

**Gender imbalances in the school governance: A case
study of two Umbumbulu High Schools**

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DECLARATON

I declare that the submitted project is my own work except where indicated. This study is my own work and has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any University.

Signature (candidate):.....



Signature (supervisor):.....



Date:



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my husband, Bheki and my three children
Nkululeko, Siphesihle and Sibahle for their concern, care and encouragement.
Without their love and support my dreams would not have come true.

I thank you so much.

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The project of this magnitude could not have been completed without the inspirational support of a number of people.

I am indebted to my Creator, the God Almighty, for his unfailing comforting inspiration that has seen me endure the academic inclines of this study.

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My heartfelt gratitude is due to my late parents, especially my mother who in the most unfashionable way laid a solid foundation for the love and respects of the female species of mankind, hence my focus on this subject.

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ABSTRACT

'Gender imbalances in the school governance' was studied in two schools and amongst community members of Umbumbulu, a rural area, and 60 kilometres from Durban in Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa. Data collected from the study reveal that governance structures of the studied schools are male dominated with men holding highest positions and women in middle or lower ranks. The status quo in the two schools is found to be reflective of the Umbumbulu community's cultural beliefs. There are entrenched beliefs regarding which gender should hold management positions, rather than what constitutes and is required for good leadership. The study found that although there are other factors that lead to gender imbalances, the overriding one is the fact that the culture and beliefs that the community subscribes to is highly gendered and stereotypical. In turn policies formulated e.g. selection and hiring policies reflect a low regard for women and practically discriminate against them. It is found that the trend leads to problems, which affect the entire schooling system. Most respondents are aware of the imbalances and are not content with them but do not commit in bringing about change.

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CHAPTER ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Overview of the Study

According to my experience and observation as an educator, males dominate the school governance in most High Schools of Kwa-Zulu/Natal. Nzimande's comment attests to this,

A look at the number of women in school administration in the schools administered by the Department of Education and Culture, like in other parts of the world, uncovers consistent male dominance in all positions except in lower primary. (Nzimande 1994:27)

The above statement draws attention to the fact that the under-representation of women in positions of senior management within educational institutions continues to be a matter of concern, particularly as women largely dominate the teaching profession. Women have been and, to a certain extent, still area part of the minority groups in male dominated positions, with special reference to the school governance structures.

Available literature on school administration reveals that there are gender imbalances in the school governance and provides statistics to substantiate the claim. Shindler in Wolpe et al. (1997:198) in a study conducted in Cape Town in 1996 to reveal the figures regarding the rank of educators found that women are situated in lower ranks of the teaching profession while men occupy higher positions. The study provides revealing statistics that while men make up 36% of all teachers in South Africa; they held 58% of principal posts, 69% of Deputy

Principalship and 50% of Head of Department posts. Such a trend is portrayed in other countries as well. Margaret B. Sutherland (1981) reflecting on women in employment, states that the pattern of women occupation is remarkably constant from country to country. In the statistics the percentages of women in the administrative and managerial category were almost uniform, Sweden 10.6%, Belgium 10.3%, France 10.9%. The figure of nearly 90% is allocated to men. The statistics of this study though conducted in the 1970s is not far removed from the contemporary position of women in the Umbumbulu¹ area where the research was conducted.

Research was conducted in two Umbumbulu High Schools, Sibusisiwe and Hamilton Makhanya, in the Durban South Region, Kwazulu Natal, South Africa. Umbumbulu is a rural area situated about 60 kilometres away from Durban. I practice as a teacher in an acting H.O.D. position in one of the schools under investigation. Prior to conducting the study I had numerous discussions with women teachers of Umbumbulu and found that most women experience gender discrimination in the workplace, and in particular with regard to accessing managerial positions. As a woman and an 'insider' at Umbumbulu I could relate with concerns raised by female teachers. Such informal discussions led to an investigation and ultimately this MA dissertation. As a point of immediate reference, the management team in my school² consists of four males and two females. I have also observed this imbalance in my school. At school management team meetings of the Umbumbulu district men are in the majority. Also observed and confirmed by other female teachers is that, at the meetings recommendations put forward by men are often taken as resolutions. Women in management positions have also expressed this indicating that they are perceived inferior in their positions. The intended research hopes to name, analyse and report on the identified

¹ There are strong indications that the status quo is not confined to the Umbumbulu area. The fact that a similar trend applies throughout the country is evident in the study reported in Wolpe et al. (1997).

² Sibusisiwe High School – one of the two schools studied.

problems and perceptions of gender discrimination in the school governance of the Umbumbulu area.

The rationale for this research is also linked to the fact that the democratic government Act 108 of 1996 ensures equality for all South Africans, Morrison C.J. (2002:24). In his message Prof. SEM Bhengu, ex-National Minister of Education stated that the South African schools' Act no. 84 of 1996 provides for a uniform system for the organisation, governance and funding of schools, thus bringing to an end the past system based on racial, gender inequality and segregation. Ansuya Maharaj, (1999:55) reporting on the status of women under the rubric of the Commission on Gender Equality accounts that the National Department of Education in South Africa has established a Directorate for Gender Equity. This was based on the recommendations of the Gender and Education Task Team report (GETT) to mainstream gender equity in all its aspect of work in the education system. It would work with Gender Equity Units in Provincial Departments, the office on the Status of Women, the Commission for Gender Equality (CGE) and other stakeholders, Agenda, 41 (199:55). One of their roles was to propose affirmative action strategies for increasing the representation of women in professional leadership and management positions, and for increasing the influence and recognition of women teachers. In an effort to check on current practices and contemporary perceptions the research was conducted in two Umbumbulu high schools. The intention of the study was to further investigate if the Department of Education does consider this issue of gender equity especially in the school governance and if so, how is the issue handled.

Preliminary research was done at the Education Management Information Systems (EMIS) office. Statistics solicited from the office confirm my hypothesis. The EMIS

office statistics confirm gender imbalances and female teachers' concerns. The total number of the Durban South teachers is 3680. Of this number 1722 are males and 1958 are females. It is reported that in the Durban South Region there are 134 male principals but only 31 female principals. The lower rank deputy principal-ship position does not reflect well either, there are 116 males and 42 females. It was my conviction that such a disparity needs to be researched, reported on and challenged and therefore conducted this study. The Umbumbulu study's revelation is of great concern as the male gender is given preference in management positions. This trend is ironic for the community as it is a known fact that women have played a significant role in building the community. Interestingly one of the schools that was researched was founded and built by a woman, Sibusisiwe Makhanya, and in turn named after her. The fact that Sibusisiwe Makhanya's contribution as a woman and community builder was phenomenal is not taken into account, and in turn used as an example to afford contemporary women teachers' management opportunities.

The well attested under representation of women in senior posts is examined and various reasons and underlying factors for this discrepancy are explored in the dissertation. Empirical research³ is employed to solicit opinions and beliefs of community and school members. In the dissertation I subscribe to the fact that it is low value that is placed on women and failure to acknowledge their skills emanates from the patriarchal beliefs and practices of our societies that sustains the status quo. Various scholars have pointed out the fact that in most patriarchal societies women are not seen well equipped for academic professions and leadership positions. In these societies women are regarded as child bearers, nurturers and housewives,

³ This is detailed in the methodological approach section.

whose duties when placed in a school environment are only suitable for teaching little children. The dissertation interrogates this assertion and also looks at other internal factors considered to be hindrances in women advancement such as displaying too much emotions⁴ and reluctance to compete as expressed by my respondents. I argue that these are contributory factors to gender imbalance in the school governance.

We cannot accept the notion that some women accept that men are superior and decide not to compete with them. This cannot be concluded as 'women's weakness, lack of confidence and inferiority complex, but needs to be understood in the context of community beliefs and cultural stereotypes. The dissertation therefore sets out to explore these discourses, question them and present analysis of data collected from respondents. Reflecting on gender imbalances Pahleney (1991:121) states,

What is problematic is that many women who choose to become teachers have been socialized into accepting their gendered roles in society as natural. In adopting such an essentialist view of gender differences, they not only accept the status quo between men and women, but as educators involved in the socialization of the next generation, ideologically reproduce it.

Pahleney's statement explains why some women succumb to decisions and situations that are not beneficial to them. The way women were brought up makes them conform to the situation. It is equally necessary to point out that despite the gender imbalances in the schools and beliefs held by some respondents, there are successful women managers. Respondents do make references to this and provide reasons for their assertions.

⁴ A few respondents allude that it is women themselves who play a significant role in undermining the female-folk as they 'allow' discriminatory practices and internalise low regard for women.

There are a number of problems that are reported in the school governance due to gender imbalances. Respondents made numerous indications to the fact that women's treatment in school governance is repressive. Repressive attitudes and practices limit entry of women into managerial positions and in turn female school children are not provided with role models.

The study therefore intends:

- To identify the problem of gender imbalances and resultant impacts in the school system and general regard for women
- To investigate reasons for gender imbalances in the school governance
- To expose the gender gap in the school governance
- To report on the perceptions, attitudes, policies and practices, that are in place with regard to school governance with an intention of investigating how gender sensitive they are.

Given that the two schools were named after prominent figures of the Umbumbulu community I provide a brief background of Sibusisiwe and Hamilton and want to draw the reader's interest to Sibusisiwe, a woman in the face of failing to recognise women's worth and leadership capabilities. Although the two individuals are long dead and were not the focus of this investigation, respondents often made reference to them and their significant contribution to the community. The two individuals were born and bred at Umbumbulu, a 'homeland' of the Makhanya clan. Sibusisiwe was born in 1894 to Jeremiah Nxele Makhanya and Mamuphi Maphumulo. She grew up like all other children, immersed in Zulu traditions but had progressive Christian parents. Unlike most girls born during her time she attended school and later qualified as a teacher at

Adams College. In 1927 she got a bursary to study overseas for a social work course. When she got back she dedicated herself to developing her community by establishing rural education programmes. Intervention programmes and knowledge learnt abroad were adapted to the community needs. She established the first secondary school in the area, Sibusisiwe High School. Her community development intervention programmes further led to establishment of the Lucy Johnson Community Hall, community clinic, library and a shop called Ekumamathekeni. She never got married and did not have any children. She died in 1970.

Hamilton Babani was the son of MaBloose and Mfako Douglas Makhanya who was a teacher, and minister. Like Sibusisiwe, he also got a teaching qualification at Adams College. Hamilton was dedicated to the development of the Umbumbulu community. His family was enlightened and the illiterate community members would come to this family with their letters to be read for them. What is important about Hamilton is that he was the first Black person to be promoted to schools inspector-ship at Umbumbulu. He married Nokuphana Khumalo who was a nurse.

This study has shown the existence of gender imbalances in the school governance at Umbumbulu area, with a special reference to two high schools, Sibusisiwe and Hamilton Makhanya. The study is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is an introduction where I give the outline of the research and also state the reasons that had prompted me to do this study. In chapter 2 the literature relevant to the study is reviewed in order to hear what other researchers say about gender imbalances. Chapter 3 is research methodology; it states how data was collected. Chapter 4 is the

analysis of the research findings. The findings of the research are in Chapter 5, recommendations and conclusions are located in Chapter 6.

The study has been conducted in two Umbumbulu High Schools but the statistics and the literature studied had indicated that there are gender imbalances at Umbumbulu circuit and in the wider Durban South region. It has also been noted through literature that these gender imbalances are universal, they do occur in other countries and provinces as well. I have used in depth interviews to obtain the information from the respondents. In doing the task I was guided by liberal feminist theory of gender equality, which emphasises individual fulfilment and attainment of freedom from structures of highly defined sex roles.

1.2. Theoretical framework for the study

Although this study is located within the discipline of Gender Studies it interrogates practices and beliefs held by people who have a direct connection with the education sector and in particular the school governance structures and practices. In an attempt to interrogate practices and beliefs I employ an analytical approach of gender inequality postulated by liberal feminist thinkers. I have chosen this framework in the belief that it is a framework that essentially captures the profundity, occurrences and interconnectedness of the different aspects of women's subordination. The liberal feminist theory is an approach that is grounded in feminist movement endeavours, which emphasize that women be given opportunities to make meaningful sense of their lives and experiences the way they understand and practice them. At the core essence of this endeavour is a contention that women ought to be treated and given equal opportunities as those afforded to men. I have chosen the liberal theoretical

approach, as it is my assertion that it does not only provide my study with a vivid analysis of gender and power relations, but gives insight to the analysis of gender imbalances in a school governance context.

The liberal feminist theory is essential for this study because it stresses equal human rights and argues against woman's subordination.

1.2.1 Liberal feminist theory

The framework of this study has drawn from the works of liberal feminist theorists of different eras. Notable proponents and works of liberal feminist theory that have influenced this study are Wollstonecraft's 1789-97 publications; John Stuart Mill's 1869 essay and a 1983 work appearing in Bryson's "feminist debates"; Friedan's 1963 publication "The Feminist Mystique"; Jaggar's "Feminist politics and human nature" (1983) and Mathews' "Just a housewife" (1987). The discourse propagated in these works is relevant to this study. These scholars have had open struggles for gender equality. They believe that the elimination of differences between men and women is the first step towards equality. These scholars argue that as men and women have the same human qualities, they should therefore have equal rights and provided equal opportunities. Although liberal feminists sometimes differ in opinions, they are unison on the fact that the single most important goal of women's liberation is sexual equality, or as it is sometimes termed, gender justice. The study fully subscribes to arguments presented by these liberal feminists because it holds that men and women should be treated equally, and be given equal opportunities in all workplace environments including the education sector. It is from this point that gender imbalances in the school governance are approached in the study. In the research methodological

approach and analysis of data, I employ liberal feminist principles to interrogate gender discrimination and imbalances and question whether there is gender justice in school governance.

Liberal feminists believe that all humans will benefit from living in a civilized society that is regulated along the principle of fair justice. To achieve this ideal they maintain that the whole society needs to draw from each other's talents and abilities. Reiterating this liberal feminist affirmation, Mill and Taylor are resolute in their expressions that if we are to achieve sexual equality, or gender justice, then society must not only give women the same education as men, but rather society must also provide women with the same civil liberties⁵ and economic opportunities that men enjoy. Tong (1989: 20). This argument is in line with the liberal feminist standpoint in relation to gender equality. It states that individuals need to be free and equal because they are human beings and that social reforms aimed at giving women a more equal place in society could liberate them. What Wollstonecraft⁶ wanted in her writings and protests was for women to attain 'personhood', that is recognition that they are human beings worthy of credibility and respect. In her writings she argues that a woman should not be treated in ways that do not accord her status as a full human person.

Liberal feminism received its classic formulation in Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" and in John Mill's "The Subjection of Women", (Tong, 1982:7). These writings are still used and referred quite often in contemporary women and feminist movements. Employing the classical writings, the women movements have achieved tremendous success in lobbying for women's rights. This

⁵ In the context of my study I interpret this to mean ensuring that opportunities, including school leadership, are open to all genders without any prejudice or reservation.

⁶ She is regarded as a significant leading figure in the development of liberal feminism.

dissertation, on a small scale makes a contribution along these lines and attempts to challenge inherent prejudiced beliefs that 'ensure' that female teachers of Umbumbulu are either at low ranks of management or in acting management positions for an indefinite period. Such practice is stereotypical and continue to persist because traditional societies hold the false belief that women are, by nature less mentally and physically capable than men, and in turn largely exclude women from the academy, the forum, and the workplace.

Exclusions of this kind are not only in the education sector or the workplace but in various other spheres as well and are based on cultural beliefs. The held cultural beliefs deliberately exclude women from public opportunities e.g. leadership positions, certain kinds of professions as well as making contributions in decision making processes. The exclusion in turn renders women unable to demonstrate their capabilities and the whole community loses out in the process. This is a discriminatory state of affairs that does not benefit either of the genders, referred to and criticised by Ira Horowitz in his article "Sexism hurts us all".

Liberal feminists' stance in relation to sexist attitudes, which seem to undermine the capabilities of women, is that such structures cannot continue to block women's potentials. Liberal feminists therefore insist that society should give women the same education and occupational opportunities that men have. The movement holds that it is only once opportunities are open for all genders on equal grounds will women be able to achieve all that they can and want to achieve. The approach to the understanding of the relation and attitudes of men and women in society and how to address gender inequalities are important elements of liberal feminists' ideologies adopted in this study.

An approach from this angle⁷ may help to highlight the importance of equality and may ease women's problems such as inferiority complex in management positions and may assist to provide insight to understand and interrogate the gender gap in the school governance. It is hoped that such an approach and attitude would afford everybody respect and protection irrespective of individual differences or different genders. This study approached the community studied and analysed data in line with liberal feminists' insistence, that is, that achieving gender justice would require that people 'play the rules of the game fair and that none of the runners of the race' should be, for society's good disadvantaged

⁷ That is, being adopted or at least considered by education authorities and local stakeholders who have decision powers in appointing and electing school governing councils.

Definition of terms and abbreviations

CGE	Commission for Gender Equality
EMIS OFFICE	Education Management Information Systems
GETT	Gender and Education Task Team
H.O.D.	Head of Department who acts as a link between teachers and learners
KZN	Kwa- Zulu / Natal
PI	Post Level One educator
PRINCIPAL	Head of the school
RCL	Representative Counsel of Learners
SGB	School Governing Body
SMT	School Management Team composed of teachers in management positions who work together to manage the school

HS A school that provides education from Grade 8 to Grade 12, formerly Standard 6 to Standard 10

VICE-PRINCIPAL Also known as the Deputy Principal, who is second in seniority to the Principal, also helps the Principal in controlling the school

CHAPTER TWO

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this section there is discussion and interrogation of various authors' works. The sources are examined in relation to the topic of the study and theories that the dissertation subscribes to. An effort is also made to include voices of individuals who participated in the study in relation to what literature study propagates. The inclusion is I believe significant, as I maintain that, respondents who provide data for the empirical qualitative study form part of the 'sources', if not a greater part that should be given equal status as afforded formal literature. The central part of the dissertation's discourse is a reflection and analysis of respondents' views. This chapter as a basis for later discussions provide statistics reflecting the gender status quo in schools governance structures. This section does not purport to be an analysis of data however; some data analysis is initiated in this chapter.

Women are at a disadvantage compared to men in many aspects of their lives, they do not enjoy the same privileges that men do. They are deeply affected by gender discrimination and an instance of that is seen whereby a person is not given the opportunity to display her full potential in the economic, social, religious and cultural life of her community solely because she is a women. According to Sherry Ortner in Moore (1998:15) biological differences between men and women take on significance only within culturally defined value systems. She locates the problem of sexual asymmetry at the level of cultural ideologies and symbols. She asks "What could be common to every culture such that all cultures place a lower value on

women?" (1998:16). Her response is that women everywhere must be associated with something, which every culture devalues. What Ortner argues about, proves to be sentiments shared by Lott (1987: 241) as well. In an attempt to understand why women are devalued, he points out "our culture defines womanhood differently from manhood". The former is equated with femininity and the typical woman is expected to behave in ways defined as feminine. The extent at which women act in feminine ways depends upon the success with which institutionalized sanctions and differential experiences have influenced them in the direction of fulfilling their culture's expectations. What both authors state is evidence that the subordination of women is not only universal, but in most cultures there is evidence of conscious control of women by men. The outlook of these scholars resonates in the South African education sector.

When it comes to education one finds that the question of gender and leadership in school administration is a thorny issue that does not depict gender demographics of the society. Gender policies and leadership in school administration is one question that has long challenged the minds of education researchers. Previous studies, lived experiences and research done in the field have highlighted the gender imbalances and in turn have initiated studies like this one to be conducted. Liberal feminists, like Friedan et al. in Tong (1989:32), argue that patriarchal society thinks women are ideally suited only for certain occupations for example teaching, nursing and clerking, and are largely incapable of other task for example ruling, preaching and investing. Findings of this study resonate assertions relayed by this feminist group. Such societal thought abound both internationally and in South Africa.

However, my contention lies in the emphasis that, yes indeed the teaching profession is a 'women's profession', but not its leadership positions. The latter is traditionally seen as not suitable for women but for men. With regard to viewing the profession as 'women's' but its leadership structures as a man's reserve, Cubillo and Brown (2003: 279) quote Newman who describes this association as a "caring profession", as it offers women "quasi-familial roles and identities around a core of male hierarchies and privileges". Several writers note that there are more women than men in the teaching profession. However, the statistics accessed for the purposes of this study reveals that despite the large number of women in the profession, they are greatly under-represented in positions of management.

Edigheji (1998:2) noting the gender imbalances emphasizes, "While they (women) constitute the majority of teaching corps, they are not adequately represented in the top echelons of the teaching hierarchy nor do they all enjoy tenure". Nzimande (1994:IV) also notes the imbalances and argues that data obtained from 1987 statistical returns from the KZN government schools under Natal Education Department reveal that the number of women in educational administration is disproportionately lower than the number of men in congruent positions. Although this report is a mid-1980's account, the trend reported then still holds true of the contemporary KZN education sector and in particular the Umbumbulu area. Many feminists¹ have observed and have documented the gender inequality in varied genres of literature. Among the literature are the works of, Nzimande (1994) referred to above; Edigheji (1998); Pahliney (1991); Mugomba and Nyaggah (1980); Sutherland (1981); Moore (1998); and Wolpe et al (1997). The next section continues

¹ I refer to these authors as feminists due to their works, which unequivocally seem to subscribe to feminist values and principles.

to reflect and review this and other literature that reports on how authors account for and detail gender imbalances of the school governance.

2.2 Gender inequality and discrimination in educational leadership: inspecting school administration

Discrimination against women violates the principle of equality of rights and respect for human rights and dignity. It is an obstacle to the participation of women, on equal terms with men. Equal terms need to be sought in the political, social, economic and cultural life in which women participate. Inequality is societal loss as it hampers the growth and prosperity of the family and society, thereby crippling full development and potentialities of women Byrne, (1978: 246). Such a state of affairs denies women to service their communities and country well. The study holds that an act or 'subtle culture' of this kind that sets out to discriminate against women because of their sex, prevents them from demonstrating their capabilities. This is a violation of their rights. According to Arnot and Weiler (1993:79), sex discrimination consists of less favourable treatment of a member of one sex. This would be relayed to a person of the other sex whose relevant circumstances are the same or not materially different from the one discriminating.

I fully concur with Arnot and Weiler's argument and view discrimination as a state wherein a person is treated less favourably than others because of characteristics irrelevant to his or her capacity to do a job. Discrimination could be based on such characteristics as gender, race, disability etc. In most high schools, especially at Umbumbulu in the Durban South Region, when there are senior posts, promotion committees favour men and disadvantage women basing such an attitude on factors

that have nothing to do with practical leadership capabilities. Had this not been the case we would not have an outcry from teachers and receive evidence from statistics. Statistics accessed reflect that the Umbumbulu region has about 90% men who occupy senior positions as opposed to just a little above 10% women in senior positions. Regarding the case at hand, essentially this means that status or position is accorded on the basis of physical anatomy rather than skills and leadership capacity that a person has.

This in turn leads to a practicality wherein women are poorly represented in the upper echelons of management and administration. They largely occupy lower ranks. Traditional stereotypes and inequality is also evident in the manner in which management duties are distributed. Women in middle management roles in education are often assigned pastoral duties, that is, they are cast in "the role of the senior mistress",² while the men are given responsibility for areas such as curriculum and finance. This kind of treatment and under-representation of women in education leadership positions has prompted many feminists and researchers to try to identify reasons for this uneven distribution. Harry Wolcott in Jane Strachon (1973: 71) argues that women are seriously under-represented in positions of senior education leadership and further states that it is likely that it is usually a man who is found in the principal's office. Wolpe et al (1997) agrees with Wolcott when they say that education administration in South Africa has traditionally been and remains male dominated, with women positioned in middle rather than senior management positions. Most of the participants I interviewed and had discussions which affirm that it is mostly men that are in the senior decision making bodies and women are mainly

² See detailed discussion in chapter four.

in middle or in bottom rank management positions. However, women are in turn expected to carry out most duties. It is ironic that most of management gets to be done by women who are viewed as not suitable for the actual positions and benefits from holding such high positions. Some scholars refer to such trends as a 'cultural behaviour'.

Ganesan and Gresse (2002: 21) state that leadership is a type of behaviour. On the one hand it can be argued that the leadership styles of men differ considerably because of gender differences and on the other hand, one can hold the view that leadership behaviour is not related to gender. It is true that leadership behaviour is not related to gender, it has nothing to do with genital or sexual organs. It is the 'declaration' of this dissertation that women should not be discriminated on the basis of their sex, but they must be given a chance to hold senior positions and opportunities to prove their worth. If you qualify, you deserve a position whether you are a female or a male. "If you are made of the right stuff, your way [should be] open" (Maher in Knott and Hugo Agenda 1999:4). A report on the proposals for the restructuring of education and training in Kwa-Zulu Natal published by KZN Department of Education in (1994) emphasizes the importance of ensuring that women and rural people are adequately represented in governance structures of all levels. One of the reasons why this Umbumbulu study was conducted was to investigate Umbumbulu schools' reaction to what is emphasized by the report.

An earlier discussion on what is expected of school culture was a report on Governance of higher education (1982). It states that higher education must not retreat from the goal of 'equal opportunity'; that higher institutions should affirm an

absolutely unwavering commitment to equality for all. The report further develops its affirmations and note that protecting individual's rights has to be a public accountability obligation that must be met by every higher learning institution. My opinion and the aim of this study is that what is noted by the 1982 report should also apply in high schools as well, and preferably be enforced.

Calls made by some scholars refer to extending 'equality for all' beyond just having gender equality in management structures but contend that strategies used in recruiting prospective managers needs investigation. Mc Pherson (1999) argues that managing recruitment and selection must be carried out within the framework of the relevant legislation, which includes legislation that guard against discrimination. He further states that many countries, such as South Africa, have similar legislation, like the employment of Educators Act (No. 76 of 1998) that should be used as instruments of ensuring equality. These acts protect the right of educators in that they forbid discrimination on the basis of gender, ethnicity, religion and political association. I am in full support of what Mc Pherson says. School governance personnel should consider the issue of gender inequality and work on eliminating discriminatory practices in line with legislation, as inequality is forbidden by the Employment of Educators Act. A variety of other equality instruments exist. It is not only the educational act that promotes equality but the SA constitution as well. The bill of rights, promulgated in 1996 clearly elucidates freedom and rights of an individual in society and in particular stresses that gender discrimination is against human rights and therefore a crime.

Connell et al. (1982:55) focus on the way schools reproduce the subordination of women, "Women have increasingly moved into education and profession but it hasn't all been up the tree, management has remained hardly closed to them". I have personally observed what Connell et al. say in the Durban South Region. Statistics that attest the inequality also speaks volumes. In the Durban South Region there are 1195 males that are in post level 1 positions and 1607 females in the same positions. What is amazing is that there are 134 male principals but only 31 female principals. The immediate management rank and deputy principalship does not reflect well either. There are 116 men and 42 females in deputy principal positions. As an educator and a budding feminist researcher, this statistic is another reason that prompts me to do this research in particular to investigate underlying reasons behind the statistics and how other people (both ordinary and professional) view the imbalance.

What I have also noticed is that this gender inequality and discrimination in educational leadership seems to be a universal predicament as it is also found in other provinces of the country and other countries as well. For instance, in the Gauteng Education Department, gender profile is similar to that of other provincial education departments in that women dominate the profession but not its leadership. The 1997 statistics show that the majority of teachers (87%) were women, but they comprised only (9%) of heads of department, (2%) of deputy principals and (2%) of principals cited in Chisholm and Napo (1999:34).

Similar patterns are evident in other countries. In Australia, for example, 45,3% of all teachers in secondary schools in New South Wales in 1979 were women, yet only

11,8 % of the principals' posts were held by women, Morland in Nzimande (1994:24). The inequalities are not only statistically bound but are found in kinds of responsibilities given. To emphasise gender discrimination in educational administration at school, Shepherd (1992:36) mentions that women in promotion posts in England (as in South Africa) in co-educational high schools such as deputy principals, usually hold different areas of responsibility from their male colleagues. They are often in charge of pastoral responsibilities, such as counselling, checking uniforms and school neatness, catering for school functions and organizing all social occasions while men typically hold the responsibility for the administrative and curricular activities. In a study of factors affecting the utilization of women professional and managerial, roles, Shafer (1974) cited in Nzimande (1994:23) noted that in East Germany 70% of the teachers were women while only 25% of the principals were women. These gender imbalances and discrimination have demotivated some of the women and they have preferred not to be in senior positions. The following are some of the reasons why they are reluctant to be in these positions.

2.3 Women who are not keen to be in senior positions

Women do not wish to identify themselves with management, and therefore do not apply for promotion. (Popplestone in Grimwood & Popplestone (1993:49).

Women are sometimes not interested in management positions due to personal or internal reasons.³Sometimes they are discouraged by gender discrimination that is exercised in these positions or gender roles they are expected to perform. Some women do not apply for senior posts because of the general belief that they cannot

³ This is an intrinsic reason further explained in chapter four of this dissertation.

cope because management duties are demanding and stressful. Grimwood and Popplestone (1993:102) state that some women are reluctant to apply for senior positions because of stress; they say being ignored, undermined, put down and devalued is stressful. There is lot of discriminatory practices in what these authors point out, which can be an obstacle to the advancement to managerial positions. We cannot deny the fact that management positions are stressful and demanding but the belief that women cannot cope undermines their ability or capability. The question posed by this work is: why can they not cope if men do? The other challenge that efforts of ensuring gender equality face, is the manner in which women perceive themselves, or rather are made by society to perceive themselves, and their gender roles.

Shakeshaft cited in Nzimande (1994:44) remarks:

Married women do not apply for promotion, not because they have less drive than men or single women but because they are being realistic, having found that juggling home responsibilities and administrative tasks decreases their feelings of the worth of each role. Moreover, even in families in which the mother is working, the major part of the housework is done by the wife. The very problem women face at work and in combining the two roles; help maintain a situation in which most women make marriage and family their main or exclusive role.

Women then decide not to apply for senior positions, which perceive to take most of their time that they might be spending with their families because in their cultures, they grew up knowing that "a place of a woman is in the kitchen" and that all household chores are their duty. This is attested to by one of the respondents, Mrs. N.Z. Ngcobo. When asked why some women choose not to apply she stated that,

As a female sometimes you do not want to expose yourself to senior positions because they can take all your time, they can require you to work even after hours while your husband and children are waiting for you at home. You know, as women we give that pastoral care to our families and to our learners so we can't cope because if you are a leader you must be available all the time.

We can therefore assume that marriage and childbearing are an essential part of one's identity as a woman and this is emphasized by Fransella & Frost cited in Nzimande (1994:44) when they say that:

The assumption that a woman's primary identity is that of a "homemaker or housewife" assigns to her not one, but three roles: wife, house worker and childcare. A common belief is that their roles are naturally and inextricably linked, and that they are naturally performed by one person.

Negative attitudes towards women also prevent them to be in leadership positions. In many studies, the reasons given for not promoting women have only to do with the fact that 'they are females' and it should be men that are always dominant. "It is male dominance that keeps women from advancing into positions of power and prestige", Shakeshaft in Nzimande (1994:37). Since women are depending on men and have grown up expecting and assuming that they will be taken care of, they end up shunning independence and enjoy being led instead of being leaders themselves. Lott (1987:244) argues:

A woman may fear independence because she has had little experience in practicing it or because she has learned that women should be protected, defended and guided by men. Such an assumption is still part of the dominant gender, ideology of our culture.

Culture makes women reject hierarchies because it favours men and also makes them feel that it is not their place to be in authority.

Most people enter teaching to teach children and not to sit at a desk writing letters and performing monotonous administrative duties, losing contact with the pupils. However, this is what promotion up the ladder, in teaching means: the higher one progresses, the further away one moves from the classroom teaching" (Shepherd, 1992:45).

This indicates that some women like to remain in the classroom rather than being in the senior management positions, as this is uninteresting. To them promotion posts have too much paper work and no teaching. Their reluctance to be leaders lies in their alternate view of what constitutes a career rather than in their lack of aspiration. Having heard of the obstacles that prevent women to apply for senior positions, I will report on women who are in management positions and see how they cope, and also report on their experiences.

2.4 Women in management positions

More women managers are subjected to a greater number of work related pressures than are their male counterparts, for example, being the taken women, lack of role models, feelings of isolation, strains of coping with prejudice, and discrimination. However successful women managers consider that their ability to handle stress is one factor in their success. (Davidson & Cooper, in Grimwood & Popplestone, 1993:102).

This argument makes you want to ask a question, how do women manage and cope under such situations? To answer this question and some reiterate arguments put forward by feminist scholars discussed above, one female respondent, a learner Makhosi Sibisi who is the president of RCL says:

You must be strong and broadminded because sometimes there are difficult situations where you have to stand as a leader and act or take discretion to show that you really deserve to lead. But what is important is your approach, you need to be tactful. With me it's easy to work with boys who are RCL members because I don't dictate or do things on my own; we just sit, discuss and then take a decision.

Another respondent Mrs. R.K. Malaza an SMT member who is an H.O.D. had this to say:

To tell you the truth it is very difficult and frustrating sometimes because there are situations where you need to fight for your department when there is something that affects it directly which needs attention. They exercise this manhood and they impose on you something that you don't like, sometimes you feel like standing up and shout but you can't because

you are professional and as a leader you need to be patient and resolve the problem wisely, you need to fight for your position as a woman skilfully.

Mr. M.A. Manzini's experience and observations as an educator at Sibusisiwe High school is that:

Women are very good; they have the ability of seeing things. They are very steady and not boastful; they network and ask for help if they have a problem. Unlike males who want everybody to say yes if they suggest something because in their homes they are not opposed as the heads of the families. Women hold their positions smoothly, peacefully and successfully. There are very few women if ever any who are failures

Patience, success, courage, determination, persistence and being democratic is what respondent's stories tell about women managers and this leaves one puzzled as to why are they the minority sex in the senior positions, why are they discriminated and hindered to apply for educational leadership. This is witnessed by Stone in Lott (1987:12) when he argues that:

The written literature and oral traditions of large numbers of cultures, spanning the continents, reveal that women were once viewed as deities and heroines, "as strong, determined, wise, courageous, powerful, adventurous and able to surmount difficult obstacles to achieve set goals".

If women have such qualities, they need to be placed in leadership positions. They need to be appointed in numbers in order to bring their skills and talents into the field in order to boost their male counterparts and uplift standards of management. In this regard Grimwood and Popplestone (1993:4) state that:

If women continue not to be appointed to management posts, standards of management may decline even further, despite the fact that there is a vast-reserve of untapped talents. While men tend to be promoted to levels beyond their counterparts, women are held in posts below their level of competence. This has become known as the "Paula principle". Most people in the personal social services are familiar with situations where

women are working effectively but are being managed by men who are working ineffectively.

This is evidence that there are situations where women in the middle or lower ranks manage better than men who are their superiors. This stresses that leadership has nothing to do with genital or sexual organs but it needs determination, qualities and skills. Women must apply for the positions and prove themselves capable and suitable for the job once appointed. One woman states:

When I was chosen, the man didn't think I was capable of doing it. They waited to see if I would fall. This made me determined to prove them wrong. This was an incentive for me to prove not just to them, to myself that I could do it that it does not matter what other people think, it's what I can do. Negative things don't stop me, I just ride over them. (Cubillo and Brown, 2003:285)

The literature I have reviewed concentrate mostly on the discrimination of educators, leaving out other structures of the school governance such as the SGB and the RCL, something, which this study aims to cover.

CHAPTER THREE

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

A research method is a technique of gathering evidence. One could reasonably argue that all evidence gathering techniques fall into one of the following three categories: listening or interrogating informants, observing behaviour, or examining historical traces and records (Harding 1987). Harding further states that a methodology is a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed. Methods, processes and approaches used in the fieldwork when collecting data from the respondents on gender imbalances in the school governance of the two Umbumbulu High Schools will be discussed in this chapter.

3.1 Research design

Qualitative methods and approaches were used to investigate the extent and perceptions held of the gender imbalances in the management structures of two Umbumbulu High Schools. This method was chosen as it was considered appropriate because research methodology scholars are in agreement that it provides the researcher with detailed and insightful information. The qualitative method is favoured when exploring people's wider perceptions or everyday behaviour as it captures nuances and details that would not have been captured had a method like the quantitative approach been used. The study used the

qualitative descriptive and analysis tools in an attempt to explain and interrogate the gender imbalances and underlying attitudes that 'feed' into the imbalances and discriminatory behaviour. As it is used for explanation, identification and description it was considered suitable for this kind of research since it provides in-depth material.

In capturing and analysing data I employed conversation and interactive analysis principles that is beginning to analyse data with a respondent as he/she is interviewed to ensure that what is relayed is well understood, and later on my own cross-check, confirm and conclude analysis that begun in the field. Principles of conversation and interactive analysis were thus adapted after I encountered difficulties with a planned research approach.¹ The research methodology thus adopted was the use of observations, interviews and textual as well as conversations analyses. Research scholars encourage using such a diverse group of research approaches, as it is deemed an ideal tool of pursuing diverse theoretical ends, Miller & Dingwall (1997). These authors also state that the quality of qualitative method lies in the power of its language to display a picture of the world in which we discover something about our common humanity and ourselves. In conducting this as suggested by these scholars, language usage² was equally critically observed. Although I do not analyse language in the dissertation but it was 'critically' observed and considered a crucial context for a

¹ In the planning stages I intended to interview respondents, take away data gathered and analyse it on my own. This method proved problematic as often a number of questions I could not answer on my own cropped up. Research realities and challenges compelled that I change initially planned methodologies.

better understanding of statements that were given by the respondents. The choice of words they settled for in responding to questions posed and tone used in expressing those words provided data analysis process with a fertile background for deep and better understanding of people's responses.

As I am a Gender Studies student the study was further guided by the principles of feminist research. According to Bowles and Klein (1983), feminist methodology and approaches are different from "patriarchal scholarship" or male-dominated research as it is closely related to the development of feminist theory, thinking and practice. This thinking and practice imply that respondents' are treated with respect and their stories analysed cautiously in a manner that is considerate of the respondents' realities, wishes, circumstances as well as preferences. It is therefore the aim of this dissertation to present respondents 'voices' and interpretations as they were presented to the researcher. To ensure that I was in line with feminist principles and approaches of conducting research I referred to the chosen respondents more than once in order to verify analysis given and my final analysis as a research analyst.³ Research feminist scholars provide numerous cues regarding gradations of feminist research approaches.

² I refer here to both the verbal and non-verbal formats – the tone that the respondent used as well as accompanying gestures.

³ This practice was to keep in check that the respondents' interpretation were not clouded and ultimately diminished by my own interpretation.

Dubois (1983) argues that feminist research cannot be value free⁴ and also raises the issue of subjectivity and objectivity.⁵ Feminist research must therefore be grounded in female culture and experience a philosophy that I strived hard to keep check of in this dissertation. Equally important is a need for a researcher to concede the existence of researcher-respondent relationship. Stanley and Wise (1983) argue that feminist methods must take on board the necessity to challenge the power relationship between a researcher and the researched. I must point out that as a researcher I was aware that I had an upper-hand with my respondents having studied feminist research methods I made all attempts to acknowledge the power relations and in turn made conscious plans to minimise power relations that could have impacted negatively on the respondents, data collected and ultimately the analysis. As a trained fieldworker, I saw, heard and wrote up as a result of research experience in a particular setting, and am, in this dissertation presenting data as communicated by the respondents to me staying as close as possible to what they said and employ both feminist principles and qualitative methodological principles to achieve this ideal.

In addition to arguments presented above I subscribe and demonstrate in this dissertation that feminist researchers emphasize the necessity for feminist

⁴ This means that a context in which activities are conducted needs to be considered in order to have a full understanding of events or people's beliefs (as is the case in this study).

⁵ The argument put forward and a stern reminder to feminist researchers is to avoid at all cost to treat and regard respondents as objects that 'accidentally happen' to form part of what you are 'interested in' (your research project).

research to be qualitative, reflective of women's experience, voice those experiences unequivocally and in an action-orientated manner.⁶

I hold that recommendations I suggest are based on extensive experience as I have worked more than ten years with women who join the public sphere and I am one of them.⁷ Feminist principles and approaches of self-reflexivity were employed and taken note of in confronting my 'insider' status. Self-reflexivity⁸ formed and still⁹ forms a vital part of this study. During these processes I equally recorded my emotions, feelings and reactions as well as that of the respondents. My subjectivity as a researcher could not be avoided as I am directly involved in the school governance and experiences the discrimination that I write about. I relate very well to the women respondents' articulated feelings and had sagacity that their responses were echoing my own feelings and experiences. Considering issues of reflexivity, this study acknowledges my knowledge, feelings and experiences but equally engage with respondents' stories as well as interpret data from a combination of these sources. I worked hard to practice what Sullivan in Magwaza (2003) urges researchers to do - to take issues of self-reflexivity with great caution,

It is important that we continue to be reflexive and subjective in our research in ways that cannot easily be dismissed as biased and anecdotal. Research needs to draw, as it must, on our experiences as

⁶ As I discuss and analyse data I make recommendations, suggestions or infer on what ought to be ideally done to confront challenges faced by the marginalized in school governance environments.

⁷ As an insider I am aware that it is difficult for me to distance myself from the situation that I have to face on a daily basis and in which I am one of the disadvantaged. This consciousness has helped me to conduct the research in as much an objective podium as possible – however I do maintain that 'no research can afford to be entirely objective'.

⁸ During the collection and interpretation of data.

⁹ In the writing-up of this dissertation.

individuals who live and grow in one part of the global city of language, while recognising that we cannot live as individuals in every suburb. (Sullivan, 2002: paragraph 28, <http://www.qualitative-research.net/fqs-texte/3-02/3-02sullivan-e.htm>)

3.3 Project area and selection of participants

Research was conducted in two Umbumbulu High Schools, namely Sibusisiwe and Hamilton Makhanya. Umbumbulu is a rural area, 60 km away from Durban, in KwaZulu Natal. In a rural area like Umbumbulu traditional practices that discriminate still exist which negatively affect women's physical and psychological health and deny them control over their own lives. Such challenges that women face extend to both the private and the public spheres. The conducted research makes direct reference to the public sphere,¹⁰ in which I am involved and subtle reference to the private sphere.

My capacity in the public sphere¹¹ has been that of acting H.O.D. for a number of years. In the course of my research I had the opportunity of meeting and interacting with some of the women who experience gender discrimination at their work place due to gender inequality in the school governance. In most schools as statistics show¹² in this dissertation, men are in more favourable conditions than women and this is evidenced by the fact that they outnumber women in management positions.

¹⁰ In this discussion I refer to the place of work as the public sphere.

¹¹ As a teacher and manager at the Sibusisiwe High school.

The status quo in the two schools researched prompted me to conduct this study. As indicated in the earlier discussion, qualitative research was used; in particular I employed in depth interviews¹³ to collect data. Participants consisted of five SGB members and six SMT members as well as two P1 educators from each school. The reason I included Post Level 1 educators is because they are not part of management teams and are considered to be neutral in their responses. In providing their responses, though I am an 'insider', I was convinced that respondents did not feel threatened to present their observations, perceptions and experiences of what goes on in school management structures. In listening to their responses I had a sense that they welcome the opportunity to have their voices heard and recorded. Woman than man generally felt this feeling more strongly.

Initially all five SGB members and six SMT members of each school were to be interviewed but I eventually interviewed four SGB and four SMT members from each school due to problems encountered during interviews, which will be discussed later in the dissertation. Paton (1990) states that qualitative inquiry that uses in-depth interview methods is not rigid about the number of participants to be included in the study but what matters is the purpose of the inquiry, the credibility and what can be done within available time and resources. In my initial plans I had also left out learners but during the interviews, I discovered that there were gaps that cropped up, which needed to be filled by learners. I therefore

¹² See chapter 4.

¹³ See 3.4 for further explanation.

included four learners (2 boys and 2 girls) after the data gathering process had long begun. These were two learners from each school including RCL members. In addition to the school based respondents I interviewed two members of the community to provide information on life histories of Sibusisiwe and Hamilton Makhanya. The life histories of these Makhanya clan members provide background to the schools as the schools were named after them. The total number of the participants that were interviewed for this research was twenty-six.

The twenty-six participants and the schools chosen for this research were contacted in advance. Permission was sought through personal and telephone calls. Times for interviews were arranged in accordance with respondents' preferences. Interviews took place at school and at any place of the respondents' own choice e.g. home, workplace, private place etc.

3.4 Data collection method

The survey interview is a conversation between interviewer and respondent with the purpose of eliciting certain information from the respondent. This in depth method is desirable in collecting qualitative data. Denzine, (in Paton, 1990), developing this argument states that an in depth interview method enables the researcher to understand the stance, position, feelings, experiences and worldview of others. In depth interviews are often used when a researcher does not know much about a population¹⁴ and wants to get preliminary ideas from the

¹⁴ The study employs this tool but to a limited extent as the area of study was well known to me. In-depth interviews were therefore used with members of the SGB that I had not met before, as they are not part of

participants. In circumstances where in depth interviews were used it was crucial to introduce myself, explain the aims of the project as a practising teacher in the area it was necessary to give reasons why I had to do the project detailing benefits for the community and the research field. Large amounts of time, approximately 30 minutes were spent on what we were going to talk about, why and also on words of assurance to the respondents that data collected would not jeopardise them in anyway and that their real names would not be used. On each visit, even on second visits I would again orient the respondents to the purpose of the study and gave them an overall sense of the importance of the study, and also reassurance. It was also necessary to take respondents through the possible length of the interviews explaining why they had to be long. After all the lengthy explanations I had to pause, and ask for their permission to restart the conversations. Reflecting on the research process and the length of time spent attempting to gain their trust, I realise that researching one's community has numerous challenges. Some participants would require that I 'rehearse' questions with them several times - to 'prepare them well' before the actual interview started. Beside this limitation I confronted other limitations. Limitations are further discussed in ensuing sections.¹⁵

the school teaching team. The second school studied, Hamilton High School is another site on which in-depth interviews were used. Although the school is in close proximity to my school (Sibusisiwe) it was clear during the initial interviews, before deciding on using in-depth interviews that-questions posed and the manner of posing them had to be different in order to solicit valuable data. It is to this end that in depth-interviews were employed.

¹⁵ See 3.6 below.

The interviews were largely narrative in nature and were conducted by myself. I was trained in the feminist research methodology in the Gender Politics and Theory course and was therefore able to perform this task. Interview questions were prepared in both Zulu and English so that participants could choose either one of the languages. This was done so that participants would have minimum difficulties in expressing their views. Discussions, note taking and the use of a recording audiotape were employed as tools for gathering data. The kind of tool used, would be decided upon considering the respondent's permission. On average each interview session lasted one to one and a half-hours.

Despite the fact that this dissertation forms only 25% of my MA degree, field research span was five months, i.e. January - May 2003. The interviews proved to be more time consuming than anticipated, a factor that slowed down the process. This was very much in contradiction with the plans that I had put in place. A contributing factor was an experience wherein I interviewed senior management participants in their offices we would be occasionally interrupted e.g. by phone calls, people knocking at the door etc. When interviews were at the respondent's home, we would be sometimes disturbed by sudden crisis with children, unexpected visitors etc. Often I had to break or even postpone interview processes due to these and other similar problems. Although such numerous pauses stalled the process, in the interest of putting respondents first and in line with feminist research values, respondents were given 'time off' the interview processes and assured that they could attend to personal matters.

The discussions and interviews were filled with numberless challenges, learning points and some fun for me. Some respondents would divert from a question posed and tell stories that, at the time seemed not necessarily related to questions asked. Reflecting on the interview processes I now realise that such stories were a good context for a better understanding of the project at hand. I recall an instance of a community member who was extremely demonstrative and dramatic relating Sibusisiwe's life history to a point where he moved away from the tape recorder, stood up and sang songs that Sibusisiwe taught them at crèche and primary school. In this instance and a few other instances I had to request for a second or even third round of interviews with some participants.

Research scholars point out that what is important in encouraging people to participate in a research project is the patient and careful building up of relationship with a variety of individuals in different networks who then act as intermediaries Jowel et al. in Miller and Dingwall (1997:68). This advice was helpful to me and a reminder that gaining trust does not come in a day's time and patience is necessary if a researcher is to achieve set goals. The delays however did not change the aim, content and quality of data collected. Due to the fact that I teach in one of the schools and am familiar with the context of the study, I believe that my research yielded much more reliable data and I am confident that the findings arrived at are accurate. It is hoped that the research process and findings in my analysis would:

- Provide a history and understanding of why social groups behave in a particular manner,
- Highlight individual versus group concern, and
- Reveal divergent experiences and other attitudes that could have been concealed had I only used a focus group interview tool.

3.5 Focus group interviews

Focus groups were used to supplement in depth interview processes detailed above. These interviews were in depth guided discussions among several individuals and were led by myself. This kind of research instrument challenges too. What I discovered was that using a focus group method was equally, if not more difficult than conducting individual interviews. I ultimately engaged in a trial and error method before finding one method that was the most suitable. The following groups proved not to work well:

- * Men and women together,
- * Junior and senior participants together (by age and work position), and
- * Teachers and learners together.

These group combinations proved difficult to handle; challenges ranged from dead silence to some participants in a group dominating. Members within the groups were evidently not at ease with each other and did not feel comfortable to relate their stories, beliefs and feelings. Ultimately, I had to conduct discussions with participants who shared similar characteristics (learners, management,

junior teachers and ordinary community members on their own). This method of soliciting data delayed the data collecting process. Besides power-relation problems, the difficulty of interviewing more than one participant overwhelmed me. As it was common to have about six participants in one group, all would want to speak at the same time. Further more the greatest challenge was during the process of listening to the recorded tapes. To counteract this problem I ended up pairing participants and affording no more than a pair to speak at the same time. Challenges faced required a change in initial planning, i.e. the reduction of the number of SGB and SMT members.

3.5.1. Interactive observation

During interviews processes I was also watchful and observant of how participants reacted, that is checking on non-verbal cues. Gestures played out gave a context to the study and gave an insight into a better understanding of responses provided. Due to the constraints of a 25% dissertation I do not discuss in depth non-verbal cues and some inferences deduced from them. In order to ensure that all topics and questions prepared were covered and data extrapolated, a careful observation of the said cues were necessary; more so because the project had a huge interest in perceptions, opinions and feeling towards gender imbalances. I observed different emotions that were displayed by the respondents and connected them to verbal responses to get a full sense

of perceptions¹⁶ held. Some women would be emotional when talking about the problems caused by gender discrimination at their work place as well as the effects brought thereon; some were even moved to absolute silence and even tears. I could also read through their facial expressions and comments that some women and men are still hesitant of the need for gender equality or blatantly make deliberate attempts to block efforts toward equality. Although it is a known fact that the South African Education Department requires gender equality in school governance, personnel at schools ignore the requirement. From the data it is apparent that most respondents, even some women, believe that a man should 'be always on top as our culture deems', as one respondent put it. Elshtain in Tong (1989: 32) refers to the fact that such a belief is widely held. She points out that liberal feminists hold that most differences between men and women are the products of cultural beliefs, one such belief is of culture vs. biology and nurture vs. than nature.

¹⁶ It is the assertion of this dissertation that perceptions held by a social group influence and inform behaviour patterns as well as decisions taken (e.g. who manages a school and what assumptions are held regarding leadership characteristics of that person).

3.5.2. Method of data analysis

In this section I discuss a strategy and process I employed in interpreting what was pointed out to me during the interviews. Before the formal analysis of data I went through notes that were taken by hand,¹⁷ as well as listened and transcribed recorded tapes. There is a lot of other data that was recorded through audiotapes. However note taking was not analysed due to time constraints and limits of a mini dissertation. I transcribed a total of eight of eleven 2hour tapes recorded. Tape recording interviews was found to be a useful exercise as I would refer to the tapes from time to time to confirm data and more importantly listen to the manner in which points of view were expressed.¹⁸ Transcribed interviews were used to extrapolate as is statements made by respondents and quoted throughout the dissertation. Handwritten notes taken during interviews and discussions were helpful as I used them to check data accuracy. I listened to the tape carefully several times in order to analyse the content and to identify categories for analysis. Interviews conducted in Zulu were translated into English before the analysis stage. In analysing respondent's statements, plans were made to develop themes and group them into categories. Themes formulated from data collected were:

¹⁷ Extending and clarify points which were roughly noted.

¹⁸ Due to the fact that that Zulu is a tonal language-from which a researcher can tell respondents' feelings-taped voices relived interview processes and gave full understanding to 'emotions' that people have towards issues of gender imbalance.

- a. Personal (emotions)
- b. Cultural (traditions and customs)
- c. Social (political and religious)

3.6. Research ethics and protocol

In accordance with what is expected of a researcher I first made appointments with the authorities of the two institutions of Umbumbulu, Sibusisiwe and Hamilton Makhanya High Schools, as well as other people that were involved in the research. I had to make sure that all official and recognised channels were followed before making appointments. I therefore asked for letters of permission from my supervisor, in the Centre for Gender Studies Department, a letter from my line manager and wrote a letter myself declaring that data collected will be used appropriately and with confidentiality. These letters were most useful; they enabled me to get access to the schools selected as well as community individuals interviewed. The letters stated aims, reasons for the study as well as ethical commitments on data collected. The letters helped to introduce myself and confirm my research status.

At each meeting I would verbally explain the purpose of the research to the participants and indicated for how long the interview would last. Permission for tape recording would be required and the respondents assured that interviews and data collected would be treated with confidentiality, and that their proper names would not be used in the dissertation. A number of participants did not

need further evidence of my status before the interviews because they are familiar to me.

3.6. Limitation of the study

As pointed out in the introduction of the dissertation, the discussion is with only two Umbumbulu schools. Results and findings of the study regarding gender imbalances in the school governance may not apply to the entire Umbumbulu, Durban South Region school sector. Although similar trends and perceptions may be found elsewhere in the KwaZulu Natal (KZN) region or the country, the study does not purport to regard findings in the two schools to be representative of the whole region.

I also need to point out that data collected was from selected participants of the Umbumbulu Community. Given that Umbumbulu is a rural area, it could be that observations and findings of the study speak more of rural school trends. However statistics from school governance literature and the KZN Education Department offices indicate that there are indeed gender imbalances in the whole of the Durban South Region High School Area and the rest of the KZN province. In spite of the limitations pointed out, data collected is confidently considered valid and reliable by the researcher, Umbumbulu locals as well as number of individuals who were not part of the study. Discussions and informal unstructured interviews held randomly with selected participants (14 in total) confirm the data collected and analysis arrived at.

It is my hope that this research and its findings will challenge attitudes and practices that restrict women's access to promotions and that the interview panels will revisit their policies in order to effect amendments that will attend to the gender gap in schools in question.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present findings of the research study with regard to gender imbalances in the governance of two schools of Umbumbulu. Reasons given by different respondents as to why there are gender imbalances in the school governance are examined, reflected upon, interpreted and presented in this section. Although a number of questions were posed to the respondents in the course of the interviews and discussions I focused on two main questions for analysis purposes. The questions are:

1. What do you think are causes of gender imbalances in the school governance?
2. What are the consequences of the gender inequality and in what way do they affect the school system?

Gender imbalances imply a situation wherein one sex dominates the other. An instance of gender imbalance could be an evidence of statistical domination at a work place, that is one gender outnumbering the other or it could be power control, that is supremacy, deciding for and dominating the other.¹ Data gathered from the case study for this project demonstrate that both kinds of domination are present in the Sibusisiwe and Hamilton high schools. Statistical evidence

¹ This could happen in situations that seem gender balanced (statistically or at face value) but wherein it is a trend that one gender's opinions are more respected and acted upon than the other.

gathered from the two schools show that the governance structures in both schools are male dominant. Most of the respondents were in unison with regard to reasons for the gender inequality in the structures. The study found that reasons often quoted for the imbalance were:

- Cultural background and the general belief system of the community in which the gender imbalances abound
- Politics, apartheid and religion, and
- 'Emotions'²

Gender studies' scholars have for decades made numerous attempts to explain the inherent imbalances. Lott elucidates,

Our culture defines womanhood differently from manhood. The former is equated with femininity and the typical woman is expected to behave in ways defined as feminine. The extent to which women act in feminine ways depends upon the success with which institutionalised sanctions and differential experiences have influenced us in the direction of fulfilling our culture's expectations (Lott, 1987:241).

The study found Umbumbulu community's responses and underlying perceptions to be highly influenced by culture as Lott points out. The most recurrent response³ I received from the respondents was, "it is our culture that determines the trend that you see. In our culture it is men who are leaders not women". This response came from more men than women. It is common as Mama (1991:79)

² I found 'emotions' as a reason to be too vague and initially left it out. On probing further about this reason as it cropped up quite frequently I was told that it refers to the fact that since women are by nature emotional and sensitive they not suitable for leadership positions. The discussions use the word as it was relayed to me.

³ An informal probing question posed was, 'in your opinion why are women so sparsely represented in management structures despite being large in numbers?'

observes, for men to 'appropriate and interpret African traditions and culture in selective ways that enhance their power and authority'. A significant number of respondents believe that men in the governance structures outnumber women because they (women) do not want to take up management positions. On probing further about women's reasons for not 'wanting to take up management positions', I was told⁴ that even if women were to apply in large numbers they would not get the positions as selection committees tend to look at males more favourably than females. Such an affirmation is troubling as it came from a person who often has a significant role in selecting interview candidates.

As a member of the Zulu society I am deeply troubled by these affirmations and find that they relate easily to Mama's arguments. I reiterate Mama's observation of the 'glorification of African traditions' only when it suits certain people. From an African perspective, despite that history has proved otherwise, leadership has always been seen as a male responsibility (Ngcongco, 1993:7), hence it becomes difficult for governing bodies to appoint a woman for a school leadership position. In the Zulu society schools are viewed as not only belonging to the communities in which schools are built but that it is the responsibility of the male membership of the community to have a significant say and decisive powers in the manner in which a school appoints personnel into leadership positions. Such a view lends school governance to be regarded as a 'public structure' that can be easily manipulated. This is so because the school governance is expected to adhere to cultural nuances of the community. One such nuance is that a woman cannot

4.By an SGB member.

lead a school, a public/ community structure. The study found that the belief abounds in schools, so is a strong assertion that women are not good leaders. Most respondents aligned their perceptions about school governance to the socio-cultural belief that, as one male respondent put it,

In our homes and in our families a man is clearly decreed as the head of the household and that translates into the reality that in institutions that have males and females, males lead. This is one way of ensuring things run smooth

It is evident from this quote that in the Umbumbulu community women's role and importance does not exceed that of a man and the latter is still thought to possess by 'nature' good leadership skills. However reality and leadership in a sizeable number of organisations disprove assertions held by most of my male respondents.

This discussion is an indication that people want to perpetuate this line of argument and mentality that is that for a school to perform better, be well run and achieve its set aims it must be headed by a man. Jabu Ngcobo, a 45 year old woman respondent contends, "School kids understand and respect a male 'voice' better than a female 'voice'." Until Umbumbulu community members' mental models shift it is not likely that school governance in the area will represent the demographics of the school teaching teams and the community at large.

4.2. Gender imbalances and its causes in the school governance

Findings reveal that all structures of the school management are male dominant in both schools. At Sibusisiwe high school, out of 13 SGB members, only 4 are women. SMT members consist of 4 men and one woman and an acting female member. RCL members consist of 2 females and 3 males. At Hamilton high school, out of 13 SGB members only 3 are females. SMT members consist of 5 men and one woman. RCL members consist of 3 males and 1 female. These figures are clear proof that there are gender imbalances in all governance structures of these two schools. SGB members form a percentage of my respondents because they are the most decisive members that play an important role in the governance of the school. They have much power compared to other management teams and can make an effective contribution in the promotion of gender equity at school.

There have been efforts made by the country's Education Department in addressing gender inequality in school governance. The South African Schools Act of 1996 set out terms and conditions for governance and professional management of public schools and called for all schools to have governing bodies. It is important that through governments' processes, school governing bodies are supported in strategies for operational management teaching and training, and promoting social relations in schools through which gender equity can be promoted. Much of the process of democratising schools and breaking

down past authoritarian school cultures is planned to happen through governing bodies Wolpe et al. (1997:92).

Extending Wolpe's point, Shepherd (1992:50) adds that governing bodies are expected to be actively involved in choosing teachers⁵ for all promotion posts and do so in a neutral manner. However the question posed here is "do governing bodies apply what the 1996 South African School Act expects of them?" If yes, in what way? Is there any policy that guides them through their work? These are some of the things that the study addresses in order to ascertain whether they do apply and if they do, interrogate the extent at which they happen or are applied at Umbumbulu. The fact that Umbumbulu is a rural area brings about some uneasiness with some scholars hence their cautionary words:

Patriarchal social relations and gender inequalities are particularly pervasive in the rural areas and this is reflected in many ways in existing school governance and management structures and processes (Wolpe, et al. 1997:92).

The vigilance pointed out by these scholars reiterates a concern indicated by "The Rural Education Facilitators Project" in a written submission on the 1996 Bill. The education bill expects school governing structures to have policies for appointing members of school teams. The bill also states the need to respect the freedom and the rights of individuals in communities.

⁵ The emphasis here is on all teachers- not just of a particular gender.

On enquiring with a member of the governing body whether there is any policy that guides them as the governing structure and what they say about gender equity, Mr. L. Shange⁶ noted,

There is a policy that guides all governing bodies and it states that at least 2% of the membership of the structure must be females.

Learning about the contents of the policy and the statistical suggestion, it was evident why there are gender imbalances in the management structure. The percentage portion dedicated for women is shocking and does not reflect the actual demographics of the community. SGB members are responsible for appointing educators for all promotional posts and fill in new SGB members' positions that open up. If they follow this policy that favours men and disadvantages women, gender imbalances in the school management structures will continue, and in turn women will be always discriminated⁷ against.

4.2.1. Gendered culture and inequality

Questions were posed to SGB members regarding the '2% policy'. The education bill⁸ cited above was quoted to them and they were asked if their practice is justified. Mrs. K. G. Nxele's response was,

It is not right; sometimes we overlook this section of the policy and have had more than 2% women in the management structure. But on the whole sometimes it depends on the people or parents who elect member. It is a well-known fact that most of them prefer males than females because of the cultural belief that as

⁶ Shange hold the position of the governing body for both schools that were under investigation.

⁷ Such discrimination is legislated by typical policies like the one quoted here.

men are superior in their homes, they must therefore be superior even at workplace

What Mrs Nxele points out is also observed by Connell, cited in (Nzimande 1994:36) when he argues:

Women's disadvantages are attributed mainly to stereotyped customary expectations, held by both women and men, which keep women back from professional advancement and create prejudice and discrimination against them.

Mr. Z. C. Khanyile, an educator who is also a SADTU member who often sits on interview panels as an observer was vocal about gender inequalities. Asked to comment about the policy and procedures used in selecting prospective candidates, he confirms,

As per a directive from the department, there is the procedure that is being followed, but the selection committees tamper with the process procedures. It is common to find that the principal and the chairperson of the governing body go into the process with preconceived ideas as to who should get the post, and unfortunately it is often male than female candidates they have in mind. They go into the process with well- structured patterns and strategies of influencing scores. Such thorough prior planning in turn has an effect on final decisions. In my experience giving positions to 'already identified people' has become the order of interview panels. Male candidates are often advantaged by these 'hidden' process. What would you expect, of course - the selection committee is also male-dominant.

Such a comment is clear evidence of gender inequality based on male cultural beliefs and practices. Evidently if the school management is male-dominant,⁹ it is obvious that women are likely to be discriminated against because selection

⁸ The Bill stipulates gender equity.

⁹ And there are many such similar cases than instances of female domination.

procedures favour men. It has come to be accepted as 'natural' in our society for people of the 'same kind' to favour each other. It is however unfortunate that this trend breeds, produces and reproduces gender inequality in the school governance.

The majority of the respondents believe that the main cause of gender imbalances in the school governance is due to the fact that our culture is gendered. Mr. N. H. Nene declares,

Gender imbalances have to do with the cultural background. From an African perspective, leadership has always been seen as a male responsibility, therefore, it becomes very difficult for the SGB or even parents to elect a woman chairperson into matters of the school, because, that is seen as public leadership. Women are not considered as good leaders. This comes from the belief that we as Africans, in our homes, in our families, a man is always the head of the household. See why changes are difficult to come by – then people want to perpetuate that kind of mentality that, for the school to perform better, a man must head it.

It is fascinating that this statement does not only come from a man who is a SGB member. It is a wonder and a concern that people who hold such strong views fail to implement change in governing structures. Reflecting on the statement, it is obvious that societal expectations and cultural beliefs that a community subscribes to are difficult to challenge by ordinary individuals. Much more stringent and focused programmes as well as commitment for change are needed to address gender imbalances. Most respondents were aware that there are gender imbalances but did not want to take ownership of the problem numerous references were made to the 'nature of our traditional culture and belief'.

Mrs. T. P. Zondi, an SGB member contends:

I should think it (gender imbalance problem) has to do with our traditional belief as blacks, especially we Zulus, the way we were grown up. It will be against our culture and customs if women are made managers to lead men and even other women as well.

What I deduce and observed from gestures that accompanied these responses is that, women are not hired into senior positions because of a fear that such an appointment would be regarded as an act that goes against the culture, beliefs, and the tradition. This assertion is held by both men and women members of the Umbumbulu community. Some respondents were not outright but I could infer from responses given that both men and women would be uncomfortable to be led or take directives from a woman. This is worrying and sad as none of the respondents noted that it is women's competencies or lack of ability to lead that is a problem. The respondents' responses are a clear indication of the regard that the community has for women and an acceptance of discrimination levelled against women.

Adkinson cited in Shepherd (1992:50) perceives this kind of discrimination as a form of bigotry that arises from three sources and thus contends the problem occurs because'

Communities do not accept women in leadership positions, decision-makers will not recruit and hire women for managerial positions, and potential colleagues and subordinates do not want to work with women.

4.2.2. Politics, apartheid, and religion as causes of gender imbalances

Other participants refer to apartheid, politics, and religion as contributing factors to gender inequalities. It is interesting to note that reasons for the gender imbalance here-forth brought forward are different in nature and emphasis to reasons discussed above. What is further noteworthy is that it is largely school learners who came with the ensuing reasons. Menzi Hlela, a male learner states,

This (contemporary gender divide) falls back on the apartheid era where men would leave their wives, go to places of work, fend for their families and thus attain the status of the 'provider' and in turn the leader. Women would stay at home and be housewives, and actually look after kids. Men would make decisions, as breadwinners, women would depend and be always submissive to them.

Different learners shared similar sentiments. When adults earmarked 'political' reasons, they were presented in a slightly different form than that presented by learners. Political reasons were elucidated with analogies. Mrs. A. Majozi an SGB member is one such adult who gives such an explanation. She argues that reasons for the imbalances to have taken this shape is that,

For many years, politics has been thought to be a man's thing, because it needs power and intelligence. There were very few women activists, and there were no women ministers.¹⁰ When we talk of a presidential position in the country,¹¹ we talk of men. There has never been a woman president in South Africa. This has been the case because of our people's belief that 'women do not have skills and

¹⁰ This refers to the political position of the South African parliament.

¹¹ Refers to both apartheid and the new dispensation.

confidence that is needed to lead'. Through politics¹² and apartheid strategies it was ensured that the gender imbalance continued to exist.

Other respondents believe the imbalances are related to biblical teachings, and claim that religion has a contributing consequence to the manner in which women are viewed and ultimately treated. Phindile Mdluli, a learner reflects on the Christian religion and quotes the bible. She says,

The Bible has a huge role to play in this. It contends that since God made the man first, he should be always the first one in everything. It stresses that women must be submissive to their husbands for they are their heads (Ephesians 5: 22). In my church for instance a woman relays whatever she wants to say to the church leadership and God through her husband. He is seen as a leader, as the only one who has a mandate to do that.

Views presented by these participants are evidence of how the community operates – it functions within patriarchal frameworks and along patriarchal principles.¹³ Shepherd's comment attests to this,

Teaching as a branch of the government-controlled civil service, is directly influenced by ruling patriarchal philosophy. Calvinism places the male firmly at the head of the family, the church, the school and the government. (Shepherd, 1992:49)

4.2.3. 'Emotions' as women's barriers to senior management positions

Emotions have to do with the "inner you", the individual's character. From the interviews I deduced that the Umbumbulu community generally hold the

¹² Of the contemporary and previous government

¹³ See Sylvia Walby and Robert Connell who refer to various forms in which patriarchy operates and in particular reference to male domination and control of state structure.

view that men are naturally active, therefore they make better leaders. A few respondents connected the 'active nature' of men to the fact that they are more prone to violence and in a strange way the violent nature is linked to being a strong person. These respondents maintain that a good leader is a fearsome person who can stand up to staff and learners that may challenge him physically. This argument counters a theory held about women that because they are naturally non-violent by nature, they cannot make good leaders. Women's natural non-violent nature therefore render them not liable for management positions, 'because they are soft', as one male respondent earnestly told me. This theory unfortunately is equally held by women. It is claimed that since women do not possess the necessary 'violent nature' within them, they cannot handle challenges that high school environments pose to them and are in turn not suitable for school management positions. A female educator Ms T.T. Bhengu confirms this theory when she points out:

Some female teachers are scared to be in senior positions because they are considered to be a weaker sex. The problem does not only lie with selection committees but with 'this feeling' that these women have. They are even afraid to apply for the positions, as they know that they will be expected to behave like men – handle violence with violence, be authoritative and strong. Because they are intrinsically weak, then they cannot lead.

(Nzimande 1994:18) cites Qunta, who reflects on situations similar to the above discussion,

Women are seen henceforth as weak and in need of the protection of men. This also confirms that women and what they do are valued less

than men. They are incapable of handling administrative duties, because they are known to be lacking intelligence and are not physically strong. If women undervalue themselves, they will develop lack of confidence and always feel inferior.

Nzimande's discussion does not only look at women's 'weak nature', she makes reference to other institutional barriers most often listed as contributing to woman's lack of achievement. She argues that administration of confidence and lack of motivation and aspiration are contributing factors to women's failure to take up leadership positions (1994: 41).

Indeed participants in the study did make reference reasons cited by Nzimande. Mr. L. Shange who serves as the chairperson of the SGB for both schools claims,

Women have a tendency of being emotional in most situations and this also prevents them from being appointed in senior positions. Once you are emotional, you can't manage to conduct a meeting because you sometimes deal with drunken people, people of different characters. You need to relax and be patient. Being emotional can give them an air of panic and undermine their ability to make tough decisions.

Having 'emotions' and being 'weak' was not only quoted as a barrier to women taking up leadership positions, but Mr. R. B. Ndlela, the Deputy Principal of Hamilton high school pointed out that even when women are in management positions they still portray 'emotions' and are taken for granted by both their superiors and subordinates, he argues,

I have observed that women are socialised into being accommodating and not wanting to offend or embarrass people. They can fall prey to taking on more work than they can handle,

or do well. Most of them are kind hearted and think saying no could be taken as being uncooperative and hard - but as a leader, a woman needs to be firm and do what she thinks is right as a manager.

Views expressed by respondents show that there are various barriers that cause gender imbalances in the school governance. These are either external (how other people view you) and internal (how you, as a discriminated person view yourself). The next question will look at how the inequalities affect the school system and what problems they bring.

4.3. Consequences of gender inequality and their effects in the school system

Different respondents were asked if there are any problems brought about by gender imbalances in the school governance and one respondent an SMT member answered:

Problems are bound to ... and do happen. The decision-making process will be male-influenced and will suit more men than women. As a result, you find that the gender imbalance cripples the smooth running of the school, because women cannot have a voice, even the female learners find themselves not having a voice into the decision-making processes of the school. Even when it comes to the RCL, learners elect boys as their representatives because it is understood and accepted that boys or men have a better way of managing structures. This eventually 'disempowers' girls. Gender imbalances of course create problems.

Mthethwa's revelation that all decisions are taken by men if the school governance is male dominant was echoed by most respondents. This is a great problem that violates South Africa's democratic practices. The fact that men are in the majority will ensure that the status quo is retained. Women's voices will not only be unheard but the few that sit in management structures will always be outvoted.

Reiterating Mthethwa's sentiments Miss T. Xaba an SMT member draws from personal experience,

Females are always contained because they are the minority. I know and can relate to my experience. If you are a woman working with the majority of men, you sometimes fear to talk because you know that final decisions will be taken from what men suggest.

Xaba emphasises what Mthethwa says, affirming that being in the minority disadvantages women. They find it hard to participate in discussions as their views are undermined. These respondents indicate that men unnecessarily argue with women because they do not believe that what women have to say has any value.

Management has come to be viewed as an activity associated with 'masculine' values and behaviours. This distorted view accounts for many of the problems between management and staff, and insensitivity towards the needs of both staff and consumers (Grimwood & Popplestone, 1993: 56).

Unlike teachers and adult community members learners have different views about problems caused by gender inequalities in the school governance. Bonga, a male student states,

We as learners need to view women as possible leaders at school. Like at home there are things which need a woman's 'touch'. They are skilled in many things and are very good in advising and bringing up children. They are caring and are very patient when it comes to teaching us, but if they are outnumbered by men in the management structure, we will miss those skills and that motherly love because their 'touch' has not been felt.

In a subtle manner scholars do cite the 'motherly love' that some scholars refer to as being missed in school management structures. Adler et al. (1993:114) argue that:

Women principals pay more attention to social, emotional and academic development of the children in their schools. They are more knowledgeable about curriculum of their teachers.

Although most feminist scholars would refute the assertion discussed above, I firmly believe that women have a natural instinct and skills of making a special bond with children. These skills remain inadequately utilised if women are not afforded and supported in management positions. Eventually learners lose out the untapped capacity and talents of women to deal with learners is not explored. Due to the traditional perceptions held by the whole school community loses out on women's skills that could have contributed to the betterment of the school community.

Girls testify that if the school governance is male dominated, girls find it difficult to relate to an all-male constituency as a role model. Nomalungelo Mhlongo, a Grade 12 female learner maintains;

Women and girls find themselves not having a say in the decision making processes of the school if they are outnumbered by men, as a result most of the laws that govern the school favour men. Since I came to this school in 1999, male students are at a better advantage, the cleaning of classrooms, windows, verandas, toilets even the boys toilets are the responsibility of the female students. We therefore need more women to represent us in the school governance. We could have more people finding wrong in what we are expected to do. Maybe this will one day stop girls from being boys' servants, cleaning all the mess that boys make.

Gender roles commonly performed at home are reproduced at schools. What is said by Nomalungelo reveals that when there are gender imbalances in the school governance, some learners do suffer in a way. Girls' roles are that of being subordinate to their boy counterparts, and boys remain superior. This discourages girls, even when it comes to learning, they think it is boys that must be top students. It's very rare to find girls that are prepared to take on boy classmates in terms of competing for better results.

Some respondents maintain that sometimes having more boys than girls in the RCL disturbs the smooth running of the school. Ntokozo, a female learner expresses her concerns,

When there are RCL elections you find that most learners elect boys as their representatives because it is understood that they have a better tone of voice, are brave and physically strong. And it is taken for

granted that if you want prosperity you need a team of strong men. This becomes a problem when it comes to difficult circumstances, particularly when it comes to issues surrounding conflict resolution because boys become too forceful and use power, which sometimes results to strikes at school. What I have noticed in other schools is that when the president of the RCL is a girl, there is relative peace and smooth running of the school, but mostly if the president is a male there use to be disturbances or rebellions, men are able to rally a group of learners far quicker. Women are steady, they relax and fight tactfully.

Ntokozo's concerns are indicative of problems that learners experience with male dominated structures – which are often imbued with use of force and abuse of power. Data collected demonstrate that it is not only learners that are not happy with male dominated structures that are negatively hard-lined, but educators also point this out – as is the case with a female educator below.

Mbali talked of the aggressive male stance but her main problem as quoted below lies with selection committees that are biased and practice nepotism,

We apply for senior positions but we are not appointed. It is very difficult to get a senior post if you are a female, because the selection committee is bound to favour men as a male dominated structure. Positions are given to men even if they are incapable or do not have potential to deliver. This hinders the school progress.

Mbali reiterates concerns raised by Z.C. Khanyile, earlier referred to in the discussion, see 4.2.1. McPherson makes reference to problems raised by these respondents,

There is dissatisfaction with the manner in which promotions take place, there appears to be confusion among teachers in respect of the

criteria used. Teachers feel that in some instances manhood is used as the main criterion for promotion. (McPherson, 1994: 4).

Nzimande (1994:57) also states that,

Women seeking administrative positions have to confront the present bias of decision makers who can be interviewers or chief or circuit inspectors of who are men. Selectors tend to select those most like themselves. They choose those with whom they feel most comfortable and most men do not feel at ease with women.

One of the reasons why manhood is used as the main criterion by selection personnel is the nature of culture that is gendered. The ideological values of the traditional feudal society are inculcated in a woman from the moment she is born by a whole educational system within the family, Mugomba and Nyoggha (1977:258). This highlights that discrimination starts at childhood. As children grow, boys and girls are not treated or taught equally in terms of content and method. Society expects girls and women to behave in a certain way (to be polite, respectful and considerate) to do certain kinds of jobs (mainly cleaning and nurturing other people) something that may end up being an obstruction to women's promotion.

Problems brought about by gender inequalities are also reflected upon by the school governing body. Thula a 50 year old man who is the member of the SGB says,

Gender imbalances cause the malfunctioning of the SGB's because there is no cross -sharing of the ideas between females and males. The SGB's are also falling short by not maintaining the gender balance when elections are made.

Since the ideas are not equally shared there are problems in the SGB which remain unsolved and this is how gender imbalances can cripple the smooth running of the school. The problems that Thula allude to will only cease if attitudes and regard for women are changed and the value placed on men not overrated.

CHAPTER 5

5. Presentation of the Findings

The statistics found from both schools confirm that there are gender imbalances and female discrimination in the school governance structures. This chapter summarises findings of the study by reflecting briefly on respondents' responses and put forward recommendations to be considered by educators in Umbumbulu and elsewhere. The recommendations can be used for intervention purposes as well as by future researchers.

Respondents' responses reflect:

- Reasons why there is gender imbalances in the school governance,
- Problems that emanate from the imbalances and,
- Kinds of behaviour that result from the imbalances.

Furthermore, most respondents believe it is mainly a negative cultural thought that is a reason responsible for the inequalities. They say it is the culture of the general Zulu society that determines the trend that we see where a huge number of men are leaders, not women. This negative attitude towards women is instituted, promoted and sustained by the Umbumbulu community culture in a silent way. The 'composed' culture is then used as an instrument to maintain the status quo.¹ A few respondents attest that this negativity has led some women teachers of Umbumbulu to 'boycott senior positions'. This they do deliberately by refusing to apply for senior positions. As respondents have indicated in chapter four. It is widely held and known by these women that even if they were to hand in applications they would not be considered for the positions since selection committees, in line with higher value placed on men, categorically prefer men.

¹ That being the belief and practice that it is only the male folk that are inspired and born with leadership skills.

We note, from the participants' responses, the fact that women form the majority of the teachers is viewed as a natural feature that does not necessarily have to translate into having women in leadership ranks. The respondents point to and express regret that women still dominate middle management and lower ranks of the education system despite democratic progress and processes that South Africa as a country has seen. The irony lies in the fact that most respondents do not want to take responsibility for the imbalances. The phrase, 'community discriminates against women' was used by almost all respondents but unfortunately this realisation does not translate into taking action and producing interventions that will change the tide, redress the imbalances and achieve equality. I find that respondents do not want to own up for the imbalances, i.e. point at themselves as the community members that block redress. As I discussed in chapter 3, I do not analyse and interpret data based only on what respondents said verbally, but I also took into consideration modes and choice of words used in conversations. Although some respondents stated clearly that they value women's contribution, I could tell by their discomfort, dryness in the voice, frowning, loss for words and evading certain questions, that commitments pledged towards seeing the need for redress were fundamentally voiced to please me, the researcher² who resides and teaches in one of the schools. This is one difficulty of researching one's own people. I discuss this challenge in chapter 3 in a section on self-reflexivity.

On analysing data I find that family commitments count as one of the factors against women. Some scholars make clear references to this aspect. Although none of my respondents spoke directly about this problem, it was deduced from responses provided

² As a master's degree researcher, I know that the issue of my 'power' had an impact on responses that were ultimately given to me. I realize that I may have had an upper hand in the discussions and suspect that respondents at times went at length to tell me 'what they thought as a woman I wanted to hear' – that they are against the fact that women are disadvantaged by the Umbumbulu cultural beliefs and school practices.

that marriage and childbearing prevent some women from going into leadership positions because they cannot combine the two roles i.e. home responsibilities and administrative tasks. Grimwood and Popplestone reflect,

Most women are not in a position to fulfil such requirements because of domestic responsibilities, ties or obligations to care for children, men or elderly or sick dependants (Grimwood and Popplestone, 1993:60).

Another significant and contributing factor to the imbalance is the text detailed in current policies which guides governing bodies. It states that at least 2% of the leadership membership must be females, a clear evidence of a case of hold up men.

The study also finds that some women are prevented by their emotions or behaviours to be appointed to senior positions. Most respondents, although not clearly speaking of their personal convictions, mention that women do not make good leaders because they are by nature emotional and sensitive. This claim is somehow linked to the respondents' assertion that women cannot take leading positions because they are 'scared', a reason that speaks of their self esteem. They are believed to be, and they at times, in a subtle manner affirm the belief that they are inferior to men.

Mngomba and Nyaggah give a cautioning note that such self-assessment needs to be understood in a context,

The process of rendering women inferior originates in traditional education. It is reinforced by 'initiation rites' and other such traditional practices, which leads to passive acceptance and lack of initiative (Mugomba and Nyaggah 1997:256).

Although externally produced I regard this reason as an internal problem. The self-regard is intrinsic. However, equally, women lack self-value because they have been repeatedly told and trained to become inferior to men and ultimately they do not only accept, but also adopt and believe that indeed they do not possess leadership skills. Practically this self-assertion evidently prevents them from 'wanting to try' and wanting to compete with men. This dissertation argues that lack of confidence, competitiveness, fear and failure are internal contributory causative barriers that prevent women from taking on leadership positions.

Also deduced from respondents' responses is the fact that women do not cope with leadership positions because of the manner in which the positions are portrayed. The task of leading is expressed as an extremely demanding and stressful job which only 'strong' male figures can live up to. The leadership structure in the school governance is designed on male norms and definitions. The position is viewed as a task of the heartless, 'tiger' and strong masculine people who are imbued with strategies to cope with overly demanding conditions.³ Women who opt to take up management positions find that they are restrained with regard to what they can do. Working in an environment that is 'masculine' imposes various pressures on them and this in turn leads to their reluctance to try harder; crack down under a repressive hostile environment, and even quit leadership positions due to the pressure. The environment that is conceived constructed and communicated, thus impact on perceptions held about women. The perception is that they should not be appointed to leadership positions because they are weak, soft and unlike men, who are courageous, physically and mentally strong. This misconception about women evidently plays a significant role in decisions taken by

³ This is believed to refer to uncooperative teachers and school children that are rude and wild.

selection and interviews committees. It was found that not all respondents subscribe to comparable views. These are positive views that may seem outrageous to other people.

The study found that some respondents hold an entirely different view about women in management positions. They point out that women managers usually bring enormous change, enthusiasm and commitment to their work. They have whole skills when it comes to management. These respondents state that, their experiences about women leaders are different to widely held views about women and reasons for their failure. They indicate that women are strong, broadminded, have a good manner of approach and are tactful in handling challenging situations. References are made to women's good motherly leadership skills, ability to manage in a holistic manner⁴ and network with various stakeholders in a steady, calm manner.

Learners encounter problems. Boys and girls miss that natural love and care that woman teachers give to learners. Girls work hard, very hard at cleaning the school, compared to boys and have a problem that they cannot discuss some of the issues with male authorities. It is also noted that the SGB meetings are sometimes not run smoothly since men do not avail themselves.

⁴ Attending to professional, spiritual and counseling aspects of leadership.

CHAPTER 6

6. Recommendations and Conclusion

The Department, selection committees and principals must ensure that positions are reserved for women who apply for senior positions. Unless there is such a commitment, gender equality may not be realised. On the other hand women must be made aware that such positions are reserved for them and also they must not be scared to put in applications. We would like to see them reclaiming school management activities as it is the assertion of this dissertation that they are well qualified using skills they acquire through their experience as women. Those who have leadership qualities must be identified and given opportunities.

The selection committee when conducting interviews need to consider instruments that have been in place to accelerate equality. The S.A Constitution, Affirmative Action Act and School Act all stresses gender equality and equality for all. The Department of Education needs to take it as its responsibility to enforce that all selection committees follow set policies that deal with interview processes. Schools with promotion posts need to present their governance structures to the Department in order to see how many females and males are there and it should be ensured that posts are for the marginalised gender.

In order to get some solution to the problem, it would be ideal to have intensive training of the SGBs and selection committees so that they will be well capacitated and are able to handle interview process in a desired manner that is free of prejudice. Alternatively

the whole process of interviewing should be given out to private companies and independent people to ensure that the process is speeded up and there is fairness.

In order to promote gender equality, all stakeholders, educators, learners and parents should be workshopped. Periodical courses and workshops for teachers should be conducted and the department should empower them about gender equality. Gender teaching and learning need to be provided to learners. Gender equality must be made part of the curriculum; it must be taught in our schools so that our learners can be prepared for and engendered with respect for the 'other' and all.

Women in schools and the community need to take an active role and stand up to inspire young females about human and women rights. They must be aware of what is going on; they must be empowered in such a way that they develop an eagerness to become future leaders irrespective of their 'ordained fairer sex'.

Equally, community need to be work-shopped from all places. Widespread campaigns and education is necessary and long overdue. It cannot be overemphasised that people need to be re-educated about gender equality. The Department of Education personnel may need to be upfront and take the lead in reaching communities and address communities on issues of gender and discrimination.

The Media can also play an important role in the education process. There should be radio and television programmes earmarked for the task. An ideal situation would be to afford an opportunity so that in the programmes people from different backgrounds and experiences have a say.

This research exercise has left me with a number of unanswered questions. Since most of the respondents are aware and do accept that there are gender imbalances that result in problems that affect the school system, it is difficult to understand and give explanation as to why the very respondents who claim to attest to and disapprove of the gender imbalances do not commit to address the problem. Most respondents were not content with the status quo but failed to suggest solution. It is of concern that there is such a failure, because some of these respondents SGB members who are tasked with solving school problems and who also sit on selection committees and interview panels eventually decide on who get senior positions. The confines of this project did not allow me to delve into this concern. I am pointing out this problem for future researchers to take on.

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