: family support, individual support, organisational support, spiritual support, and others.

This study acknowledges the multiplicity and intersectionality of the above experiences and concludes that women's success on their career path is based on internal and external factors. From an internal perspective, the role of how women perceive themselves and their leadership is evident in their successful leadership; from the external perspective, one cannot overemphasise the role of society and organisation. How women perceive themselves depends on their interaction with society. This interaction, in turn, might impact on how they perceive leadership. Women's perception of leadership is related to how women are perceived by society because leadership as an integral part of an organisation is rooted in society. In the next chapter, a framework for understanding and

enhancing women's career advancement in educational leadership from the framework of the individual, society and organisation will be developed.

CHAPTER 7

A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING AND ENHANCING WOMEN'S CAREER ADVANCEMENT TO EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented an overview of this study, a synthesis of significant findings and recommendations, limitations of the study, suggestions for further research, and concluding comments. One of the objectives of this study has been to develop a model for enhancing women's attainment and sustenance of educational leadership positions (see 1.5.3). The ISOLead model is based on the findings of this study.

7.2 THE ISOLead MODEL



This study suggests different means of attaining and sustaining educational leadership positions to assist women who aspire to achieve and maintain educational leadership positions. To this end, a model is developed with the following dimensions: individual, societal and organisation. These dimensions which are considered in this study as the basis for the attainment and sustenance of educational leadership are underpinned by the theoretical framework that informed this study: self-concept, social role, feminist and transactional-transformational leadership theories. Adopting these theories as the base for this model is grounded on the premises that the self-concept encompasses the perceptions that an individual has of self as “a physical, social, spiritual or moral being” (Gecas, 1983:3) (see 2.2.1). The study of Cooley (1902) using a metaphorical looking-glass self as an analogy, reveals how an individual develops self-perception and forms identity (see 2.2.3). The metaphorical looking-glass self discloses how one feels about oneself and arises from the reflection of the other individuals, i.e. society (1902:183) (see 2.2.3 & 2.2.1.2). As stated in sections 2.2.1.3 & 2.2.3, there is no doubt that who we are is associated with the perceptions of other individuals about us. Interestingly, our active role is significant as we are expected to display specific roles and responsibilities, for instance, social roles attached to be a daughter; wife, mother and professional, such as being a female manager in educational leadership (see 5.2, 5.2.1 & 5.3.1). As a result, social expectations are defined by social roles as prescribed by society (see 2.2.2). Feminist theory provides a broader understanding and analysis of women's experiences in patriarchal societies including issues such as societal gender-role expectations and negative

stereotyping. According to Msila (2013:464), it all started in “the formative years when society imposes values upon the girl child, and these values later shape their understanding that men are leaders, not women.” Leadership forms part of society; it presents “the development of ideas and a vision, living by values that support those ideas and vision” (Uzohue *et al.*, 2016:17) (see 2.2.3). The ‘process’ according to Uzohue *et al.* (2016:17) includes ability “to influence people or groups to embrace their behaviours and making decisions about human and other resources to achieve organisational goals” (see 2.2.3).

7.2.1 Developing the ISOLead model

In the process of developing the ISOLead model, I engaged with participants’ ‘different perspectives, views and beliefs. These were considered against the background of the theories that inform the study, namely, the self-concept, social role theory, feminist theory and transactional-transformational theory using the concepts *individual*, *society* and *organisation*. Figure 7.1 represents the ISOLead model - A model for attaining and sustaining educational leadership positions.

A model for attaining and sustaining educational leadership positions

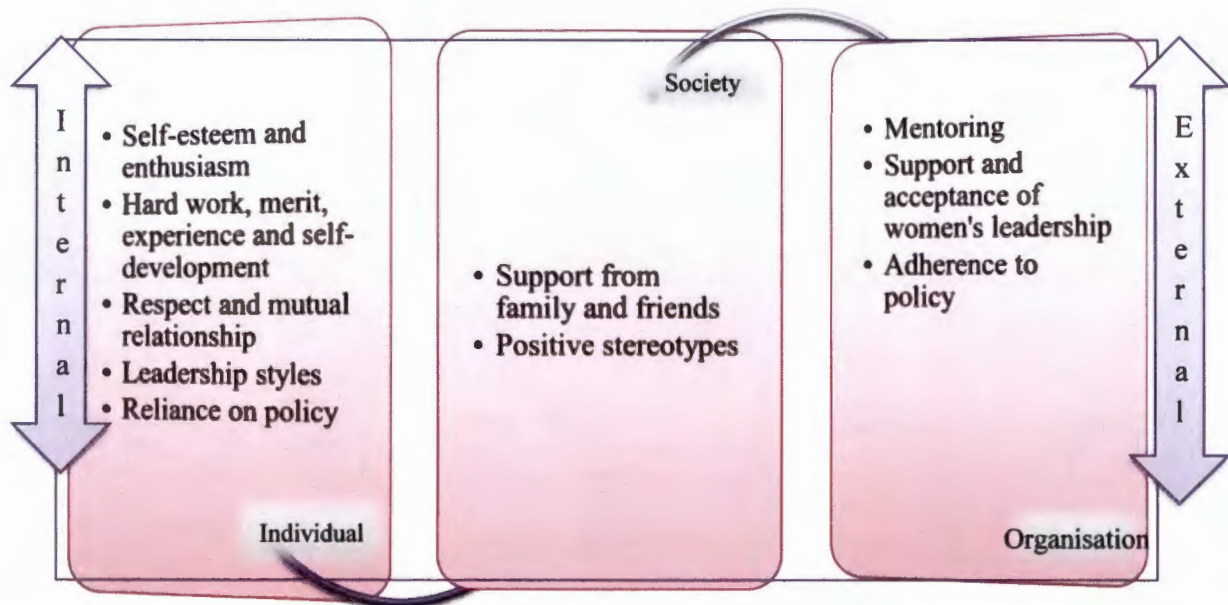


Figure 7.1 Individual, societal and organisation leadership model – ISOLead Mode (Source: Author).

7.2.1.1 Dimension one: Individual

The individual dimension depicts the elements that inform an individual's contribution to the attainment and sustenance of educational leadership. The elements are the following: self-esteem and enthusiasm, hard work and merit, respect and mutual relationship, leadership styles and reliance on policy.

(i) Self-esteem and enthusiasm

Self-esteem is everything (see 5.3.1). Self-esteem forms an element of self-concept. It presents an evaluative dimension of self-concept and concerns capability, authenticity and validity (see 2.2.1). Women in this study maintain a sense of self-esteem by referring to their capability and accomplishment. Women who aspire to attain and sustain leadership positions are required to maintain these elements. Women can show a sense of self-esteem through self-evaluation. This will become evident when they believe in themselves, see themselves as being accepted, see themselves as efficient and being able to lead. This entails a sense of enthusiasm and capability. All these are integral to women's career advancement to educational leadership positions. Women become proactive and prepare to take any leadership position when they are fearless and see themselves as capable and successful in their career path.

(ii) Hard work, merit, experience and self-development

The success of every woman lies in their hands. Women in this study acquire their present position due to their hard work, experience and qualifications. Women who aspire to acquire and sustain leadership positions are required to be hardworking, networking and get all the necessary skills essential for a leadership position. This can only be achieved through readiness to study and learn from others to gain experience and get qualified as education opens the door (Garn & Brown, 2008:62) (see 5.3.1). Women can acquire qualifications through part-time programmes. They will become more motivated to apply for leadership positions when they meet all the requirements.

(iii) Respect and mutual relationship

Respect is reciprocal - what you give to subordinates you get back (see 5.3.1). Women in this study have indicated the importance of respect and mutual relationship (see 5.3.1). Bass (1990:20) has related respect to the element of charisma. It is essential for women who want to advance their career to educational leadership positions to be charismatic. Others should see them as role models. It is believed that a charismatic leader gains respect from followers as they tend to identify with them (Bass, 1990:22; Bass & Riggio, 2006:6). It is expected to disagree and agree because we all have our differences, but women are required to respect their subordinates and work harmoniously with them. Respect can be earned when one respects others, values their contribution, keeps promises, and shows concern over the welfare of the others (see 2.2.4.1).

(iv) Leadership styles

Effective leadership is related to leadership styles (see 3.4). Women in this study attain and sustain their leadership positions due to their ability to follow different leadership styles (5.3.1). Women who aspire to attain and sustain leadership position are required to understand and follow different leadership styles to deal with challenges in different situations. Women are to realise that there are instances where they need to be democratic to garner support to achieve organisational goals. Also, there is a need to be assertive to make crucial decisions to achieve organisational goals. It is essential for women to study and understand their working environment. Here women who aspire to attain and sustain educational leadership position are required to possess multiple abilities and be able to adopt different leadership styles. This can be achieved when women demonstrate the ability to inspire, motivate and engage followers and supervise them to achieve organisational goals (i.e. district office goals) (see 3.2.1).

(v) Reliance on policy

The use of and adherence to policy is related to leadership sustenance. Women in this study have indicated that they have attained and sustained their positions due to their ability to interpret and use policy (5.3.1). Women who aspire to attain and sustain educational leadership are required to abide by policy for decision-making purposes. However, women are expected to understand and interpret policy appropriately without fear or favour. This can be done by studying organisational policy for familiarity, interpreting policy appropriately, aligning with policy and giving advice

based on it (5.3.1). Here, organisational policy should become a kind of diary that one could refer to as a guide.

7.2.1.2 Dimension two: Society

The domain of society depicts the role of society to women's attainment and sustenance of educational leadership positions. The elements that inform this domain include support from family and friends, and positive stereotype.

(i) Support from family and friends

The support from family and friends is essential to women's career advancement. Participants in this study have indicated the importance of the support they receive from family and friends, and it is believed that the support they receive from their parents have helped to shape their identity and build confidence (see 5.3.1). Parents are required to assist in building confidence in their girl child as this will shape their identity and their beliefs about leadership. Parents can demonstrate support when they tell their girl child that women can be leaders and achieve their set goals, it all starts at 'a young age' (Msila, 2013) (see 7.2). Additionally, family and friends should demonstrate support by helping women during the child-rearing period. This could involve helping women in school runs, including after care and house chores as these might combat gender role stereotypes and traditional attitudes that constitute imbalance between women's personal and professional life that perpetuate "gendered and sexualised entrenched barriers" which women are faced with (Acker, 2006:444; 2009:203) (see 3.4 & 3.4.2).

(ii) Positive stereotypes

Women in this study express positive stereotypes when they reflect on how they are perceived as mothers (5.3.1). Society is required to change their orientation about women and believe in their leadership. Society should see women as capable leaders and change the cultural beliefs that perceive women as weak leaders. While placing value on women's femininity, society is required to have a rethink on gender and leadership and avoid basing the evaluation of leadership on gender (Deloitte, 2011:1). This can be achieved by accepting women's leadership and "confronting stereotypical behaviours that stipulate how women should behave or talk; and restrict women's

place to home, meeting the needs of husband and children” (Krolokke & Sorenson, 2006:5) (2.2.3.1). Women must be individuals who own leadership potential (Rawat *et al.*, 2019:459).

7.2.1.3 Dimension three: Organisation

The organisation domain presents the role of the organisation in women’s career advancement. The elements that inform the realm of the organisation are mentoring and acceptance of women’s leadership and adherence to policy.

(i) Mentoring

Although many of the participants in this study did not experience mentoring, they believe mentoring is important to women’s career advancement. They suggested that formal and informal mentoring might help women on their career path (see 5.3.2). Education district office as an organisation is required to provide formal mentoring opportunities for women who aspire to acquire and sustain an educational leadership position. Education district office can encourage mentoring by assigning experienced leaders, women as well as men to support women who aim to attain and sustain an educational leadership position. Also, women are required to provide informal mentoring to one another. This can be achieved when women in powerful positions embrace the notion of ‘sisterhood’ and serve as role models for others who aspire to advance their careers (2.2.3).

(ii) Support and acceptance of women’s leadership

Participants in this study have indicated that women do not normally support one another, and that women’s leadership are sometimes resisted based on their race(5.3.1). Women at education district level are required to support and accept one another. This can be demonstrated when they attach value to women’s leadership in that women should not undermine one another. Men are also required to give adequate support to women’s leadership irrespective of their race and to view them as capable leaders; this can be proved by placing value on women’s capability, skill and potential.

(iii) Adherence to policy

This study has shown non-adherence to the Affirmative Action Policy as one of the challenges that women face on their career path to educational leadership positions. They believe that the

Affirmative Action policy is inappropriately implemented due to political interference (see 5.3.1). Education district office as an organisation is required to adhere to policy and avoid political interference. Career advancement for everyone should be based on merit; this should involve expected qualifications, hard work, experience, capability and success.

7.3 SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the ISOLead model to enhance women's attainment and sustenance of educational leadership positions (1.5.3). The ISOLead model has been developed to accomplish one of the objectives of the study. The development of this model is grounded on the findings of this study as underpinned by its theoretical framework using the notions of *individual, society and organisation*.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES UNIVERSITEIT

Private Bag X6001 Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel (018) 299-4900

Fax (018) 299-4910

Web <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee

Tel +27 18 299 4849

Email Ethics@nwu.ac.za

ETHICS APPROVAL CERTIFICATE OF PROJECT

Based on approval by the Human Resource Research Ethics Committee (HRREC) on 15/09/2017, the North-West University Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (NWU-IREC) hereby approves your project as indicated below. This implies that the NWU-IREC grants its permission that provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary the project may be initiated using the ethics number below.

Project title: Career advancement experiences of women in leadership positions at district level in the North West Province
Project Leader/Supervisor: Prof CB Zulu
Student: MO Kutu (21256772)
Ethics number: N W U - 0 0 6 9 6 - 1 7 - A 9
Application Type: Single Study
Commencement date: 2017-09-15 Expiry date: 2020-09-15 Risk: NA

Special conditions of the approval (if applicable):

- Translation of the informed consent document to the languages applicable to the study participants should be submitted to the HRREC (if applicable)
- Any research at governmental or private institutions, permission must still be obtained from relevant authorities and provided to the HRREC. Ethics approval is required BEFORE approval can be obtained from these authorities.

General conditions: While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, please note the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The project leader (principal investigator) must report in the prescribed format to the NWU-IREC via HRREC annually (or as otherwise requested) on the progress of the project and upon completion of the project without any delay in case of any adverse event (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the project. Annually a number of projects may be randomly selected for an external audit.• The approval applies strictly to the protocol as stipulated in the application form. Would any changes to the protocol be deemed necessary during the course of the project, the project leader must apply for approval of these changes at the HRREC. Would there be deviations from the project protocol without the necessary approval of such changes, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.• The date of approval indicates the first date that the project may be started. Would the project have to continue after the expiry date, a new application must be made to the NWU-IREC via HRREC and new approval received before or on the expiry date.• In the interest of ethical responsibility the NWU-IREC and HRREC retains the right to request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the project, to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process.• Withdraw or postpone approval if any unethical principles or practices of the project are revealed or suspected, it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the HRREC or that information has been false or misrepresented, the required annual report and reporting of adverse events was not done timely and accurately, new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.• HRREC can be contacted for further information via Ethics.Fmtrch@nwu.ac.za or 018 299 2874.

The IRECC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the IRECC or HRREC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely

Prof LA Du Plessis
Digitally signed by
Prof LA Du Plessis
Date: 2017.09.27
08:46:59 +02:00

Prof Linda du Plessis

Chair, NWU Institutional Research Ethics Regulatory Committee (IRECC)

APPENDIX 2: LETTERS OF PERMISSION TO THE DISTRICT OFFICES

APPENDIX 2A



Private Bag X2046, Mmabatho
South Africa, 2735

Tel: 018 389-2111
Fax: 018 392-5775
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Education Leadership Development
Tel: 018 3892500 (Secretary)
Email: eliza.senne@nwu.ac.za

The District Director
Department of Education Provincial District Office
Dr Ruth S Mompoti District
30 Emmanuel Street
Colledge, Vryburg

October 3 2017

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This is to confirm that Mrs. M.O. Kutu (Student No: 21256772) is a PhD student registered at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. The title of the dissertation is: Career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district level in the North West Province.

Permission is hereby kindly requested to enter Dr. Ruth S Mompoti district office to collect data from the district office female managers at top and senior management levels. Data collection will be by way of interviews/observations and WhatsApp group chats.

Collection of data will occur outside official working hours so as not to interfere with office duties. The dates and times of the data collections are to be agreed upon by the participating top and senior managers

Participants will participate voluntarily in the data collection. The identity of the participants and the district will be kept confidential and anonymous. The information collected therefore cannot and will not be used to evaluate the District in terms of its performance in comparison with others, because the information collected will not be about district performance or top and senior managers' performance in specific districts.

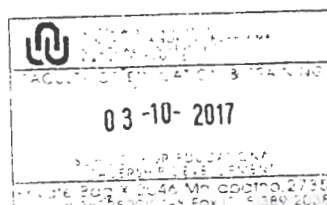
Should you enquire more information about the project, kindly contact the supervisor for this project: (Prof C. B. Zulu on 018 3892 435)

Herewith permission is kindly requested to perform this research in your district (Dr. Ruth S. Mompoti District). It would be appreciated if you would kindly grant written permission to this student. Any assistance given to the student to perform the research will be appreciated.

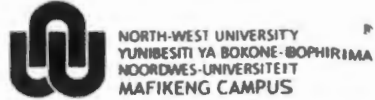
Yours sincerely

Prof N Diko

Acting Director: School for Education Leadership Development
Mafikeng Campus



APPENDIX 2B



Private Bag X2046, Mmabatho
South Africa, 2735

Tel: 018 389-2111
Fax: 018 392-5775
Web <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Education Leadership Development
Tel: 018 3892500 (Secretary)
Email: eliza_senne@nwu.ac.za

The District Director
Department of Education Provincial District Office
Bojanala District
Hysteck & Kok Street
Rustenburg

October 3 2017

Dear Sir/Ma

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This is to confirm that Mrs. M.O. Kutu (Student No: 21256772) is a PhD student registered at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. The title of the dissertation is: Career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district level in the North West Province.

Permission is hereby kindly requested to enter Bojanala district office to collect data from the district office female managers at top and senior management levels. Data collection will be by way of interviews/observations and WhatsApp group chats.

Collection of data will occur outside official working hours so as not to interfere with office duties. The dates and times of the data collections are to be agreed upon by the participating top and senior managers.

Participants will participate voluntarily in the data collection. The identity of the participants and the district will be kept confidential and anonymous. The information collected therefore cannot and will not be used to evaluate the District in terms of its performance in comparison with others, because the information collected will not be about district performance or top and senior managers' performance in specific districts.

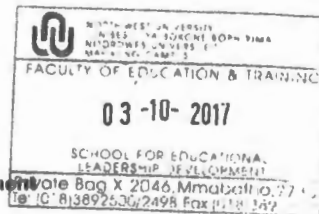
Should you enquire more information about the project, kindly contact the supervisor for this project: (Prof C. B. Zulu on 018 3892 435).

Herewith permission is kindly requested to perform this research in your district (Bojanala District). It would be appreciated if you would kindly grant written permission to this student. Any assistance given to the student to perform the research will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Prof N Diko

Acting Director: School for Education Leadership Development
Mafikeng Campus



APPENDIX 2C



NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES UNIVERSITEIT
MAFIKENG CAMPUS

Private Bag X2046, Mmabatho
South Africa 2735

Tel 018 389-2111
Fax 018 392 5775
Web <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Education Leadership Development
Tel 018 3892500 (Secretary)
Email elz@nwu.ac.za

The District Director
Department of Education Provincial District Office
Ngaka Modiri Molema District
10 Nelson Mandela Drive
2745
Mmabatho

October 3 2017

Dear Sir/Ma

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This is to confirm that Mrs. M.O. Kutu (Student No. 21256772) is a PhD student registered at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. The title of the dissertation is: Career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district level in the North West Province.

Permission is hereby kindly requested to enter Ngaka Modiri Molema district office to collect data from the district office female managers at top and senior management levels. Data collection will be by way of interviews/observations and WhatsApp group chats.

Collection of data will occur outside official working hours so as not to interfere with office duties. The dates and times of the data collections are to be agreed upon by the participating top and senior managers.

Participants will participate voluntarily in the data collection. The identity of the participants and the district will be kept confidential and anonymous. The information collected therefore cannot and will not be used to evaluate the District in terms of its performance in comparison with others, because the information collected will not be about district performance or top and senior managers' performance in specific districts.

Should you enquire more information about the project, kindly contact the supervisor for this project: (Prof C. B. Zulu on 018 3892 435).

Herewith permission is kindly requested to perform this research in your district (Ngaka Modiri Molema District). It would be appreciated if you would kindly grant written permission to this student. Any assistance given to the student to perform the research will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Prof N Diko

**Acting Director: School for Education Leadership Development
Mafikeng Campus**

APPENDIX 2D



NORTH WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES UNIVERSITEIT
MAFIKENG CAMPUS

Private Bag X2046, Mmabatho
South Africa 2735

Tel: 018 389 2111
Fax: 018 392-5775
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Education Leadership Development
Tel: 018 3892500 (Secretary)
Email: edl@nwu.ac.za

The District Director
Department of Education Provincial District Office
Dr Kenneth Kaunda District
8 OR Tambo Street
Potchefstroom

October 3 2017

Dear Sir

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

This is to confirm that Mrs. M.O. Kutu (Student No. 21256772) is a PhD student registered at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. The title of the dissertation is: Career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district level in the North West Province.

Permission is hereby kindly requested to enter Dr. Kenneth Kaunda district office to collect data from the district office female managers at top and senior management levels. Data collection will be by way of interviews/observations and WhatsApp group chats.

Collection of data will occur outside official working hours so as not to interfere with office duties. The dates and times of the data collections are to be agreed upon by the participating top and senior managers.

Participants will participate voluntarily in the data collection. The identity of the participants and the district will be kept confidential and anonymous. The information collected therefore cannot and will not be used to evaluate the District in terms of its performance in comparison with others, because the information collected will not be about district performance or top and senior managers' performance in specific districts.

Should you enquire more information about the project, kindly contact the supervisor for this project: (Prof C. B. Zulu on 018 3892 435).

Herewith permission is kindly requested to perform this research in your district (Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District). It would be appreciated if you would kindly grant written permission to this student. Any assistance given to the student to perform the research will be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Prof N Diko

**Acting Director: School for Education Leadership Development
Mafikeng Campus**

APPENDIX 3: LETTER OF PERMISSION TO THE HOD



NORTH-WEST UNIVERSITY
YUNIBESITHI YA BOKONE-BOPHIRIMA
NOORDWES-UNIVERSITEIT
MAFIKENG CAMPUS

Private Bag X2046, Mmabatho
South Africa, 2735

Tel 018 389-2111
Fax 018 392-5775
Web <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Education Leadership Development
Tel 018 3892500 (Secretary)
Email eliza.senne@nwu.ac.za

The Head of Department (HOD)
Department of Education and Sport Development
North West Province
Corona Building, East Wing, 2nd Floor
Dr. James Moroka Drive
Mmabatho

November 13 2017

Dear Sir/Ma

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I hereby request permission for Ms. Mercy O. Kutu to conduct research in the North West Department of Education and Sport Development. Ms. M.O. Kutu (Student No: 21256772) is a registered Ph.D. student at the North-West University, Mafikeng Campus. The title of her research is **Career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district level in the North West Province.**

It would be appreciated if you would kindly grant written permission to this student to enter the following provincial district offices to collect data from the female managers at the top and senior management levels:

- (i) Ngaka Modiri Molema District;
- (ii) Dr. Kenneth Kaunda District;
- (iii) Dr. Ruth S Mompoti District, and;
- (iv) Bojanala District.

Data collection will be by way of individual face-to-face interviews/observations and WhatsApp group chats. The data will be conducted only at the district offices.

Collection of data will occur outside official working hours so as not to interfere with office duties. The dates and times of the data collections are to be agreed on by the participating top and senior managers.

Participants will participate voluntarily in the data collection. The identity of the participants and the districts will be kept confidential and anonymous. The information collected, therefore, cannot and will not be used to evaluate any of the districts in terms of its performance in comparison with others because the information collected will not be about district performance or top and senior managers' performance in specific districts.

Should you inquire more information about the study, kindly contact the project supervisor: Prof. C. B. Zulu on 018 3892 435.

Any assistance given to the student to perform the research will be highly appreciated

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Diko'.

Prof. N. Diko

**Acting Director: School for Education Leadership Development
Mafikeng Campus**

APPENDIX 4: LETTERS OF APPROVAL FROM THE DISTRICT OFFICES

APPENDIX 4A



Education and Sport Development
Department of Education and Sport Development
Departement van Onderwys en Sport Ontwikkeling
Lefapha la Thuto le Tihaboiole ya Metshameko
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

10 Nelson Mandela Drive
Mafikeng
Private Bag X10
Mmabatho 2735
Tel (018) 388-1964 / 3383
Fax 086 513 9881 / (018) 381-8299
e-mail bmonale@nwpg.gov.za
e-mail omolete@nwpg.gov.za (Off Man)

NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA DISTRICT

Enquiries S.O. Molete
Telephone 018 - 388 3383

To All Women Managers
Ngaka Modiri Molema District

From Mr B E Monale
District Director

Date 16 October 2017

Subject : Permission to conduct a research

Permission is hereby granted to **Mrs M.O. Kutu**, a Student at the North West University to conduct a research on the title "**Career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at District Level in the North West Province**"

Permission is granted provided that information that shall be gathered during the research project will not be used as bad publicity, thereby putting the Department into disrepute and that the process will not disrupt Departmental duties. Prior appointment should be made in this regard

Yours in education


Mr B. E. Monale
District Director

APPENDIX 4B



Education and Sport Development

Department of Education and Sport Development
Departement van Onderwys en Sport Ontwikkeling
Lefapha la Thuto le Tšhobotolo ya Metsamakeko
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

8 O R Tambo Street, Potchefstroom
Private Bag X1256,
Potchefstroom 2520
Tel. (018) 299-8216
Fax (018) 294-8234
Enquiries: Mr H. Motara
e-mail: hmotara@nwpg.gov.za

**DR KENNETH KAUNDA DISTRICT
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR**

Enquiries: Mphiso Tyatya	Tel: (018) 299 8307 / e-mail: ptyatya@nwpg.gov.za	Mobile Contact: 082 317 4656
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**To: University of the North West
Prof. N. Diko
Acting Director: School of Education Leadership Development**

**o.b.o. Mrs. M.O. Kutu
Student No: 21256772**

**From: Mr. H. Motara
District Director**

Date: 20 October 2017

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH; "CAREER ADVANCEMENT
EXPIRIENCES OF WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL POSITIONS AT DISTRICT LEVEL IN THE
NORTH WEST PROVINCE"**

Reference is made to your letter dated 3rd October 2017, being a request for permission to conduct research under the above-stated topic.

Accordingly, permission is hereby granted for you to conduct the research as per your request, subject to the following provisions:

1. That Mrs Kutu's research work should not compromise the general office functionality, considering that your target group for research purpose is office-based employees.
2. The District Office will make available to the researcher a list of relevant Women Managers, and the onus to make individual arrangements with them will rest with your good self.
3. That the principle of confidentiality must be observed in its strictest terms.
4. That the research findings should be made available to the Department of Education & Sport Development upon request.

With our best wishes.

Thanking you

**MR. H. MOTARA
DISTRICT DIRECTOR**

"Towards Excellence In Education and Sport Development"

APPENDIX 4C



Education and Sport Development

Department of Education and Sport Development
Departement van Onderwys en Sportontwikkeling
Lefapha la Thuto le Tihabololo ya Metshameko
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

10 Nelson Mandela Drive, Matikeng
Private Bag X10, Mmabatho 2735
Tel.: (018) 388-1964 / 3383
Fax: 086 513 9881 / (018) 8299
e-mail: dntlabathi@nwpg.gov.za
e-mail: omolete@nwpg.gov.za (Off Man.)

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT MANAGER: NGAKA MODIRI MOLEMA DISTRICT

Enquiries S.O. Molete
Telephone 018 - 388 - 3383

To : All Women Managers
Ngaka Modiri Molema District

From : Mr S.D. Ntlabathi
Acting District Director

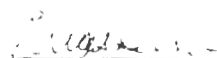
Date : 19 June 2018

Subject : Permission to conduct a research

Permission is hereby granted to **Mrs M.O. Kutu**, a Student at the North West University to conduct a research on the title "**Career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at District Level in the North West Province**".

Permission is granted provided that information that shall be gathered during the research project will not be used as bad publicity, thereby putting the Department into disrepute and that the process will not disrupt Departmental duties. Prior appointment should be made in this regard.

Yours in education


Mr S.D. Ntlabathi
Acting District Director

"Towards Excellence in Education and Sport Development"



APPENDIX 5: LETTER OF APPROVAL FROM THE HOD



Education and Sport Development
Department of Education and Sport Development
Departement van Onderwys en Sportontwikkeling
Lefapha la Thuto le Tihabololo ya Metshameko
NORTH WEST PROVINCE

Garona Building, Mmabatho
1st Floor, East Wing
Private Bag X2044
Mmabatho 2735
Tel.: (018) 388-3433
Fax.: 086-514-0126
e-mail: mothabanej@nwpg.gov.za

OFFICE OF THE ACTING SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL

Enq. : Dr TA Phorabatho
Tel. : 018 388 3407
Email : tphorabatho@nwpg.gov.za

To: Prof. N Diko
North West University Mahikeng Campus
Faculty of Education Leadership Development

From: Ms S M Semaswe
Acting Superintendent-General

Date : 15 December 2017

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: MS M O KUTU

Your email received on the 15th of December 2017 bears reference.

Permission is hereby granted to your student Ms M O Kutu (Student No. 21256772) to conduct research in the department as requested, subject to the following conditions:

- She contacts the relevant Senior Managers for her target programmes about her request with this letter of permission.
- The research process does not hinder the general functionality of the identified programmes.
- The participation in your project will be voluntary.
- The principles of informed consent and confidentiality will be observed in strictest terms, and
- The findings of your research should be made available to the North West Department of Education and Sport Development upon request.

Best wishes


Ms S M Semaswe
Acting Superintendent-General

Date



"Towards Excellence in Education and Sport Development"

APPENDIX 6: CONSENT FORM



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Researcher:

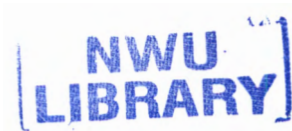
Mercy Kutu – Student Number 21256772

Dear Participant

My name is Mercy Kutu (Ms), a Doctoral degree student in Educational Management and Leadership at the North-West University in Mafikeng Campus under the supervision of Professor C.B. Zulu.

This is to kindly invite you to participate in a PhD study entitled: **Career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district level in the North West Province**. You are purposefully selected to participate in this study because you meet the criteria, i.e. being a female manager/director in educational leadership. The findings of the study will be accessible in a thesis form and scientific article. A summary of the findings will be provided to you if requested.

1. Description and goal of the study



The purpose of the study is to explore the career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions, for example,

- (i) explore the factors behind the persistence of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership positions, and;

- (ii) explore the factors that can help the attainability and sustainability of women's career advancement into educational leadership positions.

2. Research processes and participant's involvement

Participation in this study will require the following: (i) complete a biographical information form and sign a consent form; (ii) an individual face-to-face interview and WhatsApp Group Chats (between the selected participants and the researcher).

The interview will be recorded verbatim with permission. The interview will take place at a time and place convenient for the participant. The interview will last between 40 and 60 minutes. The WhatsApp Chats will last for three weeks after the face-to-face in-depth individual interview.

3. Protection from harm and discomfort

The study will not subject the participant to any potential risk both physically and emotionally.

4. Potential benefits for participants, science and human society as a whole

The study is expected to provide insights into varied lived experiences of women in educational leadership positions; and as a result, contribute to knowledge production from women's perspectives. The study will identify factors that can support and promote women's attainment and sustenance of educational leadership positions. The factors could serve as motivation for women who might aspire to advance their career into educational leadership positions. The attainability and sustainability of educational leadership positions might help to bridge gender gaps and enhance women's participation in decision making positions in the education sector.

5. Principles of confidentiality

The researcher will strictly observe the principles of confidentiality/right to privacy, integrity, honesty and respect. The researcher will ensure that the information obtained from the participant remains confidential. As a result, the researcher will not divulge any information that can identify a participant to any other party, and the use of pseudonyms will be employed in the study wherever it is necessary to mention names.

The researcher will discard the recorded voice on the digital voice recorder immediately after the transcription. Also, the researcher will discard Group Chats trends after they have been downloaded and converted to Word Document. However, participants are free to listen to audiotaped responses and view the transcribed data should they desire.

6. Voluntary participation and withdrawal

Participation in the study is voluntary; therefore, a participant may choose to withdraw their participation in the face-to-face interview and or the WhatsApp Group Chats at any moment desired without any consequences.

7. Study leader's and researcher's contact information

Should you have any enquiries or concerns regarding this study, kindly contact the study leader, Prof C.B. Zulu on 018 389 2435 and the researcher, M.O. Kutu (Ms) on 076 180 5070.

If you are willing to participate in this study, kindly give your consent by signing below:

Participant's Signature _____ Date _____

Researcher's Signature _____ Date _____

APPENDIX 7: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Interviewer: Ms Mercy Kutu (Doctoral Student)

Thank you for consenting to participate in this study. Please note that your responses and any other information that you will provide herein will be treated with an ultimate confidentiality as none of your responses will be identified with you. This exploration is an academic endeavour aiming at knowledge contribution based on the perspectives of women in educational leadership positions. Please note that any information you provide herewith is confidential. The aim of the questionnaire is to enrich data interpretation and analysis.

Biographical information

Instruction: Please tick the appropriate box in below questions

(1) Which of the following age range do you belong?

24-29	
30-35	
36-41	
42-49	
50-55	
56-60	
60+	

(2) What is your highest qualification?

Diploma	
Bachelor's degree	
Hons degree	
Master's Degree	
Doctoral degree	
Other (Specify)	

(3) How long have you been in educational leadership position?

Less than 1 year	
1-5 years	
6-10 years	
11-15 years	

16-20 years	
21-30 years	
Over 30 years	

(4) How would you classify yourself regarding your cultural backgrounds?

Afrikaner	
Black African	
Coloured African	
Indian African	
White African	
Others	

(5) Which of the following categories best describes you as a woman?

Mother	
Daughter	
Daughter in law	
Wife	
Aunt	

Please note that you may fit into more than a category

APPENDIX 8: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. Introductory Question:

i. Can you please briefly tell me about yourself and your present position?

ii. Briefly tell me about your office context.

(i) Individual factors

1. Reflect and describe how you perceive yourself as a woman and how your perception has affected you as a female manager in educational leadership position at district level? Please also feel free to relate and/or connect this to your roles and responsibilities as a woman.
2. In your opinion, explain the different types of support that may help women in educational leadership to advance into senior management positions and assist them in balancing their private and professional life.

(ii) Societal factors

3. What are your views and perceptions of societal expectations from a woman in a management position in educational leadership? Narrate how these have affected you in your present position.
4. Carefully reflect and narrate your views on culture and societal beliefs about women leaders and how these have affected your career advancement into educational leadership position.

(iii) Organisational factors

5. Reflect on your experiences as a female manager at education district office and describe how you have acquired your present position?
6. Describe your feelings as a female manager in educational leadership position; and your perception about the impression of your subordinates or male counterparts of your leadership style.

7. Reflect and describe the various challenges you face as a female manager in educational leadership. Do explain the role that gender and/or other factors may have played in these challenges.
8. Describe in detail how you have been able to sustain your position as a manager in educational leadership.
9. In your own opinion, do you think you have equal opportunities with your male counterparts when it comes to promotions, decision makings and goals achievement as a manager in educational leadership?
10. Relate to your own lived experiences and explain to me why gender disparity exists in management positions in educational leadership.

APPENDIX 9: LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

1 November 2019

I, **Ms Cecilia van der Walt**, hereby declare that I took care of the editing of the thesis of **Ms MO Kutu** titled *Career advancement experiences of women in educational leadership positions at district level in the North West Province*.



MS CECILIA VAN DER WALT

BA (*Cum Laude*)

THED (*Cum Laude*).

Plus Language editing and translation at Honours level (*Cum Laude*).

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