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**EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:**

**A CASE STUDY OF ZIMBABWEAN HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**

A Thesis in

Educational Administration

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigated four Zimbabwean female school principals' comprehension of their roles, functions and responsibilities as educational leaders. It explored how the social status of women influences and shapes their leadership roles as practicing female principals. This study contributes to the sparse academic literature on female leadership with a focus on the critical tension between conventional practices in which women on the one hand, are treated as minors while at the same time are expected to conduct serious professional responsibilities as senior administrators. On the basis of the literature review, I outlined some of the main trends which are characteristic of female educational leadership. The analytical framework used to frame the data emerged organically from the data. The analytical framework had five conceptual strands: 1) the notion of education as a process; 2) the distinction between two forms of leadership consensual as opposed to autonomous leadership; 3) three features closely related to leadership: authority, gender, and age; 4) attempts to create a new environment; and 5) leadership as social welfare. The findings suggest that female school principals are likely to be more successful because of the diverse roles which they play. Through the study I demonstrated that although female school principals are in a minority they bring with them special types of expertise which all educational leaders might benefit from. The data from the informants show the strategies to address the social, political and economic challenges which they are faced with in their day-to-day practices as principals. On the basis of the study I describe the nature and type of research which can form the basis of further studies. My study was based on data collected from female school principals,

future studies need to extend the data base by eliciting data from other communities which are also involved in education: students, parents, teachers, and male headmasters so that the views of the female school principals can be situated in a broader context.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1.1 Researcher's Personal Life and Professional Affiliation**

Allow me to begin by describing my origins, where I was educated, and my career trajectory which ultimately led to this study. I was fortunate to be born into a middle class Zimbabwean family, in the then British colony of southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. I attended a mission school. I was educated as a teacher, and taught for a decade and half in Harare-the capital city of Zimbabwe- at a girls' high school. While in Zimbabwe, I increasingly found myself preoccupied with three main issues. Firstly, I was increasingly concerned about the rights and professional status of women in institutions and society at large. Secondly, I was concerned about the need to create opportunities for female professional advancement and to improve the education of lowly salaried men. Thirdly, I became concerned about the indifference of current Zimbabwean leadership-at all levels of the Zimbabwean polity- to create opportunities for 'quality' education particularly in poorly resourced schools in both urban and rural areas. At a personal level, I aspired to be an educational administrator to contribute towards a realization of the three aforementioned objectives. In my career the personal and the professional became different sides of the same coin-boundaries became blurred. To realize my objectives of securing employment as an administrator, I successfully completed a degree in

Educational Administration at the University of Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, the preconditions for being hired as a school principal were adverse to my status and responsibilities as a woman. As an educational administrator I was expected to relocate-a move, which was difficult given the limited opportunities for employment for my spouse. The relocation would also disrupt my other social commitments in Harare that I highly valued. After reflecting on my status I decided to leave Zimbabwe and pursue my educational aspirations outside Africa.

I have lived a fractured life in the United States for four years (2000-2004): divided between two competing realities –the Third World and the First. Technological advancement particularly, the relative ease with which I can contact my family telephonically and other electronic media has meant that the everyday suffering in Zimbabwe is brought to my attention with unrelenting intimacy every moment of my working life-so to speak. I cannot distance my self from the everyday realities in Zimbabwe to focus exclusively on the here and now in the United States. Because of a pervasive feeling of dislocation and the immediacy of problems over which I have very little control, I have struggled to create a comfort zone. I take the writing of this dissertation as a therapeutic exercise-an opportunity to reflect on the experiences in Zimbabwe from the vantage point of my current education in the United States.

Feminist theory taught me to strive for another kind of coherence. It involved bringing together experience and expression. The conflicts I go through have to do with shifting identities. I have learnt to deploy some of the identities strategically. Identifying as a woman of color is both empowering and problematic. It is empowering because it offers me a less amorphous way of defining my politics. I have deliberately situated

myself on the margins without feeling marginalized. On the other hand, my identity as a woman is problematic because I at times find myself being construed as speaking on behalf of Black people even when I neither want to, nor feel that I have the authority to do so. When I am with African Americans, I am painfully aware that we are products of vastly different historical experiences, and I do not necessarily share their worldviews. While I share the burden of racism with them, and empathize with their sense of invisibility, and tokenization in an American context I somehow find it difficult to play an active role in their racial and class struggles. To be candid, the bottom line is that I, like other African immigrants came here deliberately, they are here involuntarily!

Being in the United States, has contributed to a reconfiguration of relations and role relations within my family. It has enabled me to socially function in ways that are proscribed within Zimbabwe. I have found myself playing an increasingly important leadership role within the family even in domains which in Zimbabwe, which would fall outside my remit. Bringing up my kids in the United States has been a challenge. It has required developing a new role and style of parenting. While in Zimbabwe my parenting would have been more direct and authoritative, in the United States, I have had to constantly negotiate the boundaries of my family authority, although still being held to the same if not more responsibilities than in Zimbabwe.

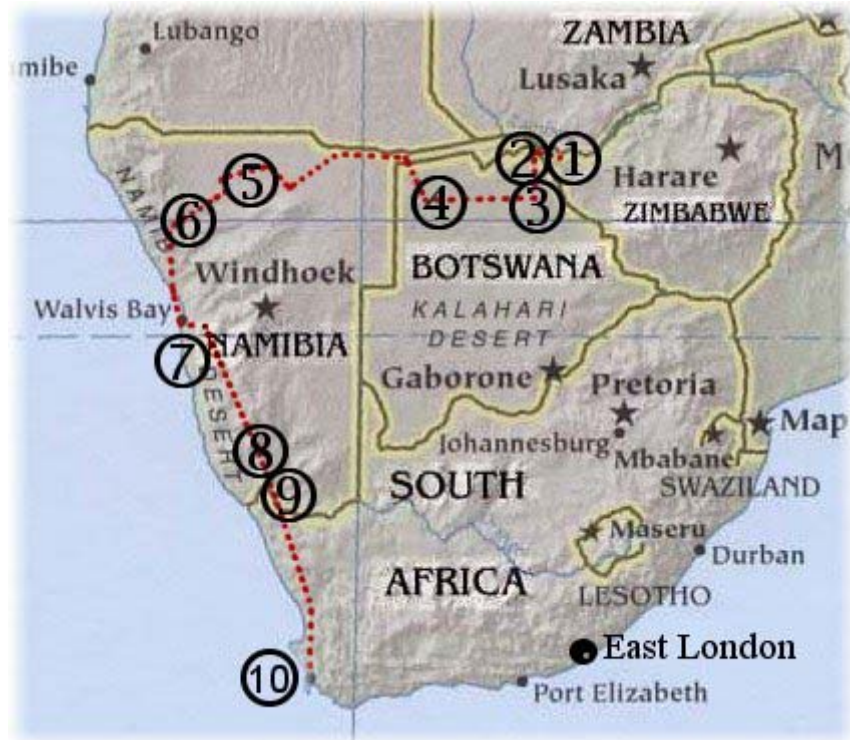
The process of writing gave me an opportunity to explore what it means to be a female intellectual writing about Africa in the United States. In the process of writing the dissertation I quickly became aware of the 'double' nature of my academic life. I felt as if one the one hand, I was representing Africa to North America, and at the same time serving inadvertently as an advocate of North America to Africa. Representing Africa to

North America was a fruitful exercise in so far as it enabled me to analyze more critically the assumptions which form the basis of personal and social behavior in North America and Africa. By serving as an advocate of North America, I mean I increasingly became aware of the need to explain the basis of what I perceived as North American scholarship, and its requirements to some of my African colleagues and family outside the academy. Perhaps, what I am talking about here is not new. It's a phenomena which duBois aptly referred to as 'double consciousness', the nature of the future is one which I constantly worry about. The only thing I can say however is that the past is another country, (Widdowson 1999) and as the American poet, Robert Frost wrote, 'I have got miles to go, before I sleep'. I am sure whatever the future holds for me, there is still a lot to be done and I am sure I will make some profound contributions.



## 1.2 Introduction

The map below shows where Zimbabwe is located geographically, identifying where Harare the capital city is located. The study was carried out in Harare and in the rural areas surrounding it.



*Figure 1 Map of Southern Africa showing the location of Zimbabwe in the region*

*Adopted from the <http://www.livingtravel.com>*

Zimbabwe attained its independence in 1980; the government has made a concerted effort to address gender disparities in all areas particularly in the educational sector. Pressure to address gender disparities was a historical product of women's active and decisive involvement in the struggle for national liberation in Zimbabwe, and indeed throughout Africa (El Sadaawi 1980; Organization of Angolan Women, 1984; Mandaza,

1986). Typically, women who were recruited were high school students. High schools functioned as sites for recruitment. Because women fought along side their male colleagues, this earned them favorable recognition from their male counterparts. Because of the equality between the genders during the protracted war, there was pressure to redress gender disparities in Zimbabwean society after independence. This contributed to the enactment of legislation aiming at establishing equal rights. Currently, there are serious efforts to encourage women to take up senior leadership positions in organizations including education (Ridell, 1980).

Nevertheless, the new national ruling elites and governments, as well as the emergent indigenous bourgeoisies, are male dominated and very soon after independence the issue of women's rights became marginalized, left to donor agencies and non governmental organizations to address (Gordon, 1994). Whilst the changes which occurred after independence may have nominally signaled an attempt to move away from patriarchy as a primary mode in the organization of gender relations, (El Sadaawi, 1980), patriarchal relations were maintained in one form or other. While, on the one hand the state sought to effect equality between the genders, in practice it created conditions, which ensured a continuation of gender inequalities-what Gaidzanwa felicitously, refers to as the 're-domestication of Zimbabwean women' (Gaidzanwa, 1992 and Nangati, 1982).

Although in theory the Zimbabwe Constitution guaranteed all Zimbabwean citizens equal rights and protection from discrimination, gender-specific rights and protection for women from discrimination and domination were not explicitly included.

In fact, the perpetuation and protection of customary personal and family law were guaranteed. Article 23 (Chapter 3) of the constitution states that no law should contravene Customary Law in matters of marriage, divorce, and inheritance of property and ‘the application of customary law in any case involving Africans’ (Kazembe, 1986; Ncube, 1987a, Nyagura & Mupawaenda, 1994). The dual system of law has remained in operation. Changes in the law, that in some respects granted women important rights, have simultaneously complicated the professional position of African women. On one hand they are considered minors while on the other they are expected to function as equals in professional domains such as education.

This study investigated four female school principals’ comprehension of their roles and functions as educational leaders and the ways in which they enact leadership in their school contexts. The purpose of this study was to provide a thick description of the female principals’ beliefs, understandings and experiences about educational leadership as they meet the day-to-day challenges of school administration in Zimbabwe.

Methodologically, this study was inductive in nature; therefore the data were reported in descriptive case study format. In developing a method of inquiry to seek the answers to the questions guiding this study, schedules of interview questions were developed using in depth-structured interviews with the female principals on a one to one.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to describe and analyze the interpretation and comprehension of their roles and functions as educational leaders in southern Africa by a number of carefully selected women. The inquiry was structured by two guiding questions that sought to determine the multiple ways in which Zimbabwean female principals comprehend their roles and status as educational leaders:

- (i) What are Zimbabwean female school principals' perceptions of educational leadership?
- (ii) What professional and interpersonal strategies do Zimbabwean female school principals use when engaging with other school stakeholders such as the local communities, representatives of the ministry of education etc?

This study constitutes a thick description of Zimbabwean women's beliefs and understandings of their roles and practices as educational leaders drawing wherever possible on their articulation of their own daily experiences in positions of educational leadership. Using a case study approach this study explores the leadership experiences of pre-selected female principals in urban Harare, the political and administrative capital of Zimbabwe and rural outlying areas. The study seeks to explore how the social status of women influences and shapes their professional behaviors as practicing female principals.

In my study I drew upon educational leadership frameworks which highlighted the social dynamic nature of leadership, its historical roots, contemporary manifestations, and structural features as it pertains to Zimbabwe (Apps 1998; Blackmore 1989; Sernak

1998). Some, if not most of the frameworks originate from North America; my main objective was therefore to explore how applicable such frameworks are to understanding educational leadership in postcolonial Africa.

Research into postcolonial societies provides a context for enhancing our understanding of the experiences of female principals in educational leadership in Zimbabwe. In Zimbabwe women have an institutionalized status as permanent minors within society, a position 'legitimated' by the Zimbabwean constitution in a landmark decision bequeathing customary law precedence over the principle of equality between the sexes. In such a context it is therefore pertinent to explore how women function as leaders in senior administrative positions when on the one hand they are legitimated minors, and on the other hand are leaders in education, which is highly valued enterprise. In Zimbabwe, and throughout Africa, women played a vital part in the struggle for national liberation (El Sadawi, 1980; Organization of Angola Women, 1984; Gaidzanwa, 1992), and as a result gender issues were brought to fore. The contribution of women to these struggles also led to them gaining some important rights in neo-colonial society. After Zimbabwe gained its independence from the British in 1980, women were subsequently recruited to fill leadership gaps left by the colonizers as they left the country, so in spite of gender biases and traditional status women found themselves in positions of educational leadership creating an anomaly which is the subject matter of this dissertation.

#### **1.4 Significance**

This is a preliminary and interpretative study. Although it is a preliminary study it fills an important gap in the educational leadership literature. In the extant educational leadership literature there is –to the best of my knowledge- very little empirically designed systematic research on educational leadership in southern Africa. This study therefore pioneers the educational leadership field in Zimbabwe and perhaps in southern Africa as well. Its main contribution is that it contributes to the sparse academic literature on female educational leadership with a focus on the critical tension between customary practices in which women are minors on one hand and perform professional duties in which they are responsible senior administrators on the other.

#### **1.5 The Zimbabwean Social, Political & Historical Context**

Historically the state in Zimbabwe has played a central role in the reproduction of patriarchy, initially as the colonial state, and lately as the neo-colonial state. The Southern Rhodesia colonial state was created by the colonizing power Britain, with the express purpose of administering the colony in the interests of British capital. Zimbabwe, like other African colonies, was a source of raw materials vital for capital accumulation and the development of industry in Britain. There was limited development of local manufacturing and commerce, which centered on the needs of foreign capital and the white settler community. This situation prevailed from the inception of colonialism until independence in 1980; practically the economy was foreign controlled.

In Zimbabwe, the colonial state introduced the Common Law (based on Roman-Dutch law). The Roman Dutch law was applicable to Europeans in all the different facets of their lives. The Roman Dutch law was unlike the case of Europeans applicable to Africans in criminal matters only. As the development of capitalist relations of production in Zimbabwe were the result of colonialism, a major role of the state was to intervene, through legislation, on behalf of capital to create a plentiful supply of cheap labor. A series of laws were legislated to coerce African men into participating in the alien wage labor system. While subject to Common Law in all criminal matters, Africans were permitted to retain, with some adaptations their traditional and personal law systems referred to by the state as Customary Law, in so far as these laws were “not repugnant to natural justice, morality and good conscience” (Ncube, 1987a). Under traditional law African women remained legal minors from birth to death, unable to enter into contracts (including marriage) or to represent themselves in legal disputes, and with no rights to guardianship or custody of children. Polygamy was a legal marital arrangement. Women could neither own nor control personal or family property and thus were not entitled to inherit property. Women could not own land; they could however exercise the rights to use the land as per the pleasure and discretion of the husband. Women professing to be Christians were allowed to marry under the Common Law with the consent of their male guardian. Customary Law was applicable in all marital and family matters. Thus, all African women were perpetually under the guardianship of males (father, brother, brother-in-law and even eldest son), upon whom they were dependent for their very existence.

The reproduction of patriarchal values, beliefs, attitudes and gender relations took place within the family, which was not only the basic economic unit, but also the major institution of education within pre-colonial traditional society. Socialization, which took place informally within

the family, was the principal mode of education of African children, preparing them for their adult roles (Dorsey, 1975; Gelfand, 1985). Gender socialization occurred within this context. Girls were taught the knowledge and skills related to women's work in agriculture and the home and the modes of behavior and related demeanor considered appropriate for good wives, mothers and daughters-in-law. The introduction of formal western education in schools and other institutions, during the colonial period, did not; in the main replace the family as the major institution of education for girls. In fact the colonial state's education policy and practice ensured that most African girls were unable to acquire complete formal education.

### **1.6 Colonial Education**

Formal education particularly during the colonial era was introduced by missionaries (in the early 1890's and 1900's), with the aim of providing most of the schooling for African children throughout the colonial period. The nature and content of missionary education was from very early on monitored and controlled by the state. State education policy ensured that the amount and type of schooling offered to Africans was compatible with the needs of settler colonial capitalism. The objective of education in the colony was to produce a cadre of partially qualified African person power to service the interests of British imperial interests and to mediate between the African majority and British imperial powers.

By 1966 revised state policy for African education aimed at 7 years of primary education for all African children, a 2-year post-primary course for 37.5% of African primary school leavers, and 4-year course of academic schooling for 12.5% of primary school leavers, to be achieved by the mid by the mid-1970's (Gordon, 1989). The education for Europeans was free and compulsory, but the education for Africans was optional and the Africans had to pay tuition fees. Furthermore, state spent nine times more money on European education relative to that spent on



African education. By 1971, just nine years before independence, 2384 African pupils were in the 10<sup>th</sup> grade, of whom 591, or 24.8% were girls, and 173 pupils in 12<sup>th</sup> grade, of whom 19, or 11% were girls (Dorsey, 1975).

The colonial society was male dominated, as was the British system upon which it was modeled. Male domination inhibited women participation in all formal sectors of African life. The male domination manifested itself in a relatively lower numbers of girls in formal education. (Chung, 1988)

Throughout the colonial period girls were discriminated against by the colonial state's education policy, not only in terms of access, but also within the school system. Girls of all races received unequal treatment in the schools, where both the formal and hidden curricula were biased in favor of boys. The relatively few African girls who successfully completed their education and gain formal qualifications necessary for entry into higher levels of the modern sectors of the economy were employed mainly in the state sector as nurses and teachers in facilities catering for Africans.

On the attainment of independence in 1980 the nature of the state changed as the country moved from colonial to post -colonial status. Whilst the new government stated that it was committed to the transformation of Zimbabwe to a "socialist egalitarian" society (Government of Zimbabwe, 1982), it inherited the structures of the colonial capitalist system. Despite Zimbabwe having gained political independence from Britain and the socialist aims of the government, Zimbabwe remained an underdeveloped neo-colonial society tied to and dependent upon international capitalism.

Although the Zimbabwe Constitution in theory guaranteed all Zimbabwean citizens equal rights and protection from discrimination, gender specific rights and protection for women

from discrimination and domination were not explicitly included. The perpetuation of Customary and Common Laws protected patriarchal family property and personal relations. Whilst unable to alter the constitution for a decade, the Government did take steps to legislate in favor of women in certain areas. However, the dual system of law has remained in practice. Changes in some respects granting women important rights (such as rights to own land), have rendered the legal position of African women complex.

The most important piece of legislation with regard to the rights of women, the Legal Age of Majority Act (LAMA), which became law in December 1982, conferred majority status on African women for the first time in history. In general, the act benefited black middle class women most as they had jobs, incomes and education rendering it possible to take advantage of their legal majority (Gaidzanwa 1992).

Although by 1987, education was perceived as a fundamental right of every Zimbabwean, gender-specific rights were not guaranteed in education legislation. However, this perception of education as a fundamental right formed the basis of educational reform. Education was also perceived as a key instrument to effect development and realizes social equity. The major objectives were the introduction of free and compulsory primary education and the expansion of all facilities at all levels. To achieve this objective, the state embarked on a program of educational expansion including the building and upkeep of school physical infrastructure, the training of teachers, the opening of colleges and the expansion of non-formal education programs. What was achieved was one of the highest rates of educational expansion in southern Africa (Loewenson, 1992).

While institutionalized differences between the colonized and ex-colonizers were done with, gender inequalities were not seriously addressed. The ideology of gender differentiation

continued to inform educational practice, and the pre-existing barriers to the education of girls remained intact. However education has been seen as the major mechanism for the emancipation of African women and the means by which they will be enabled to compete with men in modernizing the economy, which is supposed to lead to their economic empowerment. This study seeks to investigate the experiences of four female education leaders in Harare's, (Zimbabwe) high schools in light of the dual system of Customary and Common Law, which on one hand perceives women as minors and on the other guaranteeing all Zimbabweans equal rights and protection from discrimination.

Schools like most other institutions, in Zimbabwe are going through a period of rapid change accentuated by hyperinflation and a collapsing economy. Because of the economic collapse there is an acute shortage of resources both material and human rendering the day to day running and management of schools a burdensome and challenging task particularly for school administrators who have to endeavor running schools successfully in a context of declining resources. Successful management of schools in contexts of depleted resources increasingly depends on effective and efficient school leadership-to at best overcome-, or at least mitigate the adverse effects of a lack of resources on the day to day running of the institution as it attempt to realize its long term educational objectives.

As the number of women enrolling in educational administration continues to increase (Montenegro, 1993 & Gordon, 1995b), the perspectives and practices of female school leaders need to be included in the study of educational administration. Attention needs to be given to how educational leaders respond to complex environments and serve the students well. Research on Zimbabwean women's

understandings and beliefs about educational leadership and their practices will enable male and female practitioners of educational administration to develop a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of their field of educational leadership.

### **1.7 Research Participants**

In order to gain insight into the nature of female leadership, I catalogued and profiled the experiences of four women in positions of educational leadership in Harare/Zimbabwe. By women in positions of female leadership, I am referring to principals of high schools. Details of the methodology, the selection of the research participants, and how the data were collected are reported in chapter 3.

In this chapter, I have provided a contextual description of the setting within which the study was carried out. I explored how the colonial struggles influenced the direction-albeit –temporarily of the postcolonial gender relations within Zimbabwe. The chapter has also enumerated the research questions, that guide this research, and hence the methodology to be used in data collection.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review: Educational Leadership

Over the last two decades, research in educational leadership has developed rapidly. Studies into school effectiveness have generally tended to cite leadership as hallmarks of effective schools, but they have varied in their conceptualization of what leadership constitutes, and the notion of leadership has been a source of continuing controversy. Because there are conflicting ways in which leadership is constructed, arguments for general theory of leadership are compelling; this has however not discouraged some scholars from seeking to formulate a general theory of leadership. In the light of the aforementioned, I will define leadership as site specific. By site specific, I mean that there are potentially distinctive female educational leadership features (Blackmore 1998) amenable to a feminist perspective. Feministic perspectives will foreground other forms of social power other than patriarchy. A feministic perspective can be a productive way of conceptualizing women's experiences in contexts of educational leadership. In spite of the diverse ways in which leadership is understood, there are some recurring features-it is to these features which I now turn.

#### 2.1 Concepts and Theories of Leadership

One of the central points that they agree upon is that leadership involves the exercise of influence over others, and thus, unlike management, can take place outside, as well as inside formal organizations. Within organizations, leadership can be exercised at

most levels and in most activities. It is important to recognize that leadership in schools is not the preserve of any single position, and can thus be found and built throughout the school. Management, in contrast to leadership, relates to structures and processes by which organizations meet their goals and central purposes (Kotter, 1990; Buhler, 1995; Burns, 1978), and it arguably, is more likely to be tied to formal positions than to persons. Headship, like management, is a structural position, which carries with it responsibilities and accountabilities (Buhler, 1995). Whereas members of an organization recognize the authority of a leader, the authority of a head is a product of an organizational position. (Christie & Lingard, 2001). Whereas leaders operate through influence and networks, heads may operate through compulsion, as well as consent and influence. Leaders may influence followers to take any direction; managers and heads are operate within the regulations and seek to realize the mission of an institution. Whereas leaders have responsibility towards followers only, managers and heads have responsibilities for meeting organizational and systemic goals. It is heads that are also usually responsible for symbolic roles such as ceremonies, assemblies and other public functions.

Having distinguished the three concepts, I would argue that ideally the three should be encapsulated in one person-the school principal. School principals hold formal positions of authority, and are responsible and accountable for the activities of the schools. Ideally in achieving the aggregation of leadership and managing, principals should lead by exercising influence rather compulsion; and a key task for them is to recognize leadership throughout the school, and to influence it towards achieving the broader goals of the school (Krantz & Gilaman 1990). In relation to management, school

principals are responsible for setting, maintaining and changing the structures, strategies and processes by which the school operates; in a sense they are responsible for ensuring the organized rhythm of the school. Krantz & Gilmore (1990) contend that organizational leadership requires the integration of leadership and management.

Any one can demonstrate leadership qualities: a student, teacher, administrative official, parent, board member or other person associated with the school. The leadership task for the principal is to nurture, develop, and reinforce leadership wherever it is found to facilitate the school's objectives (Drake & Roe, 1994).

## **2.2 Trait Theories**

Possibly, one of the most influential theories on leadership is a variant of the "great man" or trait theories- that attributes leadership to an individual person. According to Drake and Roe (1999) hundreds of studies try to identify specific qualities or characteristics that distinguish leaders from non-leaders. Many of the traits studied seem to be inborn attributes, such as physical characteristics or intelligence, and some are acquired skills, such as impeccable social behavior or dynamic public speaking. However, for the most part these studies have failed to yield any truly discriminating traits or sets of traits. While it is conceptually empirically straightforward to point to flaws in trait theories, these theories continue to appear in different forms. It is relatively easy to demonstrate that the traits associated with "great man" theories of leadership tend to reflect idealized, *masculinity*, *heroic* myths, rather than the realities of what ordinary leadership looks like particularly in schools. It is easy to point out that these are romantic

pictures that present universal features of leaders as saviors whose qualities stand outside time, place and context. It is therefore reasonable to enquire why such a conceptualization of theories is retained in spite of the fact that its degree of realism is open to debate.

Perhaps, the logical argument to make is that leadership, however framed may make an impact. It is not hard to imagine instances or personal experiences where the change of the leader impacts a situation either positively or negatively. Individuals with their particular biographies, capacities, and dispositions or habituses as Bourdieu (1997) would describe it, have a legitimate part in theories of leadership. Consideration of individual leadership is necessary, but it is not sufficient in explaining the social relations of leadership.

According to Christie & Lingard (2001), leadership is embedded in various fields of social relations; think, for example, of principals located at the intersection of multiple fields, professional, both inside and outside the school, local community, systemic relations, and so on. Fullan (2001) attempts to capture this idea of the school leader when he defines school leadership in three ways: 'inside,' the 'outside-in,' and the "inside-out" narratives.

### **2.3 Contingency and Situational Theories**

Another strand of educational leadership is what may be characterized as contingency and situational theories. These shifts the focus from individual attributes to behavior and settings (Fiedler, 1964; Fiedler and Chemers, 1974; Vroom and Yetton,



1973; Hersey and Blanchard, 1977; Palmer; 1994 and Whitaker, 1998). This broad position is well summed up in the words of one of the best-known theorists, Fiedler (1967):

Any one style of leadership is not in itself better than any other, Nor is one type of leadership behavior appropriate for all conditions Hence almost anyone should be able to succeed as a leader in some Situations and almost everyone is likely to fail in others. It also follows from this theory that one can improve group or organizational performance either by changing the leader to fit the situation or changing the situation to fit the leader. (p. 246).

Fiedler classified leaders as either task oriented or human relations oriented, as determined by the leaders score on a personality measure called the least preferred co-worker scale (LPC). He then tested his theory on the findings of over eight hundred studies completed between 1951 and 1963. Analyses of the studies indicated (1) low LPC or task-motivated leaders were most effective in high control or low-control situations, and (2) high LPC or human relations-motivated leaders were most effective in situations of moderate control. While Fiedler's work is controversial, others, following up on his research, have critically examined leadership methods and have maintained that leaders can and should alter their style of leadership in concrete situations to better fit their style to the demands of the situation. Drake and Roe (1999) argue that no to do so would lead to failure.

Hersey and Blanchard suggest that the leader should adjust behavior to the maturity level of the group. They use the term maturity relative to the group's skill and willingness to

set high goals and take the responsibility for achieving those goals. If the group is immature in skills, the leader must direct how things are to be done – a high task and low relationship orientation. A leader who misjudges the group as immature or who needs to be controlling and directive will tend to maintain or force a group into behaving immaturely. This approach to management has been referred to as management for infancy (Drake and Roe, 1999; Heresy & Blanchard, 1988).

Contingency and situational approaches are an important move beyond trait theories in that they view leadership as involving a repertoire of styles and behaviors, and significantly they bring consideration of context into prominence. A danger in contingency and situational approaches is that they may emphasize technique over substance, and result in manipulative behavior. In their extreme, they may be more important to do the right things than to do things right (Christie & Lingard, 2001.).

Contingency and situational theories are often too complex to be useful in practice (Yukl, 1998), it remains the case that most contemporary theories of leadership are contingency theories of some sort.

These theories have been so resilient because they emphasize context and context-appropriate activity rather than to conceptualize leadership in a disembedded manner. Just as individuals with particular biographies, capacities and habitus are an important component of any theory of leadership, so too are the particular organizations or social fields in which individual habituses are located, as well as the broader social, political and economic contest in which these fields

or organizations operate. It makes little sense to evaluate the leadership of a school principal without considering the central purposes of schools as organizations responsible for providing systematic learning and teaching, and the broader social configuration of the times, in which education policies are drawn up and implemented.

#### **2.4 Transformation Leadership**

The third leadership theory that emerged in the 1980's is the transformational leadership. According to Roberts (1985), this type of leadership offers a vision of what could be and gives a sense or purpose and meaning to those who would share that vision. It builds commitment, enthusiasm, and excitement. It creates a hope in the future and a belief that the world is knowable, understandable, and manageable. The collective action that transforming leadership generates empowers those who participate in the process, giving them a sense of hope, optimism, and energizing participants. In essence, transforming leadership facilitates a redefinition of people's mission and vision renewing their commitment, and facilitating a restructuring of the systems creating conditions that are ideal for goal accomplishment. In a sense the idea of transformational leadership was a response to the speed of change surrounding any organization today. Interest in transformational leadership may be understood as part of a broader set of concerns about the emotional and symbolic aspects of leadership influences, which emerged in leadership theories during the 1980's. Of particular interest was the question of how leaders influenced followers to sacrifice their

own self-interest in favor of the interests of the organization. The seminal work in this area was that of Burns (1978), who distinguished between transactional and transformational leadership. Burns viewed power as central to leadership relationships, arguing that that ‘the genius of leadership lies in the manner in which leaders see and act on their own followers’ values and motivations (1978: 20). Transactional leadership is based on an exchange of valued things and binds leaders and followers into a cohesive entity. Transformational leadership goes further than this. In Burn’s own words, it occurs ‘...when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality Transcending leadership is dynamic leadership in the sense that the leaders throw themselves into a relationship with followers who will feel elevated by it and often become more active themselves, thereby creating new cadres of leaders’. (Original emphasis, *ibid*).

The notion of transformational leadership has had a considerable impact on studies of educational leadership (Gronn, 1996; Leithwood et al, 1999). In a range of empirical studies, Leithwood et al have developed, tested and refined an eight dimensional model of transformational leadership for schools. In this model transformational leadership is characterized as leading to higher levels of personal commitment of organizational goals and greater capacities for accomplishing those goals, which is assumed to result in extra effort and greater productivity. The eight dimensions of transformational leadership enumerated are: “ (1) building school vision, (2) establishing school goals; (3) providing intellectual stimulation; (4) offering

individualized support; (5) modeling best practices and important organizational values; (6) demonstrating high performance expectations; (7) creating a productive school culture; and (8) developing structures that foster participation in school decisions” (1999:9).

One reason why educational leadership theorists have taken up transformational leadership enthusiastically is because of an affinity between education as a normative practice, and those theories that emphasize moral principles and an active commitment to a realization of the school’s objectives. Although Burns’s study of leadership draws on a variant of the “great men”, it says little if anything, about the effects of race and gender on leadership or fellowship. According to Burns, leadership is driven by “values of means” such as honesty, responsibility, fairness, and honoring of commitment, while transformational leadership is concerned with end values: liberty, justice, and equality (1978: 430-431).

Thus there are no guarantees that the values driving transformational leadership in education are necessarily based substantially on human rights, equality, democracy and social justice-or indeed that these values have standard interpretations. Certainly Leithwood et al (1999) and Gronn (1996), in discussing transformational leadership, do not seriously consider gender issues, which is a striking illustration that transformational leadership may have its limits. Indeed, Blackmore’s (1989) *Troubling Women* provides a very instructive feminist account of the gendered effects of educational restructuring upon leadership in schools in the state of Victoria, Australia. Expansive organizations (Coser, 1974; Blackmore, 1999) typically associated with a neo-liberal era are taxing

emotionally upon women. Moreover, in spite of Burn's enthusiasm, morality is concerned with allegedly 'good' and 'bad'. As Kets de Vries, (1993) and Clements & Washbush (1999) stress there is a 'dark' side to leadership.

## **2.5 Instructional Leadership**

A fourth leadership theory is instructional leadership. According to Terry, (1996); Burns (1978); Krug, (1993); and Greenfield, (1987), this is leadership which moves the institution in the direction of academic success and into the domain of instruction. Instructional leadership requires five actions by the leader. These are: (1) defining a mission; (2) managing curriculum and instruction; (3) supervising teaching; (4) monitoring student progress; and (5) promoting instructional climate.

Krug (1992), states that a clear sense of purpose is important in educational leadership. He argues "operating without a clear mission is like beginning a journey without having a destination in mind. Chances are you won't know when you get there." (p. 432).

The primary service that schools offer is instruction. Therefore, it is imperative that principals have at least an awareness of all subject areas and the special needs of each. Educational leaders need a broad knowledge base that allows them to carry out the mission of the school. For example, they should be able to provide information and direction to teachers regarding instructional methods, and they should be actively involved in and supportive of curriculum development.

In terms of supervising teaching, an educational leader should adopt a proactive approach to staff development. According to Krug (1993), an effective educational leader provides opportunities for teachers to continue their professional development both on and off the school site, with the goal of developing within each teacher qualities that will embrace student learning.

Educational leaders provide a first level quality control check on the preparation of students (Krug, 1993). The educational leader should be able to clarify the meaning of outcomes when necessary. They should competently review the results and use them to assist teachers, students, and parents in developing strategies for improving performance.

Krug (1993) contends that the principal as an educational leader is responsible for creating an atmosphere of educational excitement at all levels and for channeling the energies of students and teachers in productive ways. The instructional climate of the school can be promoted in a variety of ways, including the provision of a safe and structured environment, child-centered activities, and a pervasive understanding that a premium is placed on doing one's personal best. All stakeholders have great expectations for the students.

While Krug has described five domains that must be engaged in by effective educational leaders, Teresa Northern and Gerald Bailey (1991) have identified seven professional competencies that are apparent in instructional leaders: Visionary leadership, strategic planning, change agency, communication, role modeling, nurturing, and

disturbing. These competencies are above and beyond the more recently expected role of the principal as manager of the organization

Two other factors that influence the principal's ability to lead effectively in the instructional realm are the clarity and complexity of the instructional technology (Greenfield, 1987). Clarity refers to the extent to which the instructional process is understood and can be specified and complexity is the "...degree to which the instructional processes of the school require interdependence and coordination among the teaching staff" (p. 183). Schools vary in the clarity of the instructional process to which they are committed. Where greater clarity exists, closer supervision is possible because all players are using the same game plan. More valid assessments of classroom instruction can be made and positive outcomes are more likely.

## **2.6 Women in Educational Leadership**

This section of the chapter focuses on the new understandings of western female experience in administering schools. According to Blackmore (1989); Capper (1992); and Regan & Brooks (1992), in the 1970's women began to seriously consider leadership positions at every level of the school hierarchy. However, most doors were closed and few women were provided with little if any support in their job searches. Most male faculty studied at colleges in which conventional modes of teaching were adopted. The conventional methods were not necessarily sensitive to issues about gender. These conventional approaches were also used when the male faculty became administrators. Generally, women were employed as low-level administrators with extremely limited opportunities for upward professional development.



Confronted with all these problems, women established networks to support, encourage, and mentor each other. In 1975 this resulted in the birth of the New England Coalition of Educational Leaders (Regan & Brooks, 1992). This coalition evolved into the Northeast Coalition of Educational Leaders (NECEL), which now has more than 500 women drawn largely from Maine to Pennsylvania. The main objective of its mission is to increase the number of women in educational positions, and to enhance their opportunities for success, when they have attained those positions.

Through a collaborative effort, women have been able to understand and develop attributes which foster successful leadership in education. These attributes reflect women's experience: collaboration, care, fortitude, intuition, and vision. The aforementioned values emerge from a core set of values, which guide their action. Naming these attributes brings them into consciousnesses.

Collaboration is defined as the ability to work in a group eliciting and offering support to each member, creating a synergistic environment for everyone (Regan & Brooks, 1992). Lenz & Myerhoff (1985) state that cooperativeness is one of women's hidden sources of power. Women share stories of how they reach out to other people, ask for help, and include people in, collaborating to get the job done. A significant side-product that often results from this approach is the development of new leadership and greater self-esteem for those included in. Women in educational leadership positions create collaborative experiences for their staffs and for the students in their care. The second attribute, caring, is defined as the development of an affinity for the world and the people in it;

translating moral commitment to action. Gilligan (1982) and Belenky (1986) identify the themes of care and connection as central to women's psychological development and learning. Feminist leadership reflects care and concern for colleagues, male and female, is central to their conduct of their schools, and is an essential feature in the development of interpersonal relationships.

The attribute of courage, is the capacity to move ahead into the unknown. Testing new ideas in the world of practice is an attribute that most women embark on especially in careers previously dominated by men. According to Regan & Brooks, (1992), there is a separation of the private and public spheres. The public sphere is a male dominated space, hierarchically structured by rules initiated and sustained by 'male' rules. Women have to obey these rules in order to become bonafide members of the group. It takes courage to figure out the rules and play by them as long as they are not in conflict with women's core values. When there are obstacles to change women are willing to take more risks and seek alternative ways of realizing their objectives.

The fourth attribute is intuition, defined as the ability to balance weight and experience and abstraction, emotion and intellect (Regan & Brooks, 1992). Intuition is a word that women, particularly professional women have hesitated to use because for so long it was a "female thing", therefore did not have a respectable empirical status. Regan & Brooks (1992) contend that there is nothing mysterious about intuition. It is a natural mental ability, strongly associated with experience. As women build on their experience, they place

greater trust in their intuition. An important piece for women leaders is to articulate what they do and how they feel, what they believe and maybe some of that comes from articulating their intuition.

The last attribute is vision, which is the ability to formulate and express original ideas, persuading others to consider the options in new and different ways (Regan & Brooks, 1992).

Women's orientations to their jobs can not be easily separated from such core values around which they organize their personal lives. Due to differences in experience women are likely to interpret the world through lenses which might be different from those of men. Regan & Brooks assert: "Feminist leadership reflects feminine experience" (1992, pp.5).

Regan and Brook (1992) and Fennell (1997) posit that gender is a category of experience. That means that women and men experience and interpret the world differently as a function of their gender. Gender is not the only category of experience, of course. Race and class are two other important ones in twentieth century United States, which in some cases are distinct, and at times intersect with race and class. The interpretation by any one individual of the world is a complex blend of different categories at the disposal of that one individual. In this study, however, I opted to focus mainly on gender.

Fennell & King (1993) state that in the beginning women concentrated on deciphering rules required for being a school leader. They formed networks

because they had heard that 's what the 'old boys' do, they dressed for success, they learned and practiced the games their mothers never taught them, and generally tried to mimic the behavior of the male leaders around them. They knew that the world of school leadership was organized hierarchically, and were determined to move up the hierarchy. Many successfully moved up the hierarchy. However, they did not know at this point they neither knew that gender is category of experience, nor that they were emulating male rules as they imagined them to be.

If one accepts gender as an experiential category, then one must also accept that women and men may experience and interpret the role of school leadership differently - a key argument in feminist perspectives to educational leadership. Gradually, over a protracted period women have been able to enumerate values associated with educational leadership from a female perspective. They have begun to use these attributes as lenses through which to analyze their practice, in ways which clarify issues for them, and to enhance their comprehension of their status and roles in educational systems.

Blackmore (1989) and Fennell and King (1993), argue that accepting gender as a category of experience does not preclude possibilities of learning from men. Rather, gender can learn from the other if the experiences of both are articulated and disseminated widely. Historically, the body of knowledge which is learned in colleges of school administration derives essentially and exclusively

from male-based experience, including the experience and knowledge of women broadens the leadership landscape.

According to NECEL women's preliminary attempts at becoming school leaders involved them in learning and trying to apply to knowledge, which might be construed –inaccurately in some cases- as male-based knowledge about effective school leadership. They simply did not know other alternative ways of practicing leadership, which are opened up by feminist perspectives to leadership.

Fennell (1977), in a study of female school principals based on their own experiences, examined the acts, beliefs, goals, feelings, dreams, illusions, and frames of reference of women's experience in educational leadership positions. The study focused on the how the principals articulated their professional experiences using stories as narratives. The women's meaning of leadership focused on three themes. They construed leadership in a multidimensional way prominent among which were: (1) women as problem solvers (2) leadership as mentoring (3) school principals as instructional leaders par excellence. One women in the study openly claimed that she was “a curriculum and instructional leader and not just a manager who runs a tight ship” (Fennell 1997:24). Women in this study realized the importance of their formal roles in their schools as resource providers, astute communicators, and leaders in decision-making processes.

The meanings these female leaders ascribed to leadership were shaped by and in turn shaped their life experiences in educational leadership. Two of the

principals talked about leadership as problem solving. These female principals viewed problem solving as the main way in which they enacted their leadership in the school setting. They discussed problem solving related to curriculum improvements and innovations, improving teacher competence and teaching strategies, problems related to student discipline, and problems of maintenance of the school, which involved problem solving with support staff and custodians. In line with the female leadership attributes of collaboration and caring, the principals claimed that they did much of their work in these areas through listening, caring and relationship building. They described the importance of relationships between teachers and students and between themselves and teachers and students. They expressed the importance of caring and being perceived by others to care about them and their problems.

Other female principals in this study expressed the meaning of their leadership experiences in more symbolic terms. They spoke about being considered by teachers in their schools, as the keeper of the dream on which the principals and teachers had worked to develop over a number of years. These women were successful in their schools because they could be perceived as understanding the deepest values and most pressing concerns of their constituents who included teachers, students, their parents and members of the community.

Eagly, Karau & Johnson (1992) noted among their findings, that although women principals were oriented to developing and having strong interpersonal relationships, they were also task-oriented. According to Fennell (1997), while all

the principals in her study illustrated the importance of caring about and listening to people, they were also consistently concerned with ensuring that the tasks related to providing the best possible instructional environment for students are being taken. Fennell also found out that these women leaders use intuition in their leadership as a resource when making expert decisions in situations of limited evidence. While women linked the use of intuition with other aspects of their work, they felt that their intuition served them well in the developing and maintaining strong interpersonal relationships.

Lynch (1990), cited in a study of female principals by Holtkamp (2002), proposed three critical attributes that women in administration should possess: (1) a high degree of compatibility between the demands of the position and her career objective (2) intelligent and capable of performing duties as demanded by her professional position and (3) negotiating barriers successfully. This means overcoming structural barriers and an informal filtering system that organizations use to test and train aspiring principals, as a way of controlling upward mobility.

Some women were more adept at negotiating barriers than others. Each of these attributes requires successful communication. Because organizational cultures and people vary, the exact contribution of each attribute will also vary by context (Lynch, 1990).

The Hagberg Consulting group in Holtkamp, (2002) concluded that women are significantly better leaders than men in six areas: (1) being able to articulate a

clear vision; (2) goal setting and clear direction; (3) being able to take charge in difficult situations (4) being inspirational role models (5) setting high performance standards; and (6) being able to assume responsibilities. It is not clear how applicable this might be to women leaders in Southern Africa.

In this chapter, I described and evaluated various leadership theoretical frameworks which characterize the nature of leadership in general and educational leadership in specific. The main objective of the chapter has been to try and interpret the various ways in which these theoretical frameworks can be used to shed insight into the nature of female educational leadership in postcolonial African contexts. The relevance of these models has empirical implications, which I address in chapter three – research methodology.



## Chapter 3

### Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research problem which the study sought to investigate, the rationale for the study, a description of the demographics of the informants and a description of the research methods used in the data collection. The chapter also provides a brief schematic description of the ways the data were analyzed. A more detailed presentation and analysis of the data are in chapters four and five.

#### 3.1 Problem Statement and Research Questions

The objective of this study was to provide a thick description and an analysis of the experiences of four Zimbabwean female school principals. An analysis of Zimbabwean female school principals is interesting because it raises a paradox. In Zimbabwe, women are playing an increasingly important role in educational leadership, but are still regarded as minors in the society at large. In an attempt to explore this paradox, the study addressed the following questions:

- 1) What are Zimbabwean female school principals' perceptions of educational leadership?
- 2) What professional and interpersonal strategies do Zimbabwean female school principals use when engaging with other school stakeholders such as the local communities, representatives of the ministry of education, etc?

This is a case study of female Zimbabwean educational leaders. It captures the experiences of four women principals in their own narratives, albeit filtered through my

own construal of their positions, to understand how they construct their positions as educational leaders. The study is holistic in so far as it attempts to capture the social, educational and historical aspects of the lives of female educational leaders (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Data collection occurred from May through June 2004. Interview transcriptions and analysis were completed within a period of seven months. (See section 3.5 for time frame and length of study)

### **3.2 Sites**

Two of the schools in the study are located in Harare, the capital city and a major commercial centre of Zimbabwe. The schools are coeducational, with a balanced enrollment of male and female students. The teaching staff in both schools includes men and women. The other two schools are rural centers and have a comparable demographic and gender balance as the urban schools. Rural schools tend to be more deeply embedded in their social context than urban ones. Rural schools are also generally treated as transit points. As these school principals become more experienced they are more likely to be transferred to head urban schools, hence my argument that rural schools can be seen as transit points. The degree to which social embeddedness of rural schools shapes the experiences of female educational leaders was a point of exploration in this study.

### **3.3 Access**

In order to gain entry to the schools, a written formal request was submitted to the ministry of education describing the objectives of the research and seeking permission to interview select high school principals within Harare and outlying rural area. (Refer to Appendix A for a copy of this letter). Only after the ministry of education had granted the authorization and targeted individual principals had given their individual consent were arrangements for the interviews pursued. A second letter was sent to the school principals, describing the objectives of the research and the ways in which data could be collected (Refer to Appendix C for a copy of this letter). It was emphasized that the discussions of the interviews would be confidential and the anonymity of the informants assured.

### **3.4 Informants**

The participants in this study were selected if they met the following criteria:

- (1) The selected schools have both girls and boys.
- (2) The schools have both men and women faculty.
- (3) Geographically, two of the schools be situated in a rural centre, and the other two in an urban centre.
- (4) Each principal has served in the school for at least one year or more prior to the commencement of the research.

Four principals were subsequently randomly selected who met the above criteria. The random selection was carried out by the ministry of education. Each informant signed a consent form before taking part in the project. The participation was voluntary. The informants did not receive any remuneration, but were given a token gift after the interview (Refer to Appendix B for standard ethics protocol).

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedures**

The main source of data collection occurred through in-depth interviewing. A total of eight interviews were conducted with four female principals: two in urban Harare high schools and two in rural areas. Each school principal was interviewed twice. The objective of the first interview was to gain insight into the school principal's experiences from their own perspectives in their own words. The second interview provided the informants with an opportunity to reflect on what they had said during the first interview, and to clarify any issues which they feel worth talking about which were not apparent in the first interview.

Seidman (1998) argues that interviewing is a basic mode of inquiry. He states that at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience. Interviews therefore provided access to the context of the female principals' behavior and thereby enabled me to understand the meanings of their behaviors (Seidman, 1998). The interviews were designed and implemented to gather experiential narrative material, which lend insight into the nature of educational leadership. I sought "conversational relation" with each of

the principals in the study (Seidman, 1998, van Maanen, 1988, and Merriam, 1998) in order to establish a rapport and to more meaningfully seek the information in the interview protocol (Refer to Appendix D for copy of the interview protocol). This had important consequences in the design of the interview protocol, mainly, indirect or semi-structured questions. This may make the questionnaire look circuitous, but such a structure reinforces rather than runs counter to the conversational style typical of most Zimbabweans. Direct questions are likely to be construed as intimidating and impersonal by the interviewees. The interview protocol unlike the ones frequently used in the west began with questions which are professional rather than personal, since questions asking about biographical details are construed as threatening. Once this 'conversational relation' was established between the informants and myself, questions of a personal nature were raised.

Data collection also involved observing what was going on at the schools, talking informally with people, and examining documents and materials that are part of the context. These documents included student enrollment and demographic records, teachers professional and other demographic records. However the interviews predominated; the on-site observation and documents played a supporting role in gaining an in-depth understanding of the women's' experiences as school principals. I relied heavily upon interviewing for this case data.

Throughout the duration of this study I maintained a daily journal where I documented my observations of the schools and informal conversations with other school stakeholders.

### **3.6 Time Frame**

There was an intervening of between two and three weeks at most between the two interviews. The interviews were semi structured. The first interview lasted between an hour and two hours at most. The first set of interviews were based on questions, focusing on the female school principals' educational leadership experiences as articulated through their own narratives and any other collateral discourses. However, my questions only acted as a guide for and did not regulate the direction of the interviews, hence the semi-structured nature. The second interview provided a retrospective assessment of what the interviewee said in the first meeting. Each principal was given a copy of the transcript of the interview and audiotape after the first interview prior to the second interview. Selected sections of the interview were played back to the interviewee in order to elicit the informant's retrospective comments to clarify any issues emerging from the interview. The second interview also provided the interviewee with opportunities to elaborate on related issues, which became apparent during or after the first interview.

The informants were encouraged to share critical incidents, anecdotes, experiences and ideas about leadership which they felt shaped their professional experiences. Using strategically deployed questions, I attempted to elicit more detailed descriptions of the issues and experiences raised by each informant. While the interviews were as open as possible, "...it is important to realize that the interview process needs to be disciplined by the fundamental question that prompted the need for the interview in the first place" (Van Maanen, p. 66).

Data from the interviews with principals were complemented with observation and field notes written in the form of a diary after each visit. In the diary, I wrote about some of my impressions of the school and recollections of some of my brief conversations with other people working at the school (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). A profile of each school was drawn based on enrollment figures, staff establishment, gender ration, academic qualifications and the nature of the social background of the students it serves. This data was obtained from school documents such as daily pupil attendance registers and teacher employment records filed in the principals' offices.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Data collection and analysis were carried out simultaneously. Analysis began with the first interviews, the first observation, and first documents read. I reviewed the purpose of my study and read and reread the data from interview transcripts, making notes in the margins to comment on the data. I wrote a separate memo capturing my reflections, tentative themes, hunches, ideas, and things to pursue that were derived from the first set of data. I noted things I wanted to ask, observe, or to look for in my next data collection activity. After my second interview, I compared the first set of data with the second.

Each interview was coded into units of data ranging from words used by participants to describe a feeling or phenomenon or large extracts of field notes describing a particular incident. All the coding was done by hand. First, the units of information were compared across the study looking for recurring patterns in the data. Second, the units revealed information relevant to the study and stimulated me to think beyond the particular bit of information (Guba, 1985). Thus themes began to emerge as

words or labeled passages of text according to content. These themes captured some recurring patterns cutting across the data. The categories were informed by the by the study's purpose, my orientation and knowledge, and the meanings were made explicit by the participants themselves (Merriam, 1998).

After working through the transcripts, field notes and documents, I compiled separate lists of my marginal notes and comments and tried to group the comments and notes that seemed to go together. As I worked through all the eight transcripts, I checked to see if the list of groupings were present in all the transcripts. Finally all lists were merged into one master list reflecting recurring patterns in my study. These patterns became the themes into which subsequent items were sorted. I put each theme onto a separate index card to allow for easy retrieval of data and for cross-analysis of coded categories. Ultimately five themes emerged from all the data (transcripts, field notes, observation notes and documents).

In table 1 below I include the themes of leadership that emerged and exemplify them with extracts from the data.



**Table 1: Themes and Interview Extracts**

Themes	Extracts from Interviews
Leadership as social welfare	<p>“Female... come to me for advice. They tell me things that they would otherwise not tell me if I was not in a leadership position.” (Chipo)</p> <p>“They find me very approachable they can come to me with their professional problems or personal problems.” (Tambu)</p>
Education as a Process	<p>Tambu defines it using the Shona proverb <i>kudzidza hakuperi-</i>.</p> <p>‘Education is an on-going process so it is process oriented. There are no specific products but only strategic points of exit. In the manufacturing sector there are specific products, which have to be produced.’ (Chipo)</p>
Consensual leadership	<p>“Other times I consult with my deputy and also senior teachers depending on the nature of the decision, which I have to make. ... day-to-day working of the school that I have to consult with the teachers.” (Chipo)</p> <p>“I confer anything to do with discipline of the school.” (Tambu)</p>
Independent leadership	<p>“There are decisions that I have to make on my own. ... it is not always that I consult other people. It depends on the decision that I have to make.” (Tambu)</p>
Authority, gendered senior moments	<p>“I think male teachers because of my age, respect me. Most of them call me mama.” (Chipo)</p> <p>“the young ones look up at me – because they actually know that I have that experience.” (Tambu)</p>
Creating new school culture	<p>“They want change for the children, change for the community, change for everybody and they support any little activity in the school. We have had to revamp the school because the previous male principal did not supervise them much.” (Chipo)</p>

A serious effort was made to report on how the informants described and narrated their own experiences (van Maanen, 1988; MacDonald & Walker, 1977).

The categories were not taken from pre-existing frameworks. A serious effort was made to report on how the informants described and narrated their own experiences (van Maanen, 1988; MacDonald & Walker, 1977: and Lucas, 1974).

### **3.8 Validity and Reliability**

Yin (1994) described the necessity for a creation of case study designs that address construct validity, internal validity, and face validity. (Lincoln and Guba 1985, Merriam 1988). Construct validity is understood as referring to the manner in which the interviews related to the broad questions of the study, i.e. in what ways the interviews addressed the question of the school principals' perception of leadership. Internal validity refers here to the manner in which the questions focused on the school principals' individual personal experiences. Face validity refers here to how the research was perceived. I tried to enhance face validity by making the interviews as professional as possible.

Techniques used to ensure reliability included a detailed account of the investigators' position in the research process, and creating an audit trail in detail as it emerged during the data collection period both during the first interview and the retrospective interviews. This meant keeping records of my impressions during the first interview and comparing them with my impressions of similar issues in subsequent interviews. Other reliability factors involved the description in the first chapter of the researcher's assumptions and the detailed choice of sampling method described in this

chapter. Whether the results of this study are portable and applicable to other comparable situations is an open empirical question (Merriam 1988).

### **3.9 Ethical Considerations**

General safeguards to the female principals during the interview included the use of an informed consent form, a discussion of the interview agenda and time frame, and the use of a tape recorder to ensure accuracy. I read a standard ethics protocol to the principals prior to the interviews and kept all agreements made with the subjects in this study. For example the principals were assured that their names would not be made public instead pseudonyms would be used to protect their identities. In addition, the identity of the participants was protected by using pseudonyms in the writing of the dissertation and therefore any publications that might emerge from the study.

In this chapter I gave a rationale for the study and a description of the research methodology employed with the intention to maximize reliability and validity. The chapter also schematically described the methods employed in the data analysis including the nature and type of transcription.

## Chapter 4

### Individual Profiles

In chapter three I described how I elicited data. In this chapter I present the narratives produced by each informant about their female educational leadership experiences. These profiles address the following questions:

- 1) What are Zimbabwean female school principals' perceptions' of what constitutes educational leadership as it pertains to them?
- 2) What professional and interpersonal strategies do Zimbabwean female school principals use when engaging with other school stakeholders such as the local communities, representatives of the ministry of education etc?

This chapter introduces four high school female principals who participated in this study, using pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality: Mai Chipo, Mai Shingi, Sisi Tambu, and mai Rumbi. I use the title 'Mai' to refer to the three informants Mai Chipo, Mai Shingi, and Mai Rumbi encapsulating the fact that I related to them as my seniors. I refer to Sisi Tambu because although she is senior to me, I related to her more as an 'older' sister. The profiles feature: 1) education as process; 2) distinguishing between consensual and independent leadership; 3) authority, gendered senior moments 4) conjuring up a new environment; 5) leadership as social welfare.

#### 4.1 Mai Chipo's Story

Mai Chipo is the principal of an inner city school in a predominantly African community with a low socio-economic status (SES). Mai Chipo describes her community's SES as: 'very poor in that most of our students fail to pay either the full tuition, or the full levy, they (are) assisted by Child Protection, Save Our Souls, and other Non-Governmental Organizations'.

In the extract below Mai Chipo narrates her educational history:

'I did primary education at a government school in Mutare, Dangare government school and then moved on to a mission school to do secondary education. Secondary education during our time meant "Zimbabwe Junior Certificate" (ZJC). I did formal education up to form 2 and thereafter because I had come from a large family of a dozen, I had to branch off to do (PTH). I did "O" level privately. After completing that I did "A" level privately as well and then I was accepted at the University of Zimbabwe (UZ) to do Curriculum Studies and English, so that's in brief what I did. Most of my studies were done privately.

Mai Chipo does not think that affirmative action had anything to do with her appointment as a principal. She said: "I don't think it played any significance in my appointment".

In the following section Mai Chipo reflects on the timing of her appointment.

Mai Chipo became a school principal after serving 24 years as a teacher. She feels that her promotion to the status of a school principal came rather late in her professional career. According to Mai Chipo, "It was a bit too late because it was after 24

years of service. So, I thought it was a bit too late in my career. It could have come much earlier than that”.

Mai Chipo feels that her promotion was delayed because, she had taught in primary schools for 18 years and then after attaining her first degree, had joined the secondary school and taught for 6 years before she was appointed as a school principal. In her own words:

“I worked all over Zimbabwe. I taught at St Joseph’s Mutare for four years and then went to Gweru. I was there for three years and then joined Harare where I taught for 13 years in Harare as a primary school teacher and during that period that’s when I was studying for my first degree. So, I switched over to the secondary school after obtaining my first degree and then joined a high school where I taught for 6 years before I was considered head of a school”.

In the following section of the narrative Mai Chipo describes her activities in a typical day in her professional life. She adopts a holistic view of female leadership which includes not only focusing on individual academic abilities and success, but the nutritional habits of her pupils and the nature of their physical and social environment as well. She also adopts a style of leadership in which her presence is felt in both academic and social aspects of the school’s life’. She says:

‘If that student were to come early in the morning, he/she would learn supervision by moving around. We would visit all places, corners of the school just to check on whether they are conducive for use. For example, the toilets have to be spotlessly clean for use by children. We also peep into the classroom to see whether they are litter-free.

We also move around the yard to see if it is clean and then at break, that person will be able to experience how our tuck shop is run because I walk there to see what type of food children buy – whether that food is nutritious, and healthy, the break takes 30 minutes and then thereafter we go round as well to make sure teachers have left the staff room to go back to work.

We (we refer to herself and an imagined visitor) go there just to tell them to go for their lessons. But our mere presence in the staff room will tell them that its time up to go for lessons. But sometimes we go and share – have tea together with the teachers and we have an informal chat and after that I also come here to the office to do my work on the computer here and to write reports to the Ministry and also attend to phone calls and to the behavior of the kids.

All sorts of problems, some come in the morning to report their problems, I am a problem solver.) They come at odd times, I keep an open door policy and I'm always here to attend to them, and to visitors as well, coming to apply for places for students from form one up to form four. Other parents and students come here looking for financial assistance... about the programs I was talking to you about. They come here for child protection. They come here for everything (*social function-my clarification*)... for professional help and some come to complain about the performance of their children that children should be able to listen to their parents. And then in the afternoon, it's more relaxed because that's when we have afternoon activities like volleyball, netball, during the season of ball games in the first term that students should be able to attend to athletics and we are here up to 4. And then I leave for home.”

#### **4.2 Mai Chipo's Reflections on her Perceptions as an Educational Leader**

In the following section Mai Chipo illustrates how she understands educational leadership. She feels that a principal has multiple roles and functions that she is obliged to perform. She expresses the argument eloquently when she says:

“Being a principal ... it's an achievement in life, yes, but it is an onerous responsibility. You become a teacher, you become a parent, you become a brother, and you become a sister to all the people you guide...” She also commented that educational leadership demanded specific skills and an orientation to listening, transparency, honesty, tolerance and a willingness to accommodate other people's perspectives.

She continues further saying: “Leadership, I think, you have to get a leaf from everything, a leaf from authoritarian, just a little bit, a leaf from laissez faire, just a little bit, a little bit of each. Management by moving around, you can take a little bit of that. And if you put too much of everything, you will spoil it. Because these days our teachers are so complex, they are just as good as their children. You need to be able to understand your colleagues if you are to be a good leader. Because if you don't listen much to their problems, you will fail as a leader because the majority of the people because of the AIDS scourge here in Zimbabwe, you need to know whether they are in good health, whether economically they are sound, whether socially they are sound because once you fail to understand them, you are in trouble. So, leadership is about understanding the people you work with. If you understand them, then you will make informed decisions.”

In the extracts below she distinguishes educational leadership from types of leadership associated with manufacturing. For Mai Chipo, the main difference between



manufacturing and education is best encapsulated in the distinction between process and product. She explains that “education is an on-going process so it is process oriented. There are no specific products but only strategic points of exit. In the manufacturing sector there are specific products, which have to be produced. Because educational leadership entails intervening directly into peoples’ lives, ethical considerations inevitably emerge perhaps more so than in the manufacturing sector”.

Mai Chipo further elaborates on her vision of educational leadership commenting thus:

“In education, you have to, because we are different from any people working in the industry...they have their own leadership. They want a finished product at the end of the day. In education, it is a process which you must groom everybody. There is a lot of grooming which is taking place with people you work with, with children. For example, in high school, it’s a six-year course whereas in the industry, if you want to make a plastic jug, you have specified time from beginning to end. In education, we have certain ethics that we follow. We need to know the human mind to be able to win their confidence. Unlike where you are working with a table, you don’t feel much like when you are working with human beings.”

For Mai Chipo discipline is an extremely important component of educational leadership. She has this to say about discipline in educational leadership:

“We have to make sure that students are well disciplined so that teachers can conduct lessons meaningfully. We have to make that all students are disciplined so that they do not disrupt the teaching. They are where they are supposed to be, on time so that

things can start moving. But on the whole, I don't think I don't have any serious discipline problems except for a couple of issues here and there.”

In the following section Mai Chipu analyses the nature of leadership focusing on issues about governance.

‘Through staff development, we have a lot consultative meetings. We have monthly meetings. In some of these monthly meetings the teachers at times chair the meetings. The meetings are also provide the teachers with opportunities to draw plans on how to further their individual development, so the teachers feel they are involved because they take part in decision making, because they contribute to important decisions. They give advice to the top brass. We have the deputy head and senior woman, senior lady, but on top of that we have eight heads of department (HODs) who are also administrators in their own right. They advise heads of department. And once a month we have a meeting where we sort of look back on the progress made each month through staff meetings.’”

In the section below she narrates her experiences as she tries to enforce school discipline. In order to enforce the school discipline she involves as many educational stakeholders as possible so that they feel committed to implementing the decisions. In order to enforce school discipline she relies on school classroom monitors to implement day-to-day discipline in the school. In the following narrative she describes the meetings she has held with parents, teacher associations, and other social activities relating to her school.

“I go to church on Sundays and once a month I join women’s group where we hold meetings. It’s a group of 75 women and we rotate. We have breakfast and lunch in a friend’s home, share ideas and invite guest speakers to talk to us. This is a day for us to relax. We have what we call Women Welcome Women in Zimbabwe. I also attend that. It’s an international organization where we host women from other countries who visit Zimbabwe. We give them shelter, we entertain them, and we give them help to visit places of interest in Zimbabwe”.

Mai Chipo describes how school activities could be said beneficial. She explained: “... it will teach you how you are supposed to relate with the community, with all classes of people. It provides you with an opportunity to relate to a diverse range of people: teachers, nurses, police etc. Our group is extremely diverse it includes any one irrespective of their professional status and qualifications. The only requirement is that the person be interested in our activities. We share ideas and that hopefully will shape peoples daily activities and improve their decision making in their personal and social lives.”

### **4.3 Instructional Leadership**

Mai Chipo felt quite enthusiastic about the role that she plays in how she contributes towards the development of both junior and senior faculty at her school. She perceives educational leadership as encompassing instructional leadership as well. She says: “Sometimes I go to teach. But in my department of languages, I ask them if I can co-teach a class with them. Sometimes we organize workshops where my teaching serves as an instructional model. In this day and age in Zimbabwe, the leader must set the pace

because if you don't set the pace, they will not be confident about your performance. You need to be well above them for you to serve as a model, which they would like to emulate, if you sit in the office, and then nothing goes out there. You have to be there with them, providing them with assistance to solve some of their problems, which they encounter. If you want to be a good leader, you have to be a good leader you have to be directly involved. You must not procrastinate. You must take immediate decisions, and say ok come at 10. You must have an open door policy if you want your administration to function effectively that's what I have learnt over the years."

Mai Chipo explained that teacher-training colleges only provide teachers with the basics of teaching. She feels that it's the function of the principal in the school to develop these teachers into full fledged professionals through development, team teaching, and clinical instruction'. In the section below she analyzes the development of junior teachers and describes the role which the school principal perceives she plays in the development of junior teachers.

"The younger ones need retraining on the job. What they have learnt at college is not enough. In fact, what they learnt at college is just the foundation of what is to come. When they are on the job, you need to provide them with on the job training through workshops, through staff development, by exposing them to the actual teaching by senior teachers, setting demonstration lessons in a department... But the college itself, yes, they produce the staff but the delivery after the college is something else."

In the section Mai Chipo narrates the challenges which she feels as educational leader.

“Acceptance by the community, what a man can do in a day, a woman has to do maybe three times for the community to accept her because in our setting a head of the family should be a man. It requires a lot of energy for a woman to be accepted in any given community because they believe the place of a woman is in the home and not heading institutions... (She repeats herself possible for emphasis) They believe the place of a woman is in the home and not to be heading institutions.” To overcome this challenge Mai Chipo says “Parents need results. If the results are not that good, then it becomes a problem. But as soon as you produce results, you have no problems with them and that is what we are working for and we are working for quality not just results, quality results. It will improve my relationship and enhance my standing in the community.”

The following section characterizes her relationship with school teachers. She uses an idiom drawn from interpersonal relationships to characterize professional relations. ‘It’s kind of cordial because they are still adapting to my management style and as I said before that they were used to a more laissez faire managerial style. Having to adjust to somebody who want work done yesterday, for the lazy type of people, they find it very difficult, but since I came here I’ve been here, I don’t think I’ve encountered any problems except for one male teacher who is alcoholic – he is finding it difficult to cope, having to stop drinking during working hours, that one small incident which I can mention but the rest are not really that important”.

Using an anecdote she describes how teachers relate to her.

“I think male teachers because of my age they kind of feel that they have no option but to respect me. Most of them call me “mama” and some call me by my real name. Some have this problem of liquor. We discovered 46 empty alcohol bottles in his office. It means over the years, that was his practice. He would drink at work and after consuming the drink; he would just throw the bottle in his office. So, we just collected the bottles in a big box and when we showed to him as an exhibit, he actually cried, he really cried and at the end, I discovered he was alcoholic. And that is the only small problem but the majority of them are very young. Most of them I treat them like my own sons. They are very young, so I have no problem in the relationships with them.”

In the following narrative Mai Chipo speculates how she would relate to older male teachers.

“Maybe, because you know we have this problem with older male teachers. They don’t like to serve under the leadership of a woman. I think their resistance to accepting female leadership arises from their ‘traditional views’ of women. But in their homes, they feel there are the heads of the family and why bother with this woman. But very few men are like that. A few traditional ones may give problems.”

In the following section she narrates how female teachers relate to her. She defines their relationship around the notion of a ‘problem.’”

“Female teachers have a problem. In some cases, as a new person, the teachers feel they have to adjust to a female educational style, they are used to male managerial style. Female teachers have problems because they are mothers at home, as a result, they come to you with all sorts of requests wanting to leave the school to go home to attend to

their personal problems and when you ‘no’, they are sometimes shocked and say ‘how dare you say no’ when your predecessor will just say, ‘oh yeah, you have got this problem you go home.’ But now in this second term, I have not had any problems but in the first term, we had so many requests of people coming to say, ‘Can I go home because my husband is sick, my son is sick, my daughter is sick.’ So many numerous excuses, too many to mention but we had a workshop on public relations. We had a workshop on culture and I think after these workshops, they know we mean business. We need to give quality time to the students so that we get paid at the end of the day. We don’t get paid by looking after our families at home and then claim money from work.”

The following anecdote encapsulates how Mai Chipo feels students relate to her.

“Students are very crafty human beings. They study the situation and try and take advantage of the situation. They disliked my predecessor. They gave him a nickname but when we bade him farewell they gave the impression that they were sad to see him go. They mimicked how he used to behave. So, when I joined them, they would come at odd times to school. Some would make noise in the corridors, and others would just go to the toilet. Immediately the break bells rings there is a massive exodus from the classrooms to the toilet. We then held some sessions with boys. We had to persuade them that they are the men, the future leaders of this country, you are leaders in your family. If you want to win boys, you have to sit down and talk; have a man to man talk and you give them rules. While we were giving them those rules and what we expected them to show the juniors in the school and that they must behave and after three or four weeks, I started seeing improvements in punctuality, discipline and cleanliness. This school was notorious

because the boys did not follow any dress code. We enforced a dress code. After enforcing a new and social code the situation improved. I have discovered that everybody wants to be appreciated, and challenged. We have not quite changed everybody but we are winning. We are planning to change the name of the school. The school has a derogatory given by the community. We are changing it to a one, which reflects our newly found sense of self-image. We are getting students to behave well not because they are afraid, but because they have agreed. We are trying to establish a bond for them. We held another session with girls. The girls were the easiest people to deal with because they are used to having responsibility in the home. Boys, according to our custom, they are made to run around. They don't have any house chores to do. With girls, I think we are almost there, but with boys we still have a long way to go.”

In an attempt to describe her relationship with the parents at her school Mai Chipo has this to say:

“It's very good. It's very good. The parents here do not interfere with the running of the school. We have had several meetings and they are progressive in their thinking. They want change for the children, change for the community, change for everybody and they support any little activity in the school, be it monetary or in kind. They collaborate with us in all the different types of sporting activities. I think parents are more progressive and supportive of the school than their children.”



On issues of school integration, the principals advocated for the integration of the community into the school, but the pertinent question is what they meant by integration. In the following section I illustrate how integration from the school principal was different from what the communities might have understood integration to mean. Integration was also expected to take place on the terms determined by the school authorities and not negotiated between the two parties.

For Mai Chipo the school is well integrated into the community. Its involvement in the school rescues the administrative load for her. The reduction of the administrative load is important because she has limited formal administrative support. She expresses her view on the school, community relationship thus:

“The school is integrated into the community ...try to involve the community into the school by holding consultation and sporting days. We try and raise funds through cake sales. The children are actively involved in cake sales, and other fund raising for the school. The community holds a meeting and they select from their members a delegation that does the purchasing. Their involvement reduces the workload for me.”

Mai Chipo described the extent to which the community gets involved in the affairs of the school. She explained that the community is not involved in the academic areas of the school. She laments: “No...not in the classroom because the majority of them are not professional. The community is involved in guidance and counseling. We have established a program in which we have we have men, boys and the male staff teaching the boys on how to grow up as decent people individually and socially. We also have group guidance for girls aimed at training them how to be good mothers, and housewives. So we have such....we involve the police, the nurses and even their parents take part in providing guidance to selected students whom we think will benefit most from the sessions.”

The nature of her professional relationship with the central office, called in Zimbabwe the provincial office, is a key aspect of her professional relationship. The relationship between the school principals and the teachers was described in strong positive terms-to what extent the descriptions masked deep differences between the school principals and the central office is a question which I return to in chapter 5.

“They decentralized everything; we relate more to the district office. We are on the phone with them nearly on a daily basis ...updating them of our performance as a school and they are also asking us about our performance. It’s a two-way traffic. And we have workshops with them. Relating to our district group and we rarely communicate with the provincial office because we now go via the district to the provincial office. But when we have something burning that needs the attention of the Regional Director, we go straight to him.”

In the extract below Mai Chipo describes the bearings which her experiences with other associations have on her professional life.

“Yes, Zimbabwe Teachers Association (ZIMTA). I don’t think in my first interview I mentioned ZIMTA. We have the National Association of Primary School Heads (NAPSH) and we have the Better Schools Program where we are integrated both primary and secondary and now they have this other program where I am a member that deals with teachers in Zimbabwe. I happen to be the vice secretary of the Highfield community. The whole community of Highfield that deals with this AIDS scourge and we learn quite a lot in those meetings. And there is another meeting where we meet with nurses in the area where we have the city council coming in, the nurses coming in ... all the people that matter in this community. Where they are brought together to discuss problems we face as a community. So, I think we learn quite a lot from other organizations like the problems the nurses are facing and police, the problems that they are facing with drug abuse and the like. We have all the people that are influential in this organization and I think we benefit quite a lot because we have relatively speaking a low crime rate. One workshop, which we had with the police, was illuminating. What we may think is not as important to the child. They spelt out how they get involved in local communities to reduce crime. We learnt quite a lot from the strategies, which the police use in crime prevention.”

There are a number of people who have inspired her and served as a role model to her. In her own words she has this to say:

“I have two people I have emulated. My very first head in Mutare and the second one was in Harare. They are both male. When we started teaching, there were very few women in positions of leadership. You can imagine in the whole of Highfield, I am the only female secondary school head. So, Mutare, it was the male head that I emulated. We couldn't even talk about female heads then. When I came to Harare, there were all male heads. I think about 10 or 11 years ago, that when female heads started trickling in into the system and into leadership otherwise it was male.”

Mai Chipo underscores the importance of these role models when she comments thus:

“I was inspired by their management styles and how they dealt with problems: their problem solving strategies. It is something, I have taken a leaf from the way they handled the situations. I got their style of management, one and problem solving, two. I said that and that's all I learnt from Mutsonziwa. He was very good at the agricultural development of the school. We leaned quite a lot from him and he was a father, he was a father figure. It appeared that he listened to everyone's problems.”

The importance of balancing her professional and family responsibilities is an issue which she keeps returning to and in the extract below she has this to say:

“It's not easy to balance but I think experience will teach you to leave the cap as soon as you go out of the gate. Leave your role as head of a school and go home as mother of a family because there is vast difference between being a head of a school, and being a mother. When you go home, if you continue with the same role that you have at

school you will encounter problems at home. Children will be afraid of you because they think you are being unduly authoritative and bossy. So, I have learnt to leave all the cap of leadership here at school. Anything to do with the profession is left here. I will only carry all those things that matter to my family and not the discipline that we have at school. It doesn't work at home. You need to be more persuasive with your own children than authoritative. They must feel they are close to you. You cannot do that at work. If you bring everybody close to you, no work will take place at your workplace. Otherwise they will waste a lot of time bringing unnecessary problems to you. And you spend a lot of time solving problems that they can solve at classroom level, but at home it's a bit different. You have got to find time for your family so that they don't feel you are running the family as if it's a mini-school."

Issues about retirement are an important issue. Her reflections on retirement are important and are captured in the following narrative. Mai Chipo would like to continue serving her community after she retires as school principal. She said: "I would want to give the remaining years of my career; I would want to help my community... at retirement I still want to teach them especially the younger groups not the bigger groups. I want to engage in a small crèche to keep myself going. I would also like to teach the toddlers how to read."

Mai Chipo has a number of roles, and her responsibilities as a social worker is crucial. It has number of different dimensions, and the following are the ones which seem salient to her: "I can give for example, ah ... we discovered an 18 years old boy in love with a 16-year-old girl in the school. And they go home together arm in arm and the other colleague came to report. When we invited both parents, the boy's parents and the girl's

separately to tell them that they should give some sort of guidance that the love affair can wait a while, whilst they concentrate on their books. They took the issue; they blew it out of proportion. The parents of the girl wanted to surrender the girl to me so that I can take her back to the family of the boy. And it was a mere love affair. Puppy love as we may call it. But the parents of the girl could not hear any of that. They wanted to send the girl straight to the boy. That is one issue. Another issue is when visitors came to the office and they say they want to see the headmaster and you say can I help you. I can help you. Then they say no, you are wasting our time, we want to see the real headmaster and sometimes it is something petty like they want a social welfare form filled in. Then you say let me fill it in for you-they can take it and send it with a date stamp and they say are you sure the social welfare are going to accept this without the signature of the Head? You process all their papers and after that you say 'By the way I am the Head?' and some will say 'You' as if you are not fit to be in that seat. You are supposed to be at the periphery doing clerical work. That is one incident we had.

And another incident was when two teachers wanted to fight over a girlfriend and finding a solution to cool their tempers was not that easy because I am not that physically fit to restrain the two that wanted to fight. I had to call for other male teachers to come to restrain them, this happened some five to six years ago-I think. These are some of the incidents...they are quite a number, and of course there was another issue of promiscuity-the young lady teacher fell in love with a married man in the staff and counseling them makes the two see that they are moving in the wrong direction-that is not good for their families. It was not easy. I had to call in an elderly lady teacher and an elderly male teacher to persuade and counseling them separately and show them the repercussion of

their involvement in promiscuity. So in the long run it paid dividends and we had to remove one of them from the school. So these are few of the problems and challenges that I have had as a leader.”

#### 4.4 Mai Shingi's Story

Mai Shingi is principal of Pote High School a co-educational school with a total student enrollment of 325 students. The school is situated in an impoverished agricultural rural district called Domboshawa, South of Harare, Zimbabwe's capital city. According to Mai Shingi, her community has been impoverished by AIDS and uncontrolled inflation. The families try and supplement their living through petty trading, farming and gardening. Unfortunately, efforts to seriously engage in farming and gardening are hampered because they do not have facilities to transport their produce to the markets.

In the following narrative Mai Shingi narrates her life experiences focusing on how she became a school principal. She taught for twenty years in Zimbabwean's schools before she was appointed a school principal. She says: "I have been in. I have been in service for quite long, I started in 1975 being a primary teacher, and then in 1992 I received a Bachelor of Education degree but was on the waiting list for three years before there was a vacancy as a head. I applied and then was appointed to be a head and I applied and then was appointed. I have been a school principal for four years." Mai Shingi emphasized that she relocated to Pote High school in order to be with her family. She said; "I opted to transfer to my family. That's why I came to this school."

Tracing her professional history she says: "I was at Zvimbiru secondary school as a teacher, a senior woman, then acting deputy head at Zimbiru Secondary School up to 1998 when I was transferred then. When I was promoted to headship



profession students are drawn from the surrounding Domboshawa rural community. I completed my 'O' Levels in 1973 at St.Alberts in Guruve (the equivalent of American High school). I have been a teacher for a relatively long time. I am certified teacher for infants. I trained at Gutu Teachers Training College. In 1987 I think I was admitted at University of Zimbabwe to study for a Bachelor of Education degree specializing in Shona. And after that I again taught at primary school for a year before being transferred to Zimbiru Secondary School.”

That affirmative action is possibly a sensitive topic is apparent in the way she reflects on the role, affirmative action and gender might have played in her appointment. She says:

“I think to some extent it did because during that time there were very few female heads. Previously there were no female heads, so during that time they wanted to increase the number of women. I am sure affirmative action and gender equity played a role - to some extent. I would like to believe my achievements also played a role.”

She felt that her appointment to the status of being a school principal was delayed. She stated: “No it didn't come at the most appropriate time. I think it was unduly delayed. I had always wanted to be appointed a school principal. My former head helped me in securing an appointment as a head. Whenever suitable vacancies appeared he encouraged me to apply. I guess if I had applied earlier I would have been appointed a head much earlier.”

The extract below demonstrates how Mai Shingi perceives her roles, and responsibilities as a school.

“He/she can assist me in supervision role and also see how I observe lessons and other administrative activities in the school. He/she can help me by supervising students around the school, make sure our grounds are neat or he/she can help us by designing or making sure a...ah or by designing the grounds.”

She clearly is aware of her management style, has a working definition of what constitutes management, and leadership. She describes both her management and what she feels constitutes management as follows: ‘I think my management style is democratic. A leader is someone who is at the forefront and must ensure that things happen, some, like a driver, to make sure that things happen at school, teachers look on you, they look upon you, for anything, so you are just, you play many different roles. You are the leader at times mother at times you are teacher. You should play all these roles. It’s a demanding position because I am involved in everything. Unfortunately, I don’t have a substantive deputy head. It’s difficult to get someone to seriously commit himself or herself to work if they are not remunerated. So it’s a problem you have to run around a lot. You are responsible to everyone and for everything every time. It’s a tough job.’”

As part of her conceptual understanding of leadership she enumerates the following features as making up what constitutes leadership: “If you are a principal you actually work with students. A-ah this when I say, I said at times you just have to be a mother, because you will be dealing with young kids, whereas in the

industry you are dealing with adults, so perhaps industry is not affected by the same problems as schools.”

#### **4.5 Decision Making**

Mai Shingi feels that teachers are actively involved in the administration of her school. She captures their involvement in the running of the school in the following words:

“They really help me in the administration. We have a senior master, and a senior woman, we work together mostly to come up to some agreement to make sure we achieve some of our goals. These people are also involved in the administration of the school. And even teachers also; when we appoint a teacher to be a form teacher, or even that subject teacher is also involved in that way.

Usually I communicate with my staff ah even with parents if it is something to do ah with building, ah constructing, building, I consult them, we work together and come up with something, and even with my teachers I first do not give instructions on something we sit together, discuss the problem then we determine a way forward.”

In rural schools, issues of school discipline are of central importance. Mai Shingi clearly seems to spend a considerable amount of time reflecting about it as is apparent in the way she describes the way she tries to enforce school discipline.

“We have school disciplinary committee ah-ah comprising the acting deputy head, with some senior members, so whenever a child does something which is not in line with our school rules, something which is not proper they sit together and find out how to help the child. It can be punishment and counseling, they normally do both.”

In addition to scheduled school meetings her school also takes part in a number of social activities. Her attitude towards her involvement in these school activities is captured in her description below:

“We participate whenever the community has their meetings.” Mai Shingi is a devote Catholic. She says: “I am a Catholic, and I am involved in what we call ‘guilds’ one of which is called HOSI YEDENGA( a denominational religious association for women). We have HOSI YEDENGA and other regions have got other guilds different from ours.”

Mai Shingi stated that the school’s involvement in the community benefits the school as a community. She explained ‘The school-community activities provide our children with opportunities to develop their talents in reading, acting and they also learn best methods of agriculture, because on field days they see how people grow their crops and become successful farmers. Here at school we have agriculture as a subject so when they attend local field days its somehow a step forward to see that if they do well at school they can also do well as parents in society somehow for prosperity.’”

#### 4.6 Instructional Leadership

Mai Shingi sees her school leadership responsibilities extended to the staff development of her teachers. She says:

“When the term begins, I usually try to assist the new teachers and relief teachers with instruction. First I go to their classes just to observe them teach a lesson and then after that we discuss their lessons strengths and weaknesses pinpointing areas, which might need to be improved.”

She justifies her reluctance to provide demonstration lessons in the following way:

“I cannot give demonstration classes for all the subjects because I do not have expertise in other subjects. I therefore leave that to the Head of departments to provide demonstration classes.”

In the narrative below she describes how she characterizes her relationship with the teachers, citing an anecdote illustrating her relationship with her teachers.

“I would like to believe that I am both firm and friendly. If I am not firm I might fail to control the teachers. I don't have a problem really with male teachers. When I started at this school, the teachers who were there, yes, there was a problem but now the new staff really accepted me. Maybe that first group was not used to female leadership. That was the problem. But now things are running smoothly.

There were problems because they could not accept me as their leader because previously all the leaders were male. They could not really accept what

you say or even if you delegated duties in a non-dictatorial way. You have to follow up to make sure that things get done.”

In a series of anecdotes she illustrates how female teachers, students, and parents relate to her professionally as a female school head.

“I have had problems with some female teachers. There is one female teacher whom I had serious problems with. She didn’t really accept me as a leader because we had some arguments that unfortunately ended up at the district office; it even went as far as the regional office before it was resolved. Each time I tried to advise her would turn down my advice claiming that she already knew what to do. She constantly undermined my authority as school principal.”

In the following section Mai Shingi outlines the problems she experienced in getting students to comply to an appropriate uniform regimen including a ‘decent ‘hairstyle.

“I have no problems with students. Only that when I came here students, especially girls they, wore their hair were plaited in different styles, and when I came I insisted on strict school uniform and short hair styles. This created a big problem for me with the parents who tried to intervene saying their children should dress as they like, and that they should be allowed to wear their hair as they like, but after sometime they accepted my directives.

Now the atmosphere is conducive, we can understand each other and they are appreciating my efforts because they are now proper school children and they are behaving like wise. There were times when students were just wild with no control, now its different and they appreciating me.

At first it was problem as I said before but as time went on they really appreciated me and they are now happy because they can see that their children are now behaving. They come to school in uniform, not roaming about as they used, and they are now happy.

There were problems because they could not accept me as their leader because all the school principals were male. A-ah they could not really accept what you say or even if you delegated duties they would carry them out in a very unprofessional way. You have to follow up to make sure that the things are done. Showing that they are not really accepting you even the attitude, I could see there were some problems.”

#### **4.7 Beyond School Principalship: Looking Towards Retirement**

On issues of self advancement, Mai Shingi had this to say:

“I should have done a Masters Degree in Education but I declined the offer because I am busy at home. I have got children who are going to school so if I devoted myself to a lot to studies, I will not have time to assist my children. Oh at the moment I am sure I shall just stick to what I am doing.” Mai Shingi indicated that she is not yet ready to move on professionally. She said: “I have got a problem, I can apply to grade two school (bigger school) but I feel I should stay

with my family, so Pote Secondary school is a Grade three school which is near my family but if for example Zimbiru has got a grade, that time is a grade two school may be I can opt to go there. I just want to be near my family. That's why I have remained at Pote Secondary School.”



#### 4.8 Sisi Tambu's Story

Sisi Tambu is the principal of Tafara high school located in Tafara Township. Tafara Township served as a dormitory town for Africans previously working for urban white employees. Since 1980 when Zimbabwe became independent it has served as dormitory town for Africans working for the African elite. In US terms, the school can be described as an inner city school. The school principal describes the school context felicitously when she says:

“Economically we are in a very poor environment because Tafara, Mabvuku, especially Tafara was made up of people who work in the low-density areas, garden people and housemaids. So it's only now that we are getting a few people who can actually be called well-to do; people who can contribute meaningfully to the community. But otherwise we are in a very poor environment.”

This is a relatively large school with a student population of approximately 2660 students. Physically, the school is located in two sites, the main school and annex. The principal's office is in the main school. She however has a secondary office in the annex.

In the narrative below Sisi Tambu describes her employment status prior to becoming a school principal, and whether her appointment came at an opportune moment in her life. She also describes the conditions under which she rose to the status of being a school principal.

“I have been working at this school for the last 17 years. In the 17 years I have been senior woman for most of that time and then I became the deputy head for the past 7 years. I was at Tegwani for my secondary education and then from Tegwani I went to Mutare Teachers College where I trained as a Home-economics teacher. And then during the course of my work I went to Seke to update my qualifications and to get a diploma in education. For two years we were there, and then from there I joined the Open University to study educational administration for four years and I got my qualification. In 2000 after four years of studying I graduated.”

Sisi Tambu feels that her appointment as principal came too late in her career. She says, “I think and I still think that it’s a bit late because the time I was more productive was when I was in the classroom. I feel I have only a few years to go before I retire, you see. So most of my time, useful time, has been wasted in the classroom because I think I perform even better as an administrator.

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Sisi Tambu has a long history in the Zimbabwean education system. She said: “I have worked in different schools. I started at Manunure in Kwe-Kwe and then I came to Harare. I was posted to Mabvuku High School. From Mabvuku High School I went to Highfield High School. From Highfield High School to Mukai High School. From Mukai

High School to Sndringham high School and then from there I came to Harare High School. From Harare High School I was posted to Tafara High School.”

Sisi Tambu has a male deputy principal. She said: ‘currently Mr Kadembo is the vice principal in the school. He is a teacher in the woodwork department and he was heading the woodwork department before he was promoted to become a vice principal. He clearly has noticeable leadership qualities. He works very hard and we work very well together because you would think we are one from the same family because whatever we do in most times we are in agreement’.

An issue which seems to be a sensitive one was whether she benefited from affirmative action, and the nature of her leadership style. Sis Tambu does not feel that affirmative action played a big role in her appointment as principal. She had this to say: “I wouldn’t want to think so. Perhaps it’s the kind of experience that I have had in the school that things went this way. It’s a mixture I think, because sometimes there are decisions that I make on my own. But I consult the teachers if I have to make decisions which affect the day to day running of the school, and directly or indirectly affect the lives of the teachers. But you can’t have one type of decision-making.”

In the following section she enumerates a series of activities which she engages in a typical school day. “My daily activities include coming in to see that everything starts on time. Everything starts in order and also teachers are in their classes, students are there on time and lessons begin and end on time. So these are basically the main things that we do in the school but also to look at the welfare of everyone in the school.”

In the light of her own experiences,

Sisi Tambu described her conceptualization of leadership.

“Leadership is being able to work with people and making sure that they actually help in the day-to-day running of things so that you are working as a team and then whatever the outcome it’s not just a one person outcome. It has to be collective. It is a challenging position because there are a lot of responsibilities that go with the post. You actually find that if you are to be a leader you have to be a very strong one. You have to continuously try and read around a lot so that you understand what is going around you and you have got to try and understand the staff that you work with. In school, students play a very important role because anyway for the school to be there I think we need them. Although leadership is a very challenging position, it is a pleasant one.”

In the following section she outlines some of the main features which she thinks are typical of other forms of leadership. Sisi Tambu draws a distinction between the leadership in schools in which she has to deal with inter-personal relationships, and the leadership in industry and manufacturing in which the products (outputs) and not the interpersonal relationships are paramount. For Sisi Tambu school leadership is analogous to social work.

“Yes, there is this aspect of working with very young people; it differs in that you work with the community, the staff and with students. You actually find that in other areas people lead adults only but in the case of education you have to lead both students and the community as well not just the school community that distinguishes educational leadership from other forms of leadership.”

#### 4.9 Decision Making

Issues of decision making and the role of teachers in her administration are issues she returns to on a couple of occasions, as evident in the narrative below:

“Teachers are involved in the school’s administration to a large extent.

Administration is not just the office. When you are administering you actually want to know what is happening in the classroom and the HOD’s (Heads of Department) who are part of the classroom help a lot in the actual running of the departments because they are special. I mean they are specialists in their field and they are the people who actually enlighten me about developments in the classroom. Because sometimes you might think you know it all but when you get into other areas where you are not quiet familiar with, you quickly find out that you are stuck. But with the help of the HODs you do succeed in overcoming some of the problems you are confronted with.

If it’s anything to do with the day-to-day running of the school, if it’s anything to do with discipline of the school, I consult the teachers because you can not do it on your own. You can’t dictate because sometimes you find that if you dictate things don’t move.”

The following narrative describes the regime of school discipline she maintains Sisi Tambu attributes school discipline problem in her school to unstable family backgrounds. At times she is not certain whether it’s a discipline or a social problem, so for her I have combined the discipline and social problems.

The school is confronted with a lot of social problems arising from teenage pregnancies: “We have a case of a girl who was being abused at home.” She went on to explain that:

“We have a problem with discipline these days. I think it’s the kind of child who is growing up in our school because things are different. I have been in education for a very long time and during the years I find that the students are becoming very difficult to discipline. I researched on discipline for my graduate teaching qualifications. I discovered that family background is one of the reasons why truancy is so widely prevalent in our schools. They are brought up by parents who are away most of the time because of work commitments and involvement in petty trading. The continued absence of a parent means that the child is deprived of a stable family background and it’s very easy to be influenced by peers into committing antisocial behaviors.

We have a department of Guidance and Counseling whose main responsibility is to advise students. This department is made up of teachers who are specialists in counseling and normally counsel at risk students. We either punish them by giving them extra academic work, or we administer corporal punishment. When and if the situation warrants it we do call in parents so that at least we will be able to work together and try and help the student.”

In the narrative below she describes her role as an instructional leader:

“In the classroom, we visit teachers to see how things are going and we observe these lessons and we identify their weaknesses and strengths. After the lesson is over we normally come together and discuss the lessons and the ways in which the teaching proceeded. In addition to classroom observations we meet the teachers to discuss best

teaching practice, and how to address any problems which the teachers might be encountering. I see these meetings as an opportunity to continuously facilitate the professional development of the teachers.”

The following are a series of challenges which she feels she faces as a school principal, the strategies which she adopts, and how she tries to balance her domestic and professional roles.

“As a female school principal students at first don’t take you seriously. You know, they don’t believe that you can exercise authority. But after sometime you stamp your authority they will learn to respect that. Even the male teachers sometimes have at times not complied with school regulations because I am woman. But if you both firm and seen to be fair they eventually respect you. The only thing that I think I can actually do is being able to communicate with the staff and the students as well. Because if you don’t communicate you actually find that you have a mountain to climb. But if you keep the office open and you are able to discuss problems with them you actually find things improve greatly.

You have to make sacrifices sometimes because you find that when have to be here from seven to five o’clock. It’s a very long time to be away from one’s family especially in our profession where you know some come in and they are here from 7 up to 12 o’clock and then the other group comes in at 12 and breaks off at 5. But when you are in this position you have to be there all the time. So you make up with your family during the week-end. In the evening you ensure that you provide a meal for them, you organize everything so that when you come to school the next day, you know that everything is in order at home as well. I accept my responsibilities both at home and at

school. At home I do not function as the domestic administrator because that responsibility falls in the domain of my husband. I however complement my husband when he has to deal with complex family matters. My husband by the way happens to be a schoolteacher and I think he understands me very well.

In the extended family, they still regard me as most junior in the family because my husband happens to be the youngest in their family. As a result I am the youngest muroora (daughter-in-law), you see. So I get things last, I behave appropriately in a manner befitting the status of a junior member of the family in spite of my senior professional status. I have to learn to keep the two worlds separate so that the members of my extended family do not resent me unnecessarily.”

In the following section Sisi Tambu describes her professional roles, her relationship with both female and male teachers.

“The experiences I would like to share (laugh) well you actually find that if you are not very firm with the community, when they look at you, you are still a woman. They disregard the fact that you are actually running the school. They actually want to take the lead where you are supposed to be leading. And this is something that goes on and after sometime with the committee that we have- the SDA committee that we have right now. This is the problem that we have because you find when we are in meetings they sometimes I tend to disregard you. But I have managed to stamp my authority with the support of my deputy. He is very helpful in that area.”



Although the question focused on Sisi Tambu's relationship with her teachers, in her response she spent more time talking about her managerial style, and how her motherly instincts she feels influence her professional judgment.

"I am a bit too motherly. Then sometimes you find that when you are making decisions I am influenced by that. But sometimes we have to be very firm, that's one of my weaknesses which I have not fixed yet. I tend to look at things as a mother. You know sometimes when you need to be very firm you are influenced by the fact that you also have children who might play truancy."

Using a series of anecdotes she describes how her relationships with both male and female teachers, students, parents and how she gets involved in the life of the community.

"Yes, we have forty male teachers. One time when I was talking to the staff and in these schools we have heads of department and normally we take it that heads of departments are part and parcel of administration. Now I was telling the staff certain things I wanted done. Instead of getting support from this one male teacher, he critiqued me. I had to call him into the office and discuss, and later he said he thought he was trying to help. But to me what it showed that he was uncomfortable with me as a woman principal. Female teachers look at me as their confidante and you find that if there are any problems at their own homes they come and confide in me, so we are very close because of that. They can actually tell me things that they would otherwise not tell me if I was not in a leadership position. Normally I am quite sensitive to their problems. Students come to the office with their problems. Normally we don't encourage them to come directly to this office. They normally have got a study period with the form teachers and

then they report to the senior woman or senior master and then they go to the deputy's office and then in the end they come to this office. But I have tried to make this an open office where students can actually come with their problem if they find they can not find help anywhere. So they do come because we have a case of a girl who was being abused at home. She came to this office and we contacted the authorities. She was helped. She was moved from this school because she was staying with her parents. Her stepfather and he was abusing the girl. They moved her from the family and she now lives with a family somewhere in Mount Pleasant. Unfortunately, I lost contact with her so can't tell you how she is doing now."

There are inconsistencies in the narratives which Sisi Tambu gives about her relationship with the parents.

"I would say our relationship is very good with parents. The very few parents who would come and complain and say that things are not going the way they want. Normally they come here to ask how their children are doing and we always give them the chance to talk to teachers so that they can get the teachers' opinions on their children and normally you actually find that when they come they are very friendly. Very few parents are hostile to us when they come for parent-teacher conferences. But normally when they, when talking to them and when I talk to them in the end normally we see eye to eye, so I would say that we relate to each other well."

Sis Tambu had this to say about community involvement in her school:

"They are very helpful financially. But sometimes they tend to go over board where administration is concerned. Because only the other day there was some parents who actually came to say 'Ah some of your students you see them outside at the wrong

times and when you around some of the teachers will not be teaching.’ They don’t understand really the actual methods that we use in teaching. As a result they think that a person who is talking to the class is the only one who is teaching, so it’s a bit of a problem when it gets to that. But otherwise financially they are quiet helpful and when we are going for sports they help us a lot.”

According to Sisi Tambu’s role models are important in shaping one’s professional career. To support her argument she has this to say:

“I have Mrs. Nhandara. She was actually the Educational Officer for Harare Province and was subsequently promoted to the status of provincial director. Currently she has been transferred to the head office. But you can actually see that women can actually do perform well even at the highest educational and administrative levels. Because she has been going up the ladder, she is the one person who actually encouraged me to read on and to take advantage of any opportunities for my advancement. Her work ethics is inspiring, and she serves as a model which I would like to emulate. You actually see that here is a woman whose work has been felt. She is in a post that was normally reserved for the male. She is doing it equally well and that it’s inspiring. Like me she was a home-economics teacher and she ended up in high administrative positions.”

#### **4.10 Beyond School Principalship: Looking Towards Retirement**

In the following extract Sis Tambu described problems that make it difficult for her to fully realize her dreams:

“I sometimes think about advancing further professionally, but from my educational background I think you have learned that I have done a lot on my own. So because I have children who have to go to school and education means money. It’s a bit difficult for me otherwise I would have already started on my masters. And because of my children: I have got one girl in university and two boys who are in form six now. So it’s very difficult for me to get the funds. But if given funds, I wouldn’t mind getting my masters.”

#### 4.11 Mai Rumbi's Story

Mai Rumbi is a principal of Seke High school which was established after independence in 1982 in response to the massive expansion in education. The school is owned by a rural district council and is run by a school development association (SDA). The SDA collects levies for school improvement and development. The government provides the school with grants to pay teachers' salaries, and also participates in infrastructural development.

This is a co-ed high school with a staff establishment of 13 teachers; 9 males and 4 females. There is one male vice principal in the school. The school is experiencing a problem of high staff turnover especially among the female teachers. Female teachers tend to use the school as a stepping-stone for gradual movement into urban schools in the city of Harare. Male teachers tend to stay longer at this school given its proximity to Harare. The school has no electricity but the SDA has already levied parents as to bring electricity to the school. Water is available from a deep well with a fitted pump. However, the supply is not sufficient for agricultural and building projects.

The area in which the school is located is largely used for subsistence farming. Market gardening has become increasingly important as a source of revenue. Parents are therefore capable of paying fees and levies but due to illiteracy they do not see value in timeous fee payment. She commented that:

“The school's community subsists as vegetable growers, they do market gardening thus how they manage to survive and send their children to school. This is their source of income, market gardening, they send their vegetables to Chikwanha and Mbare

musika where they sell on wholesale price then those who sell at the market place take their mark up also after ordering from them.”

Mai Rumbi has been a school principal at Seke Rural School for five and a half years. In the narrative below she describes how she became a school principal.

“I was in my eleventh year as a secondary school teacher and as a head of department when posts for headship were advertised. In fact they were for deputy headship, deputy head grade 2, which is the same as head three, so my headmaster at Nyamuziwe High School encouraged me, as a woman to apply, because it was one of the requirements on the vacancy circular encouraged eligible senior women to apply. In spite of the fact that the circular encouraged women to apply I didn’t want to apply because my husband was the headmaster and I didn’t want to apply. What I know from my experiences of watching my husband, the job is very demanding, at times my husband had to either miss or postpone his lunch.

He was head of a boarding school so at lunch hour he would be summoned, may be there was an emergency, one of the school children might have fainted so he would be called at any time and leave the food cooling. Because of my husband’s experience I had vowed never to become a Head in the school system because it would adversely affect my role as a mother. I don’t think it would be a nice thing for me to leave the children because of administrative responsibilities. I was the only lady who was eligible and in fact I was the only teacher who was eligible at that time at that particular school, so I told my headmaster who was also my husband that I wasn’t interested (laughs). So when we got home, he continued to encourage me, then he said if you are not interested just try

your luck. Until eventually after a week, or so, I decided to give it a go but I wasn't serious about it. My application was submitted and then I forgot all about it and they normally take very long time to process the applications. So the following year (laughs) in May, that's when I received a letter of appointment saying that I had been promoted to deputy head 2 or head three. I was instructed to report to the regional office so that I would be told which school to go to. At the time my appointment came through I was about to go on maternity leave in three weeks time. So you can imagine the state I was in. Then we went to the regional office, Marondera and I was told the school. You know, all the men, all the education officers were so excited, and they were congratulating me. I wasn't excited about it. I wanted to withdraw. I told them that I wanted to go on maternity leave in three weeks and then they said, no problem, you simply go and make an appearance at the and then you make your policies known, and then, you know in three weeks time you appoint someone to act in your place and then go on maternity leave. It's your right. Then I said I had an examination class, I was teaching 'O' levels, then the Regional Director said don't worry, the Education Officer staffing is here he will find a replacement for you. That's the story of my appointment as head.

As for my educational background, I went to Hartzel High School. After high school I taught as a substitute teacher for one year in 1975. I taught at three primary schools in 1975. I was forced to be a teacher by my father. My father is an ex-teacher. I didn't want to be a teacher I was more inclined towards nursing. When I was a substitute teacher my father asked me "so what is the way forward? What are you going to do next? Then I said I am going to do my second year, temporary teaching. Then my father said

‘No, its not good, time is running out. If you want to go for nursing its fine, but whilst you are waiting for the papers to be processed for nursing why don’t you join a teachers’ college. Then if something materializes, then you can quit and go for nursing’. I wanted to go overseas and I had been promised a place at one of the hospitals. I followed my father’s advice. Then I applied and secured a place at the United College of Education. They were offering home-economics. So when I went to the United College of Education, I was three weeks late the others were already three weeks ahead of me. I was very miserable and wanted to quit. I had a personal tutor called Mr. Tunball, he was very supportive. He kept encouraging me to go on. I passed my first year and when I got into second year, things were beginning to shape up. I passed my second year with flying colours and it boosted my self-esteem. After my second year, they were phasing out home economics at the United College of Education because they wanted to train primary school teachers only at this college. My home economics department was therefore moved to a new location at Gweru Teachers College. Later, I enrolled for a bachelor’s degree with the Zimbabwe Open University where I studied educational administration, planning and policy studies. I passed with an upper second class, now I am considering doing a Masters degree.”



In the extract below Mai Rumbi examines the role that affirmative action might have played in promoting her to a status as principal.

“Sure it did, because at the time the post was advertised they explicitly stated that eligible women should be encouraged to apply.”

Mai Rumbi feels that her appointment as principal came at the right time. She explains:

“As a mother and I could look after my children, you know in a much better way. An early appointment to become principal would have made it difficult for me to care for my young children. This promotion came, just at the right time. I needed time to cope with motherhood, so it can it came at a time after my first experience of motherhood.”

Mai Rumbi narrated her perceived her roles, functions and responsibilities as school principal in the extract below.

“I receive guests on a daily basis. Many people, stakeholders come to get some kind of service. It can be parents, salesmen, fellow heads and other and many others. Maybe they would also get an idea on how I supervise my teachers. They will also get some insight into how I deal with students at risk, handle transferees who would be coming to apply for places at my school. It’s a daily routine. I also pop in into one of the classes to present a lesson although the teaching load is not all that big. I do teach some classes occasionally.”

In the following extract she analyzes what she understands about leadership, and being a principal.

“I think it’s a mixture, as I said earlier on, at times it’s democratic, at other times it tends to being authoritarian. But again it all depends on the situation and the problem to be addressed. There have to be subordinates for you to be a leader, as a result I find it very important to maintain a good working relationship if I have to achieve the school’s goals and objectives.

I think in order to be a successful female principal you need to be fair, you need to be just. If you show any favoritism, the teachers would not like it. So that’s why I said you need to be fair, you need to appreciate the expertise and accommodate the individual differences of your staff. If they have done something wrong it should be clear that if you if you reprimanding anybody, it should be clear that you don’t hate that person but you just want to correct his or her and if you correct a person it should end there. There is no need for you to carry a grudge. If you do that it ceases to be professional. You need to correct a person and then you end there. If a person reforms and does something good you need to acknowledge it. Give credit where it is due.

Well it’s quite a mammoth task because you deal with people. Some of them are mature like the teachers, the parents and the rest of the public. But the ...the others, the students or pupils are still immature so it’s extremely challenging. You need to, you know, as a leader you need to be dynamic. You also do not need to be unduly sensitive. There are a lot of trials and temptations that you come across, and the one thing that I have learnt is that in order for me to be a good leader I construe my role more as a

vocation than a profession. If I am faced with a very difficult situation, I consult other people. If they can't help me, I turn to God and tell him that you are the one who send me to do this so advice me, show me the way. If I didn't believe that the job is a vocation I would have left the job a long time ago.”

According to mai Rumbi there are a number of important features which can be used to distinguish educational leadership from other forms of leadership.

“Educational leadership is different in that sense that the leaders have to be educated. I think that's where the difference lies. In some sectors the leaders do not necessarily have to be highly educated. A leader lets say of a political party does not necessarily need to be educated before assuming the role of leader, but just has to be voted into power. But as far as educational leadership education is a prerequisite for appointment.”

In the following narrative mai Rumbi describes the role which teachers play in the school administration, her role in their professional development, how she enforces school discipline and the contributions of community-based associations.

“I delegate my responsibilities for example, the HOD are more knowledgeable about the day to day running of their section of the school than I do. The teachers are therefore key people in the administration of the school. I mix approaches. It depends on the type of decision I am making. At times I can take a personal decision. In other cases I

consult my deputy and teachers as well. In other cases I hold a general meeting which includes all the teaching staff.

I actually delegate. The chairman of the disciplinary committee is the deputy head and I am an ex-officio member of that committee, so that I advise on policy issues in case they may deviate when they try and make decisions. It's the responsibility of every teacher to enforce school regulations to make sure that discipline is maintained. We also have class monitors in place. Each class has a class monitor and deputy. We also have prefects. All those people assist the head in maintaining discipline and enforcing school regulations.

At times when they have their agricultural shows, they invite me to attend. At times they invite me to be one of the judges.

I also hold staff development seminars at school. I also supervise the teachers to enhance their professional development. I also try to cultivate the talents of individual teachers. I try and assign teachers which will provide them with opportunities to develop their talents. At times I provide demonstration classes. The deputy principal also at times gives demonstration classes particularly for younger and less experienced teachers.”

Mai Rumbi describes her relationship with teachers in the following extract.

“I wouldn't know, may be the teachers who see me may be in a better position to explain that. As for me, I seem to work well with subordinates, both male and female. Of course there might be one or two problem teachers among every e- eh group of members of staff. I don't think we have any problems eh-eh problems with my subordinates. They

find me very approachable because they can e-eh come to me with both their professional problems and personal problems at times which shows that they I am accessible.”

In the narratives below she recounts a series of anecdotes which illustrate how she relates to both female and male teachers, students and parents. She describes the complexity and at times ironical relationships between male teachers and female leadership.

“Of course there are some male teachers who look down upon women leadership. But you know that it is in isolated cases. For example, when I was at a certain school, the senior master came to report a certain disciplinary case to me. He complained about what the student had done to him, he said....”Kubva andiita kunge mukadzi kudaro” (He treated me as a woman) (laughs) “kundidherera kunge mukadzi kudaro” (He does not respect my authority and status). Anyway I didn’t like it. It didn’t go down well with me. At least it showed me that e...e...eh he looked down upon my leadership as well because of what he had said. There is nothing unusual about my relationship with female teachers.”

The extract below shows the relationship that Mai Rumbi has with her students:

“I think students fear me. I don’t know why. On a certain day I left the school early because I wanted to go to the post office, to post some official mail. So this class had a free period or a study period. I passed through the classroom blocks to the bus stop and one of the students saw me and she said ...the head is going away and she was happily clapping hands. It gives me the impression that when I am around may be they

don't... they are not mischievous. So she was very happy that I was leaving early leaving them to their own devices.

I think I have cordial relationship with parents in my school because each time I invite them maybe to a meeting, they turn up in a large numbers. I find them very supportive when I have to take important decisions. We have a parent/teacher conference once a term. At the conference we discuss the student's work, and the progress or lack thereof of the student. They are eager to learn how their children are doing academically. If the student is a truant the parents do not express any reservations if the school wants to discipline the child.”

The professional relationship between the Central office and school principals is an extremely important. In the narrative below she describes how she relates to the Central Office.

“I think cordial. I think it's cordial.”

In the extract below Mai Rumbi describes some of the major challenges of being a female school principal.

“I motivate the other female teachers to work hard and aspire to take leadership positions. Female students are encouraged when they know that there is a woman school principal because although a majority of the teachers are female, there are very few women school principals.”

Another key issue which seems to affect the female school principals is the need to balance family and professional demands. She describes how she tries to balance these demands.

“I think first and foremost I have a very supportive husband. He knows what it takes to be you know an administrator; so many times I leave home going to attend work shops he doesn't object. He remains behind looking after the children.

Well my father in-law is a minister of religion. (laughs) He is very understanding and has been to the United States of America where he studied part of his theology and is quiet an enlightened man although he is retired now. But I have no problem with him and my children know you know when mummy goes away it's for the good of us all because that's where she earns part of her income.”

In the extract below she describes the role and contribution of role models in the development of her leadership.

“When I started teaching, my first school head was a woman. She is now late, she passed away last year. She had obtained her doctorate that was Doctor Irene Chitsiku. She was the headmistress of Sunnyside Girls High. It's a United Methodist mission school in Manicaland. It's now called Lydia Chimonyo but when I was appointed it used to be called Sunnyside. She was my first, you know headmistress. At that time Irene had a Bachelors degree in home economics from America, and then after that she had taught under her for two years she went back to America to study for her Masters. And then

when she came back, she studied for her Ph.D. she was quiet, you know, inspiring. She was a student throughout her life. When I graduated she also received her Ph.D. But unfortunately she was already ill. She had breast cancer. I strongly admired her leadership style. She was; and before she passed away you know, she came back with her Masters she studied theology. She was now a reverend. She was a teacher, a headmistress, and pastor. She combined leadership with Christianity. It was refreshing to work with her. But she was very firm but fair.”

#### **4.12 Beyond School Principalship**

In the last section of the interview Mai Rumbi speculated about her future.

“I will be happy and I will have achieved my last goal, educational goal if I attain a Master’s degree, that’s my dream.”

#### **4.13 Summary**

This chapter presented professional histories and personal profiles of the four female principals who form the basis of the study reported in this dissertation. I identified five main themes: (1) leadership as social welfare (2) leadership as a process (3) consensus versus independent school leadership (4) authority and gendered senior moments (5) and towards the creation of a new school culture and demonstrated using their own words how these themes impacted on their personal and professional development.



## Chapter 5

### **An Analysis of Female School Principals' Comprehension of their Roles and Functions as Educational Leaders**

In this chapter I analyze the multiple ways in which the four principals understood their roles as educational leaders. The analysis entails two parts. In the first part I depict features which the women shared in common; in the second part I focus on the unique features of each school principal using analytical categories emerging from a close reading of the interviews and my field notes. I also highlight the merits and limitations of each of the educational features I analyze. For example, the advantages and disadvantages of adopting a mixed decision making style in which the educational leader at times consults and at times acts independently. There are five analytical heuristics which I use to characterize the various ways in which the educational leaders construe their roles as leaders: (1) leadership as social welfare (2) education as a process (3) consensus versus independent school leadership (4) authority and gendered senior moments (5) and towards the creation of a new school culture. For the purposes of analysis, I treat the above as analytical isolates, even though in reality the same phenomena may reflect more than one of the above categories simultaneously.

The depiction addresses two main questions:

- (1) What are Zimbabwean female school principals' perceptions of educational leadership?
- (2) What professional and interpersonal strategies do Zimbabwean female school principals use when engaging with other school stakeholders such as the local communities, representatives of the ministry of education etc?

Table 2 is meant to assist the reader in gaining a global picture of the similarities and differences among the various school principals at a glance. The symbol “+” means that a principal exhibits the feature which is highlighted, (-) means she does not. Mai Chipo and Sis Tambu are female school principals at two urban high schools. Mai Chipo is the oldest of the informants. She is between 55 and 60 years old, while the three other informants are all within the 40 to 50 age range. The schools which Mai Rumbi and Mai Shingi head are situated in rural settings. Mai Chipo is the most experienced of the informants having been a school principal for eleven years; the school principals with the least experience are Mai Rumbi and Mai Shingi who have been principals of their respective schools for five and six years each.

**Table 2: Characteristic Themes of each Female School Principal**

Themes	Informants			
	Chipo (u)	Shingi ®	Rumbi ®	Tambu (u)
Leadership as social welfare	+	-	+	+
Education as a Process	+	-	-	+
Consensual leadership	+	+	+	+
Independent leadership	+	-	+	+
Authority, gendered senior moments	+	-	+	-
Creating new school culture	+	+	-	-

*The symbol (u) means urban setting and ® means rural setting*

The categories illustrated in above table are conceptually distinct. By this I mean the notion of consensual leadership is conceptually distinct from independent leadership. In terms of analysis, however, the categories are fluid and the boundaries between them permeable. For example, in practice it is not self evident where independent leadership ends and where consensual leadership begins. Because of this fluidity some double coding is inevitable resulting in some activities belonging to more than one category at the same time.

### **5.1 Leadership as Social Welfare:**

I construe leadership as social welfare to refer to the interests exhibited by the school principals for the social, spiritual, and physical upkeep of their teachers and students: a type of concern which clearly goes beyond 'narrow' professional development. From a western perspective this form of leadership can be construed as welfare because western scholarship tends to have a much more tightly defined understanding of what constitutes leadership and maintains, in some cases, a firm distinction between the professional and the personal with spiritual, social and physical features being the remit of other professions including charities and not school principals.

Mai Chipo, Mai Rumbi, and Sisi Tambu are all actively involved in the management of both their family and community affairs, whereas Mai Shingi is not. In western terms, their roles can be understood as that of social welfare officers. This means that their leadership goes beyond the professional roles of school principals in western schools. They try to meet the social needs of their teachers, students and the community playing the role which conventionally falls under the remit of guidance counselors in western professions. Even though from a western perspective this might be seen as an

expansion of their roles, it can be reasonably argued that this is consistent with the ethos of traditional African education. Reagan (2000) argues that there are seven cardinal goals of traditional African education and one of them is to develop a sense of belonging and to actively participate in family and community affairs.

Although three of the educational leaders are engaged in what I am calling social welfare, there are however, subtle differences in the ways in which they conduct their responsibilities. For example, Mai Chipo addresses some of the social, economic problems that affect her students, an approach particularly useful in Zimbabwe because of its current social and economic problems. According to Mai Chipo, if one is to succeed professionally it is necessary to appreciate the social and economic factors that may be adversely affecting the personal and professional lives of the teachers. Although her involvement can be construed as an over extension of her professional duties, this type of engagement is congruent with some of the primary objectives of African Education particularly in its objectives to cultivate a good person. A good person is one who is honest, respectable, skilled, cooperative, and conforms to the social order of the day (Reagan, 2000).

Mai Chipo's desire to cultivate a good person within her teachers is apparent in the ways in which she handles some of the teachers' alleged problems including inappropriate consumption during working hours. The following anecdote neatly encapsulates the various ways in which she tactfully handles such situations: "...male teacher who is alcoholic is finding it difficult to cope, having to stop drinking during working hours." She carried out her own investigation and according to her "discovered

that the teacher was alcoholic. Mai Chipo therefore helped rehabilitate a teacher who she alleges was alcoholic. She said ‘he would drink at work.’”

Not only does Mai Chipo try to be sensitive to the social and economic factors impinging on the lives of her staff, she also addresses interpersonal relations among her staff.

Sisi Tambu set up a structure that makes her accessible to students. For example, teachers do not have to make an appointment to come and consult her: she in a sense runs an open door policy. Sisi Tambu feels that an open door policy enables her to keep abreast of developments in her school. Sisi Tambu seems to have an ambivalent attitude towards her open door policy, implying that at times it seems to be exploited by some of her teachers to raise petty issues which they could easily solve on their own, at the same time she also feels that it enables her to address problems early before they are complicated.

The teachers seek Sisi Tambu’s advice for a wide range of issues including personal and domestic matters. At times she is skeptical as to whether she has the expertise to address the wide range of problems that they bring to her. Ironically, she argues that she feels she has learnt a lot from being privy to the wide range of problems that the teachers bring to her.

Are there any gender differences in the way school leaders use the open door policy, and are they influenced by the rural/urban distinctions? Sisi Tambu feels that female more than male teachers are more likely to approach her with their problems. The general tendency for female school teachers to approach her with their problems is enhanced by the fact that because of the effects of urbanization the school teachers might

not have their traditional advisers readily accessible to them in urban areas as opposed to their rural counterparts. She says:

female...teachers...if there are any problems at their own homes they are very open to come to me and tell me and ask for advice. So we are very close because of that. They actually tell me things that they would otherwise not tell me if I was not in a leadership position. I lean an ear to most of their problems and I try to advise them as much as I can. I have tried to make this an open office where students can actually come with their problem if they find they cannot find help anywhere. We have a case of a girl who was being abused at home. She came to this office and we contacted the authorities.

It is, however, not clear who Sisi Tambu approaches when she is faced with professional and personal problems.

There is, however, one key difference between Sisi Tambu and Mai Rumbi. Although Mai Rumbi has not set up institutional arrangements like Sisi Tambu which enhance her approachability, she seems to be more involved with her teachers and students. At times she feels morally obliged to intervene even in the lives of her students. According to Mai Rumbi: "They find me very approachable because they can come to me with their professional problems or personal problems at times which shows that they are not frightened of me."

Although the three educational leaders are all involved in social welfare the new duties are not without their own difficulties because their involvement creates more rather than solves the problems. In a sense what the school principals are saying is that although they derive pleasure from their social roles they are at times not sure whether their

involvement necessarily resolves the problems or only complicates their social relations with the communities they are meant to serve. For example, Mai Chipo's involvement raises moral issues about what constitutes acceptable moral conduct. She has this to say:

We have a child chatter in the school and when you invite parents to come and solve a problem especially one that involves their children, I can give for example, we discovered a boy –an 18 year old boy is in love with a 16 year old girl in the school. And they go home together arm in arm and the other colleague came to report –and when we invited both parents: the girl's parents and the boy's parents separately to tell them that they should give some sort of guidance that the love affair can wait a while, whilst they concentrate on their books. They took the issue; they blew it out of proportion. The parents of the girl wanted to surrender the girl to me so that I can take her back to the family of the boy.

This illustrates how African educational thought and practice is characterized not only by its concern with the good person, but also by its interweaving of social, economic, political, cultural, and educational threads together into a common tapestry (Reagan, 2000).

Mai Shingi unlike the other three educational leaders is not actively involved in the social lives of either her students or teachers. Mai Shingi is married to an agricultural officer who perforce because of his profession has responsibilities that are invariably deeply involved in the social lives of the local community.

Mai Chipo also finds herself having to deal with complex issues of marital relations that in western societies might be handled by marital counselors. Her profession

has intimate ties with the social life, both in material and a spiritual sense. This can be illustrated in an incident where three teachers were involved in a love triangle:

“And another incident was when two teachers wanted to fight over a girlfriend and finding a solution to cool their tempers was not that easy because I am not that physically fit to restrain the two that wanted to fight. I had to call for some male teachers to restrain them, this happened five to six years ago-I think. Two male teachers were fighting for love from a certain young lady who had just joined the school. In a separate (incident), a young lady teacher fell in love with a married man on the staff and counseling them makes the two see that they are moving in the wrong direction-that is not good for their families. It was not easy. I had to call in an elderly lady teacher and an elderly male teacher to persuade and counseling them separately and show them the repercussion of their involvement in promiscuity. So in the long run it paid dividends and we had to remove one of them from the school. So these are few of the problems and challenges that I have had as a leader.”

Moral guardianship is an integral part of how Mai Chipo construes her role as school principal. From a western perspective, her involvement in the interpersonal relationships of her staff can be interpreted as violating the private space of her staff. From a western male perspective, it may look like Mai Chipo is violating the private space of her staff. But clearly the boundaries between private-public differ substantially between male dominated western societies and African societies, so the issue about the ethical viability of intervening into the private world of her staff does not arise, illustrating that ethics are contingent. They are contextually-sensitive, and may indeed



vary both between western and African societies, and within African societies themselves!

Mai Chipo understands her role as creating education structures to socialize children (Reagan 2000). Some of these socialization structures have been undermined by current social, and political developments, and the epidemiological transition of disease (Livingstone, 2003).

In traditional African societies there was a systematic process by which the adolescent was formally transformed, socially and spiritually, into an adult through initiation ceremonies. Nonetheless, initiation remains a common, although less often observed practice today as a result of increasing westernization. While in western societies reaching puberty is a private matter in which each girl and boy goes through adolescence to maturity alone, in Africa the initiation ceremonies dramatize this change and make it a social ritual (Reagan, 2000). Initiation processes in Zimbabwe involve separation of the initiates from their homes under the leadership of a specially selected adult (tete/aunt or sekuru/uncle). The boys and girls received formal and informal instruction about their responsibilities to others, and obligations, aspects of sexuality and sexual relations in preparation for marriage. They would also observe behavioral and sexual taboos and restrictions.

In contemporary Zimbabwe, it looks like many of the societal structures used to initiate youths into adulthood are not functioning adequately. Due to urbanization, the extended family has been severed as people settled in different locations in search of employment. In some cases the western influence of family has ostensibly had adverse

effects on the communal care depriving the youth in some cases of necessary social support. Mai Chipo understands her role as school principal as filling this gap.

She constantly monitors the behavior of younger teachers and students and always makes it her job to guide and counsel them whenever they seem to go astray. She also brings together respected adults in the community and the school to help the youth in the school community, thereby filling in for the traditional African initiation structures. It can therefore be argued that for Mai Chipo this function is not perceived as extra responsibilities, rather she sees it as part of her job as a leader in an African context. She therefore represents an example of how traditional educational practices can be continued even within the format of western education with the objective of introducing change. She also goes out of her way to assist families confronted with what are ostensibly problems disciplining their children. Whether these are simply problems about truancy or are symptomatic of other poorly analyzed problems is not clear because we do not have the accounts of the children themselves. She cites examples of two students who stayed out late and the girls' parents initially declined to have the girl back until after her intervention. They demanded that she be married to the person she was cohabiting with. In order to arrive at this decision she was able to take advantage of the extensive network she has within the local community.

In the above section I have examined the concept of leadership as social welfare. The key finding is that the notion of leadership as social welfare demonstrates that the school principals have an expansive understanding of the role of female leadership. The school principals however also seem to have some not so fully articulated misgivings about the effects of the social welfare as leadership not so much on the school teachers,

but themselves as professional persons. It is also interesting that leadership as social welfare is only practiced by three of the school principals only. It's possible that the school Principal Mai Shingi does not adopt the leadership as social welfare style possibly because she feels that her husband who is an agricultural demonstrator is already playing that role, and since both she and husband are serving the same constituency, adopting a leadership as social welfare would be unnecessary duplication.

## **5.2 Education as a Process**

There are a number of different orientations that can be adopted to frame one's understanding of education. A popular distinction is one which is founded on the validity of the distinction between process and product. In the following section I focus on education as a process as understood from the perspective of the school principals themselves-because their conception of a process might be a bit different from the way processes are understood philosophically by educationists. By focusing on education as a process I am able to highlight ongoing problems and challenges which educators are faced with. All the school principals in this study subscribe to the notion of education as a process. Sisi Tambu defines education as an on going process. She tries to capture it using the Shona proverb *kudzidza hakuperi*-.This proverb however conflates two aspects of educational philosophy, education as a process and life long learning, reflecting the difficulties of translating concepts from one language to another directly. Even though the school principals subscribe to the notion of education as a process they are aware of the tension between education as a process and education as a product. On the one hand they have to focus on the process of learning; while on the other hand, they have to focus on the quality of their final products, in this case the academic achievement of students.

The tension in the teaching profession is also apparent between the demands on teachers to be bureaucrats while at the same time developing professional relationships with students (Bidwell, 1965).

Mai Chipo and Sisi Tambu are both committed to treating education as a process. Because they conceptualize education as a process they are concerned about their 'moral' character. For example, Mai Chipo's interest in the moral character of her students can be exemplified by the following anecdote from her:

“We invited the boy's parents and the girl's parents separately to tell them that they should give some sort of guidance that the love affair can wait a while, whilst they concentrate on their books. They took the issue; they blew it out of proportion. The parents of the girl wanted to surrender the girl to me so that I can take her back to the family of the boy.”

From the above quotation it appears that one of the key issues is that teaching in itself is seen as an ongoing process of moral engagement.

According to Sisi Tambu educational leadership encompasses a wide spectrum of followers: “you work with adults, the staff, and with the students. In other areas people lead adults only but in the case of education you lead even the students and the community.”

The principals' concern about their moral status is consistent with the ethos of traditional African societies, so the question should not be whether it is right for her to enforce moral behavior in her school but whose morality she seeks to enforce, and whether there is some latitude to negotiate the substance of what is regarded as morally upright within her framework. Reagan (2000) contends that “One of the central features

of traditional education throughout Africa is its concern with the formation of the child's character.”

The concern with the development of a child's character reflects ongoing concern with process as defined from the perspective of the teachers.

Mai Chipo distinguishes educational leadership from leadership in industry. For her the main difference between the requirements of leadership in industry and education is best encapsulated in the distinction between process and product. She explains that:

“Education is an on-going process so it is process oriented. There are no specific products but only strategic points of exit. In the manufacturing sector there are specific products, which have to be produced. Education in high school; it's a six-year course whereas in the industry, if you want to make a plastic jug, you have specified time from beginning to end. In education, we have certain ethics that we follow. We need to know the human mind to be able to win their confidence. Unlike where you are working with a table, you don't feel much like when you are working with human beings.”

In the preceding section I have analyzed the notion of education as a process. What is striking about the analysis is that although the school principals clearly subscribe to the notion of education as a process, they at times keep 'slipping' back to the notion of education as a product. By this I mean that even though their focus is on process, the importance of having a product of one form or other to show for the process is something which they are fully aware of, particularly in contexts in which the school's efficiency may be judged on the basis of a product. Within the Zimbabwean educational system, examination results are of paramount importance, and constitute an important product. As

a product they may influence the nature of learning that takes place during the course of the academic year, as teachers begin to teach towards examinations. This means that the product begins to determine the nature of the process, a phenomena which is called 'backwash effect' (Davies, 2003).

### **5.3 Consensual Versus Independent School Leadership**

Here I distinguish between two forms of governance which underpin leadership: consensual and hierarchical leadership. Consensual system is based on a system of respect for the rights and views of the individual. Since individuals can veto the opinions of the majority, individuals are also expected to respect the interests of the community by accepting compromises (Mengisteab, 2002). By consensual leadership, I am referring to a form of governance in which most individuals play a role, albeit different roles. In consensual leadership each individual is treated as a member of a team. In independent leadership the main accent on the leadership is on the role played by the school principal as an independent person 'driving' a collection of individuals with conflicting interests.

According to Tutu (2004), there were two main forms of governance in traditional Africa. Firstly, non-centralized traditional states had no individual leader in a western sense. These states had well-defined norms despite the absence of a hierarchical system headed by an individual sovereign. There was direct and pronounced participation of people-members of clans in decision making. Secondly, centralized states had a more structured and sophisticated political system under high structured authorities. The state was backed by well-organized law enforcement agencies. The citizens obeyed authority. In these states there was provision for participation in decision making by the

communities. However, it's important to note that in both cases leaders ruled in collaboration and with the active assistance of community advisers,

Mai Chipo's leadership style fits into the centralized structured, or independent governance. However, she does not seem to have a single overarching leadership style. At times her style seems to be hierarchical, and at times it's founded on consensus. The hierarchical nature of her leadership is apparent in the way she 'deploys' her deputy principal and teachers to implement some of her regulations. For example she has set up a discipline committee in which her teachers make important decisions about students and school policies.

For all the school principals educational leadership is a collaborative process to varying degrees. According to Mai Chipo education is an on going developmental process that is different clearly defined processes in industry. This view is echoed by all other principals in this study. Because in education there is no terminal point about learning, it's a life long process.

Mai Chipo expands her vision of educational leadership when she says:

“In education, it is a process [in] which you must groom everybody, meaning it is not only an ongoing process. It demands a lot of attention and involvement on the part of the teachers and the school principals. A lot of energy is expended in socializing students so that they grow up to become decent and productive members of society.”

She described her teachers as very complex and as ‘good’ as their children. Teachers are complex which means that there is a discrepancy between the behavior expected of them according to professional ethics and what they actually do.

Mai Chipo feels that it is her job is to help them address their problems and hopefully contribute towards solving some of them. All the four principals emphasized the issue of consultation as a style of institutional governance. Mai Rumbi explained how she confers with stakeholders in her school:

**“Other times I consult with my deputy. At other times I also consult with my deputy and also senior teachers depending on the nature of the decision, which I have to make....but not always, it’s not always that I consult other people. It depends on the decision that I have to make...I mostly, whatever I do is endorsed by the school development committee. For example, finances.”**

Mai Shingi echoes similar sentiments about collaborative governance: “I consult, we work together and come up with something, and even with my teachers I first do not give instructions on something we sit together.”

Sisi Tambu: “there are decisions that I have to make on my own. But there are other decisions which touch on day-to-day working of the school that I have to consult with the teachers.” Sisi Tambu confers on issues such as: “anything to do with discipline of the school.”

All the principals in this study have a major constraint that limits the effectiveness of collaborative governance. They all seem to agree that the biggest handicap is the lack



of officially appointed vice principals to assist with administrative roles. This problem was articulated by Mai Shingi:

I don't have a substantive deputy head. If you first nominate one he knows that he is not paid so he does do his/her work as someone who is going to be paid? So it's a problem you have to run around a lot. You are answerable for everything.

Mai Chipo's decision making styles have to be understood within an overarching framework of African governance systems. The consensus format of her leadership style is seen in the ways in which she tries to devolve power by setting up committees. She has a disciplinary committee comprised of 2 Heads of Department (HOD) chairmen and the parents' school board. According to Mai Chipo school rules are formulated by the prefects' body.

Her authority is felt everywhere in the school by both teachers and students. According to her, "my mere presence in the staff room will tell them that its time up to go for lessons." She does not have to ask anything, her presence says it all. Students as well seem to acknowledge her authority by being at the right place at the right time.

Mai Chipo seems to borrow from both the non-centralized and centralized states the idea of shared decision-making. She seems to vary her leadership style depending upon the problem confronting her. For example, she does not consult for an immediate solution. She does not consult "especially where cleanliness is concerned, the preparation of lessons is concerned; you tell them what to do."

Mai Chipo explained that she does not necessarily always liaise with all stakeholders before taking a decision. However, she confers with her teaching staff-at least those whose interests are affected by the outcome of the decision she is going to

take. In some cases she consults with stakeholders before making decisions. For example, “Where you need to consult is where you are going to make a major decision about the relationship of people ... say you want to change the uniforms, you can’t make that decision on your own. If you want to raise fees, you can’t do that on your own. If you want to transfer a teacher, you have got to consult the district, the region. You cannot do that on your own.” She holds consultative meetings with teachers, parents and students concerning matters stated above.

In this section I have drawn attention to two types of governance structures that are characteristic of school leadership: consensual and independent leadership. The two types of governance structure are founded on different assumptions about the role of the school principal as a person. In one case, the school principal is part of a team, in another she is the dominant person. I have shown that although the two leadership systems are conceptually different the school principals seem to ‘mix’ the two types in their everyday leadership practices.

#### **5.4 Authority and Gendered Senior Moments**

Two of the female principals in the study, Mai Chipo and Sisi Tambu, are principals of big urban high schools in the city of Harare. The other two principals, Mai Shingi and Mai Rumbi are situated in rural schools surrounding the city. Mai Chipo is the oldest of the informants. She is between 55 and 60 years old, while the other three informants are all within 40 to 50 age range. In the following section I enumerate three features which are closely and completely related to these women’s leadership: authority, gender and age. The concepts are related in complex ways.

Reagan (2000) elaborates:

“Age is an important element in the life of the African...seniority confers social and economic privileges ...the elder is assumed to be a man (or woman) of wisdom and is expected to demonstrate this in speech and in action if he/she is to keep among those who look up to him/her for leadership” (p.38).

Reagan’s argument emphasizes the expected wisdom of the elders.

According to Mai Chipo, ostensibly there is a relationship between age and status; respect, or reverence is shown for those who are older. In African traditions, seniority confers social and economic privileges. Is respect the same thing as deferring to authority? Yes, you can defer to authority but not necessarily be respectful. Notions of deference to authority and respect are difficult categories to use consistently within African aging (Makoni & Loan 2002).

Mai Chipo feels that her age helps overcome problems of resistance to her leadership when she relates to male teachers. She says ‘I think male teachers because of my age, they kind of respect me. Most of them call me mama.’ According to Reagan (2000) age is such a vital factor among many... ethnic groups that a man (or woman) will overstate his age rather than understate it. It is important to note that the concept “elders” here refers not only to those chronologically older than the individual, but those in authority. Respect in this regard entails, among other things obedience. It also involves appropriate forms of address and ritual greetings, which play an important role in many African societies, and even distinct forms of language in some cases (Reagan, 2000).The question which should be posed here is whether these male teachers would behave in the same way to any woman Mai Chipo’s age.

If not why then is Mai Chipos' age a factor to consider? Mai Chipo treats the young teachers like her own sons, but this does not mean that the teachers who are treated like sons necessarily respond to her as a mother. Here we see a situation where the boundaries between the home environment and the school are blurred, a domestication of professional space.

Mai Chipo feels that older male teachers resist her authority. The problem here is that some of the categories used in African languages do not have a ready equivalence in English, and 'respect' is one of them. She feels that they don't like to be under the leadership of a woman because socially these men hold leadership positions in other spheres of their lives, notably their households.

If male teachers resist her authority, female teachers exploit her gender to do less professional work and spend more time addressing issues allegedly related to their families. Mai Chipo explained that acceptance by the community for a female principal is critical. To overcome this challenge she explained that "parents need results....if you produce results you will be fine".

Mai Rumbi complains about male attitudes toward her as a female leader: "the teacher complained about what the student had done to him, "Kubva andiita kunge mukadzi kudaro, kundidherera kunge mukadzi kudaro" (treating me with no respect like a woman) I didn't like it. It showed me that he looked down upon my leadership as well because of what he had said".

Experience helps sisi Tambu to exert her authority because she has had previous opportunities to exercise her authority. She now has as part of her personal histories a sharp sense of what type of social strategies to use when trying to exercise authority. She

says: “the young ones look up at me because they actually know that I have that experience.” All four principals seem to use multiple strategies to overcome resistance to authority by their followers. They all use delegation as a strategy. This strategy helps them to defuse the source of authority. It is difficult to resist authority if there is no clearly identifiable source of authority.

Sisi Tambu explains how she establishes authority: “after sometime you stamp your authority they will learn to respect that ...if you are firm with them and you actually are fair at the same time they come to respect you for that .If you keep the office open and you are able to discuss problems with them you actually find things improve greatly. I have managed to stamp my authority with the support of my deputy.

Mai Rumbi also says that: “as a leader you need to be dynamic. And you also need to have thick skin as a leader or else you quit if you don’t have a thick skin. If I am faced with a very difficult situation, I consult other people. If they can’t help me, I turn to God and tell him that you are the one who sent me to do this so advise me.”

**Mai Shingi emphasizes her approach to school authority as being consistent. She says: “I follow the rule of being firm and friendly.”**

In the above section I have tried to show the complex interplay between gender, age and seniority. These concepts relate in complex ways and which of the factors is regarded as most significant between the three varies depending on the nature of the problem which has to be addressed, and the history of the social relationship between the school principal and the teachers.

### **5.5 Towards the Creation of a New School Culture**

In the following section I focus on the attempts by the school principals to change prevailing institutional cultures. I analyze the nature of the strategies which they adopt to initiate a culture of change. Here, cultural practices refer to the modes of social behavior of Africans, their cultural beliefs, and the artifacts they use to shape their social and religious lives. These cultural practices create the context within which education occurs. The relationship between education and cultural practices are however bidirectional in the sense that on the one hand, cultural practices shape educational practices, while at the same time education shapes cultural practices. It is within this complex relationship between educational practices and cultural practices that issues about educational leadership have to be understood (Inglehart & Baker, 2000). Mai Chipo and Mai Shingi understand the need to change the nature of institutional culture as one of their main responsibilities. Institutional culture here refers to the multiple and intersecting ways in which teachers and students work together in educational institutions. Their desire to change the institutional culture is motivated by an ideological belief in the need to create a school which is sensitive to the social and educational demands of the context it is embedded in.

Mai Chipo strives to conjure and foster learning in her school-she interprets learning to refer to both classroom learning, and the process of social learning. Social learning supercedes performance in schools as measured by grades. According to her, “it is not the exam that prepares the future of the child. It is the process that takes place from

January up to December that prepares the future of the child. Examinations will only assist to select a few in a field.”

Mai Chipo feels that her commitment to changing the institutional culture is supported by parents as well. She says: “they want change for the children, change for the community, change for everybody and they support any little activity in the school.” She also says that parents need to see academic achievement. This shared visioning is a process that honors the hopes, dreams and aspirations of all members. It encourages members to openly share their thoughts, beliefs, desires and feelings.

Mai Chipo became a principal in 2002, at a time when the school’s performance was poor according to the Zimbabwe Junior Certificate (ZJC) and the “Ordinary” High School Certificate (“O”). Two years after she became a school principal its academic performance improved substantially. Mai Chipo uses the improvements in examination results as an indication of the improving quality of education within the school. She attributes the improvement in school performance to be the outcome of an improved culture of learning characterized by better social discipline.

Prior to her appointment as school principal, from her perspective, there was a breakdown in school discipline. Her assessment of the institutional situation is corroborated by the informal comments not only from the teachers but the grounds people as well. Students would come to school at odd times, some would make noise in the corridors, and some would just go to the toilet, after every bell. According to Mai Chipo “people used to come in this school at any time and leave at any time. Female teachers excused themselves from their instructional duties to go home to attend to their domestic problems. Mai Chipo describes her approach: “we have had to revamp the

school because the previous male principal did not supervise them much.” Her teachers had to adjust to her because she wants her work done “yesterday.”

But now under Mai Chipo’s leadership an institutional culture more conducive to both social and educational performance is beginning to develop. With this in mind she has this to say: “We had a workshop on culture and I think after these workshops, we now know that we mean business. We need to give quality time to the students so that we get paid at the end of the day.” She had a session with the boys whereby she persuaded them to behave well in school and obey school rules. To control ‘student traffic’ in and out of the school, Mai Chipo explained that all gates into the school except for one are locked; she held workshops with students about this problem. She modeled well dressed students at assembly for the other students to emulate. After a while she says:

“I started seeing results of punctuality, of discipline or cleanliness.

Everybody wants to be given responsibility and a challenge and we are winning....we are changing the name of the school...the nickname given to this school by the community. We are changing it to what we want and they are part and parcel of it and the students once they see my nose, if they are making noise, they make sure they are in the right place. We have a bond to do well as a team.”

Parents have also played a crucial role in changing the school culture. According to Mai Chipo, “they want change for the children, change for the community, change for everybody and they support any little activity in the school. Be it monetary or in kind.”

For Mai Chipo the new culture: clean buildings and grounds, close supervision of students and teachers.



Over the two years of Chipo leadership, the school has created a strategy for the use of professional development to improve teaching and learning in the school. This strategy consists of a set of organizing principles about the process of systematic change and the role of professional development in that process; and a set of specific activities, or models of staff development, that focuses on improvement of instruction. Mai Chipo's leadership can be said to be strongly goal oriented.

Mai Chipo demonstrates the importance of teaching: "I take one or two lessons in their presence. I set the pace; retraining on the job for the junior teachers."

Mai Shingi also made significant institutional changes in her school. In her own words she said:

"There are times when they could not even put on school uniform they were dressing, as they like. Some were doing their hair every style they could think of. They are now appreciating. Now school children they are behaving like school children. At first it was problem as I said before but as time goes on, time went on they are really appreciating, and they are now happy because they could see that their kids, children, are now behaving, they are now coming to school in uniform, they are now dressed they are not roaming about as they used to do, and they are now happy."

After she insisted on a strict dress code it appears that the other two informants have not had a chance to reflect on the nature of governance.

An analysis of the attempts by the school principals to create a new environment is hampered by factors both internal and external to the school context. In other words, the experiences of the school principals demonstrate the difficulties of initiating and

sustaining institutional educational changes. The other school principals are concerned less with effecting change but in sustaining existing institutional arrangements, perhaps because they see change as too costly both in terms of time and emotional and intellectual resources necessary if it is to be effectively carried out.

### **5.6 Looking Across Leadership Roles and Functions**

In this chapter I have analyzed the varying conceptualizations of female educational leadership on the basis of the interviews conducted with the four principals. The analysis shows that although there are some similarities among the school principals there are also fundamental differences in management styles, and in the ways in which they relate to the communities they serve. The differences between the schools principals are a consequence of the fact that rural schools typically serve as training grounds for urban schools; consequently urban schools typically have more experienced teachers and educational leaders than rural schools. There are also crucial differences in terms of the availability of resources. For example, rural schools typically have fewer resources than urban schools so tend to rely more heavily on community support than urban schools. The heavy reliance on community support may affect educational leadership in so far as it tends to make the school principals more socially oriented than their urban counterparts. The distinction between rural and urban can however not be seen as a providing a 'full' explanation because in some cases there are certain institutional characteristics which the schools share in common in spite of their being located in different geographical situations.

There are however a number of important conceptual issues which emerged from the study. First, the school principals were selected in part on the basis of working in an urban or rural school environment. It is important to question whether a rural/urban distinction can be said to be a valid heuristic given the fact that people are constantly moving between urban and rural environments. It might therefore be better to talk about urban and rural life styles. It is possible to experience an urban life style even in an environment that can be defined as spatially rural and vice versa. It is also conversely possible to experience a life style that is rural even in a predominantly urban setting because of the process of villagization. Villagization is a term coined by Rene Devisch to refer to the general tendency to recreate social networks typically associated with rural communities in urban areas (Devisch, Makoni & Stroeken 2002).

Second, it is also not clear to what extent the notion of age which formed the basis of the analysis was also useful. The notion of chronological age has to be distinguished from social elderhood, the manner in which individuals are able to attain an important social status because of their achievements. Social elderhood can also be attained by any person irrespective of gender. At the same time, not everyone who has attained the status of social elderhood is necessarily old. The emerging social order has created pathways which enable individuals irrespective of age and gender to achieve social elderhood. The exact role which social edlerhood plays in educational leadership, particularly in female educational leadership, is an important issue to explore.

## Chapter 6

### **Reshaping the Boundaries for Educational Leadership**

This case study investigated four female school principals' comprehension of their roles, functions and responsibilities as educational leaders. The study explored how the social status of women influences and shapes their professional behaviors as practicing female principals. This is particularly relevant to Zimbabwean context where women have an institutionalized status as permanent minors within society, a position legitimated by the Zimbabwean constitution in a landmark decision bequeathing customary law precedence over the principle of equality between the sexes. In such a context it is therefore pertinent to explore how women paradoxically function as institutional leaders in senior administrative positions when, on the one hand they are legitimated minors, and on the other hand are both administrative and educational leaders in education, in societies which highly value schooling.

#### **6.1 Objectives of the Study**

A prime objective of the study was to provide a nuanced description of and an analysis of the functions/roles of select Zimbabwean female school principals. The study sought to contribute to the educational leadership landscape on both a macro and micro level. On the one hand, it is global, on the other it is local and context specific. It is holistic in so far as it attempts to capture the social, educational and historical aspects of women who are educational leaders. The experiences I tried to capture were specific to Zimbabwean female school principals. Indeed it may be possible that the experiences are peculiar to these four women at this particular point in time. It remains an open empirical

question to what extent these same women would describe their experiences in a comparable way, had I interviewed the same women after an intervening period. The inquiry was structured by two guiding questions that sought to determine the multiple ways in which Zimbabwean female principals comprehend their roles and status as educational leaders:

- (1) What are Zimbabwean female school principals' perceptions of what Constitutes Educational leadership as it pertains to them?
- (2) What professional characteristics and interpersonal strategies do Zimbabwean female school principals use when engaging with other school stakeholders such as the local communities, representatives of the ministry of education etc?

Here I analyze some of the social and professional characteristics which are typically not shared by men, such as social caring. Two of the schools are situated in an urban center while the other two are in rural setting. The schools have both male and female faculty. The data were collected through in-depth interviewing. One of the strengths of the study is the use of retrospective commentary. The data were transcribed verbatim and independent Shona/English bilinguals checked each transcript for accuracy. Data analysis revealed the following categories:

- leadership as social welfare;
- leadership as a process;
- consensual versus independent leadership;
- authority, gendered, senior moments;
- towards creating a new school culture.

The analytical categories that emerged organically from the data represented how informants understood their own experiences. Because the interviews were carried out by the same person, it enhanced the opportunity for cross-informant comparisons. The disadvantage is that it provides a single person's perspective of female school principals' perceptions of leadership. Because the perceptions are based on a single person's views, they still need to be cross-validated by comparing the perceptions with that of other people. Retrospective commentary made it possible to clarify some aspects of the interview.

The analysis is two fold. In the first part, I describe features which the women shared in common, and then those features that are unique to each one of them. Concluding this chapter, I highlight the merits and limitations of each of the educational features I examined.

In the literature review I evaluated and developed a postcolonial critique of leadership theoretical frameworks by analyzing the nature of the insights which might be gained about educational leadership when it is embedded within a postcolonial society. In order to examine the nature of female educational leadership I analyzed the nature of the relationship between western female educational leaders and African female leaders in sectors other than education. The literature review focused on how leadership, particularly female educational leadership, is perceived by women themselves. Since most of the literature on female leadership is based on western sources, raising the important question about the possible relevance and conceptual limitations which arise from using western paradigms to understand post-colonial societies is warranted.

## 6.2 Research Findings

The four female principals in this study have affirmed the following issues: First, the study raised the notion of education as a process. It is striking that although the school principals clearly subscribe to the notion of education as a process, they at times keep ‘slipping’ back to the notion of education as a product suggesting that they see both process and product as central to their educational responsibilities. By this I mean that even though their focus is on process, understood as ongoing teaching and learning, the importance of having a product of one form or other to show for the process is something which they are fully aware of, particularly in contexts in which the school’s efficiency is evaluated on the basis of educational products which include examination results.

Second, the participants reflected two forms of leadership: consensual and autonomous leadership. Consensual or collaborative leadership refers to a form of collective leadership in which most individuals play different roles. In collaborative leadership each individual is treated as a member of a team. In autonomous or independent leadership the main accent of leadership is on the role played by the school principal as an independent person ‘driving’ a collection of individuals with mutual reinforcing and at times conflicting interests. I am arguing that perhaps because of the perceived women’s ‘low’ social status they may be more inclined to adopt a consensual leadership style than an independent style.

Third, the research findings revealed three features significantly impacting leadership: authority, gender, and age. These concepts are related in complex ways and necessarily have to be combined for analytical purposes, although the process of analysis

demands that they be treated as analytical isolates. Aging provides an opportunity for women to gain respect. The women also gain respect through their husband's status.

Fourth, the study enumerates the challenges school principals are faced with as they try to change prevailing institutional culture. Their attempts to create new school cultures are hampered by factors both internal and external to the school environment. The experiences of the school principals are testimony to the difficulties of initiating and sustaining institutional educational changes. Paradoxically, because of the heavy demands which change requires, it is easier for the principals to manage the schools if they do not introduce any change into the school system. Unfortunately, when no change is introduced the schools may run efficiently administratively, but they will not be able to effectively accomplish their educational objectives, so in a sense introducing change becomes necessary irrespective of its initial costs.

Fifth, the study revealed main differences between urban and rural high schools. Rural schools are more impoverished than urban schools as amply demonstrated in the poor qualities of the school buildings and limited nature of office space. Mai Shingi did not even have an office to work in. She used a public space as her workstation. It is possible that this compromised her effectiveness. Another significant finding is that rural schools tend to have fewer qualified teachers than their urban counterparts. Inexperienced teachers tend to use rural schools as training grounds while looking for teaching opportunities in better resourced schools, particularly in urban areas.

This study has also revealed some interesting issues about educational leadership when leadership is conceived as social welfare. Three female principals in this study seem to subscribe to the notion of leadership as social welfare where education has strong



links to social function and reform. It is not clear whether this leadership style is peculiar to women. The school principals however also seem to have some not so fully articulated misgivings about the effects of the social welfare as leadership not so much on the school teachers, but themselves as professional persons. Through social welfare women can disguise their role which they play as leaders.

### **6.3 Implications and Recommendations for Future Study**

Although this study focused on female educational leaders, it has broader implications, particularly for the training of educational leaders for the Zimbabwean context. For example, the study described the everyday dynamics of four female Zimbabwean educational leaders, which might need to be incorporated into the overall training of educational leaders in Zimbabwe. Currently, most of the educational leadership training is done using teaching materials based on western notions of educational leadership contexts, which although interesting might not be directly relevant to the Zimbabwean contexts.

Another feature apparent in the study is that the female educational leaders seem to have an extended role that encompasses social, educational, and personal responsibilities. It is possible that the 'technical' efficiency of the principals in some areas might be adversely affected by these extended roles they play. If the school principals feel however, that the diverse roles they play are an integral part of their professional identities, then providing them with 'professional' training in counseling, and public relations might be necessary. If these areas of expertise (counseling, social management, public relations) are all part of their responsibilities as educational leaders, then these roles have to be considered when women are being assessed for promotion the

capacity of the candidates to carry out. The argument has major implications less for women school principals than for male school principals. If it is true that female school principals are likely to be more successful because of the diverse leadership roles which they play, then although female school principals are in a minority, both in numbers and social status, they bring with them special types of expertise which all educational leaders may benefit from as part of their ordinary training as school principals. But are different expectations placed on male principals? It means that men and women might learn from each other although the general tendency is to highlight what women have learnt from men than the reverse.

This study illustrated how the four female principals were inclined to adopt consensual leadership styles instead of independent leadership styles. If the principals use collaborative leadership as a strategy to effectively overcome some of the challenges of school leadership, then the Ministry of education in Zimbabwe needs to create an environment which fosters collaboration as a modus operandi at all levels of the school community wherever feasible for both teaching and evaluation.

This study demonstrated the major differences between rural and urban schools in terms of both funding and staffing. These discrepancies between rural and urban settings need to be addressed if obstacles which hamper the advancement of women principals are to be minimized. This means that the Ministry of Education needs to formulate and promote policies that promote equal funding for both rural and urban schools.

The principals in this study have problems in cultivating and maintaining institutional cultures that facilitate change. These women require support to enhance

institutional changes in their schools. Support can take the form of funding for teacher development programs that prepare them for the changes envisioned by the principals.

#### **6.4 Limitations and Implications for Further Study**

This section is divided into two parts. In the first part, I examine the nature of the research implications, and in the second part, I speculate on possible policy implications. Methodologically, methodologically, what I presented in this study were perspectives of leaders as interpreted through my research lens. I cannot rule out the possibility that my interaction with the informants led them to raise particular issues and to ignore others. Second, what I presented was one slice of the leadership landscape. Since I did not have formal interviews with other stakeholders such as teachers, parents and the students, I am not in a position to triangulate what the principals said about themselves with what other stakeholders say about the school. Future studies along this line will need to look at perspectives of leadership by other individuals. Future studies will need multiple perspectives on the same phenomenon. Such studies may need to select principals from the same location with comparable experiences.

In terms of substance, principals were selected on the basis that I was going to compare rural and urban school settings but that assumption was based on a conviction that the distinction between rural and urban (which is a product of geographical and spatial arrangement) will be relevant to education. The notion of a school in an urban or rural environment is to some extent an artifact of western ways of thinking. Africans recycle themselves from urban to rural and back. Unfortunately the notion of the distinction between rural and urban is a gross simplification because of the constant

movement of people across different localities. The urban/rural distinction is unfortunately also very problematic. In this study it was used as a dichotomy, but it might be more useful in future studies to frame the urban/rural distinction in terms of a continuum rather than a binary opposite. Furthermore, the notion of rural/urban does not travel well, by this I mean it's not easily applicable to new contexts because countries use different criteria to distinguish between rural and urban.

Another factor that complicates interpreting data is how to interpret notions about age and their impact on school governance. There are two possible ways about handling age. Firstly, looking at age as a chronological variable and secondly, age in terms of social accomplishments. I mean, what the individuals have been able to accomplish and the status they have acquired as a result of those accomplishments. Because there are now different pathways to accomplishment, people may attain social elderhood outside education. So although someone may be a junior teacher in the school hierarchy, they may have a higher status outside the school than the principal. It is not clear in the study how social status outside the school may have a bearing on the behavior of people within the school. This is particularly important because the involvement of school principals outside the confines dissolves boundaries between the school and the community. Because of the dissolution of these boundaries, school principals find themselves subjected to complex dynamics over which they may have little control. Another factor that complicates this study is that teachers might feel that they have a higher status outside school, thus impacting their relations with school leaders.

## **6.5 Policy Implications**

In the following section I speculate on the possible policy implications of the results of the study. By policy I am focusing here on the relevance of the study for administrators responsible for educational policy formulation with particular relevance to professional training. Because apparently there are emerging styles of leadership associated with women, it will be prudent to take cognizance of these educational leadership styles for the training of both women and male school principals. Since the female educational leaders seem to have developed ‘distinct’ educational leadership styles, their distinct styles of management may have to be taken into account as a matter of policy when they are being evaluated for promotion. Further research is needed to determine the effectiveness of the different educational styles associated with women. Because of the sharp differences in terms of the resources available to urban and rural schools it will be useful in terms of equity, if the government could reduce the resource discrepancy by providing additional funding to resource poor rural schools.

Because of the unpredictable nature of community life, what is required is not dissolution of the boundaries between school and the community. This problem requires the training of cadres of school principals who are able to interface between the school and the community.

The female principals selected as participants in this study are from Harare the capital city of Zimbabwe, and the rural, so I cannot claim whether their experiences are comparable to that of other women in similar positions in other parts of Zimbabwe, or indeed in other postcolonial countries. The school principals are also at different stages in their careers, so I cannot claim whether their experiences will remain the same as they

continue with their careers. Indeed their perceptions of their professional careers will likely change with time. The primary aim of the study was to shed insight into the nature of educational leadership through a group of carefully selected women. The onus is on the reader to seek transferability to other specific contexts and to discern patterns across the broader educational leadership realm.

Future studies also need to be able to stress the importance of the role of age within the school. Age is particularly important in traditional African societies, which tend to be age graded. Since the study focuses on a number of carefully chosen women, it cannot be claimed that the results are necessarily valid for other women even in the city of Harare in Zimbabwe. Because the study focused on women educational leaders, a separate study might seek to investigate whether the perceptions generated in this study are necessarily shared by female leaders in other professions as well. More importantly, future studies need to be based on a prior empirical analysis of how gender is understood and functions within institutions in Zimbabwe, this might entail a detailed analysis of gender discourse by both male, and female, professionals and non-professionals.

In spite of the putative limitations of the study which I have outlined above, the study contributes ritually and symbolically to the paucity of research about female educational leaders by female scholars studying societies in transition such as Zimbabwe!

## **6.6 What is in this Study for Western Scholars?**

As can be expected most western scholars focus on western societies. Even though they focus on western societies, it is still justifiable to argue that research in non-western societies will be enriching to western scholars. By focusing on issues of educational leadership in post colonial societies, the study provides western scholars an

opportunity to explore the validity of some of the constructs which form the basis of their research in radically different environments, hence testing the portability of their constructs. For example, in what way is the fundamental distinction which forms the basis of western scholarship between personal and professional responsibilities pertinent to postcolonial societies?

Furthermore, because the US is increasingly becoming a diverse community, some of the issues raised in this study will be relevant to minority scholarship because of the historical connections between African Americans and Africans.

This study can be described in the 18<sup>th</sup> century British poet William Blake's words as looking at the world through a grain of sand – meaning that by focusing narrowly and intensively on a specific point in time you see infinity. US educational leaders can use the African experiences as a prism to analyze their own educational leadership.

### **6.7 Recommendations to a Young Principal in Zimbabwean High Schools**

Any individual in a position of authority will meet with resistance from his/her subordinates. However, young female leaders tend to experience more resistance accentuated by traditional factors. In Zimbabwe women are accorded more respect as they grow older. Also if the woman is married and has children she will command more respect from her community with Mai Chipo as a paradigm case.

A young female principal can use consensual leadership styles to get all her stake holders involved in the day-to-day affairs of the school so as to promote collective ownership of the project. All stake holders expect the principal to serve and promote not only their professional needs but their personal needs as well.

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## Appendix A

### Letter of Introduction

March 6, 2004

RE: Request for research authorization

Dear Mr. Mwenda (Director of Education),

My name is Rudo Tsemunhu. I am a PhD student at Pennsylvania State University from Zimbabwe. I am interested in studying female educational leadership in Zimbabwe. This letter serves as a formal request for authorization to conduct research on female educational leadership in Zimbabwe. The research will be carried out in schools meeting the following criteria:

- (1) Enrollment should have both girls and boys.
- (2) The schools should have both male and female teaching staff.
- (3) Geographically, two of the schools should be located in a rural centre, and the other two in an urban area.
- (4) Each principal should have served in the school for at least one year or more prior to the commencement of the research.

The study entails interviewing each principal to elicit her experiences as female educational leaders. Each interview will last for a maximum of two hours. Each school principal will be interviewed twice over a period of a month.



The dissertation is part of my Doctoral degree at the Pennsylvania State University in the United States. The research process will commence as soon you have granted me authorization to the schools meeting the aforementioned criteria.

I am willing to send you a copy of the dissertation when it is completed as a token of gratitude for your assistance in granting me access to schools under your jurisdiction.

I will be contacting you telephonically as per your request in the coming week to confirm your decision.

Looking forward to your cooperation in this regard.

Sincerely,

Rudo Tsemunhu

## Appendix B

### Standard Ethics Protocol

My name is Rudo Tsemunhu. I am the researcher on a dissertation study entitled Female Educational Leadership: The Case of Zimbabwe High School Female Principals, which I am conducting as a doctoral student in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Penn State University.

I may be contacted by phone at 814-862-0835 or 814-883-3156, or by electronic mail at [ret7@psu.edu](mailto:ret7@psu.edu) should you have any questions. For any further information concerning this study you can also contact Dr. Shouse by phone at 814-865-1487, or electronically at [rsc8@psu.edu](mailto:rsc8@psu.edu); Dr. Striedieck at 814-862- 1467, or [striedieck@psu.edu](mailto:striedieck@psu.edu). If you need further information about your rights as a research participant, you may call the Office for Research Protections at (814-865-1775), or [orprotections@psu.edu](mailto:orprotections@psu.edu).

The purposes of this study are three fold: (1) to examine the unique problems and struggles faced by woman educational leaders within the Zimbabwean school system; (2) To investigate how female Zimbabwean school principals address the tension, which arises from being legal minors on the one hand and Educational Leaders on the other; (3) To explore how the social status of women influences and shapes the behaviors and practices of female principals.

An interview protocol with four main aims will be used to elicit narratives from the principals which reflect: (1) the experiences of Zimbabwean female school principals, (2) their beliefs about their professional roles (3) how they construct and understand their roles as educational leaders (4) the strategies which they adopt to render their leadership

effective in school contexts given the social constraints arising from a patriarchal society. Interviews will be audio taped for accuracy and the research informants will be given a chance to review the interview transcription after the interviews. There will be two interviews with each principal in a four-week period. Each interview will last approximately two hours. The audiotapes will be locked in the researcher's office for safety and will be destroyed in 2010. Other than the researcher, my two research advisors: Dr. Shouse and Dr. Striedieck will also have access to the audiotapes. Research participants can be assured that there are no risks in participating in this study.

This study will contribute to the sparse academic literature on female leadership with a focus on the critical tension between customary practices in which women are minors on one hand and perform professional duties in which they are responsible senior administrators on the other hand.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project. Your participation is very much appreciated. Before we start the interview, I would like to assure you as a participant in this study you have several rights.

- ❑ First, your participation in this interview is entirely voluntary.
- ❑ You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time or discuss any given subject.
- ❑ You are free to withdraw from the interview at any time
- ❑ This interview will be kept strictly confidential.
- ❑ Excerpts of this interview may be made part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics be included in this report.

I would be grateful if you would sign this form to show that I have read you its contents

Informant \_\_\_\_\_ (signed)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Printed)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Dated)

Investigator \_\_\_\_\_ (signed)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Printed)  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Dated)

## Appendix C

## Letter of Introduction

March 6, 2004

RE: Request for research authorization (For the female principals)

Dear Mr. Mpofu:

As per our earlier telephone conversation, I am now formally writing to take part in a research project on Female Educational Leadership in Zimbabwe which I am currently carrying out as part of my Doctoral dissertation at the University of Pennsylvania, in the United States. The research process entails interviewing selected female school principals in Urban and rural areas in Zimbabwe. Two interviews lasting for a maximum of two hours each will be carried out with you. The interviews will be confidential. Your name and comments will be anonymized in the results. The interview will be carried out in any language of your choice. A copy of my dissertation will be sent to you as a token of appreciation for your assistance in this project.

Feel free to contact me on the following number if there are any other issues which you would like me to address: 814-862-0835 or email me at [ret7@psu.edu](mailto:ret7@psu.edu)

Yours sincerely,

Rudo Tsemunhu

c.c. Head Office

c.c. Supervisors

## Appendix D

### Interview Protocol

This protocol has four main aims to elicit narratives which reflect: (1) the experiences of Zimbabwean female school principals, (2) their beliefs about their professional roles (3) how they construct and understand their roles as educational leaders (4) the strategies which they adopt to render their leadership effective in school contexts given the social constraints arising from a patriarchal society-INTERVIEW BEGINS

1. Can you tell me a short story about how you became a school principal?

.....

2. How long have you been a principal at this school?

.....

3. Is this your first posting as a principal?

.....

4. Before becoming a principal where did you work?

.....

5. How would you describe the socio-economic background of your schools community? .....

.....

6. How big is your staff establishment? .....

7. What is the gender mix and professional qualifications of your teachers and other support staff in your school?

.....

.....

8. Can you give a brief description of your vice principal?

.....

.....

.....

9. Was your predecessor female or male? Do you know anything about his/her relationship with teachers, students, and parents? Please share in confidence some of the things you know about the relationship of your predecessor with teachers, students, and support staff.

.....

.....

.....

10. If you were to describe how you make decisions, do you make them after consultation with teachers, students and parents or do you make them yourself and then communicate them to your teachers-what do you say is your leadership style?

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

11. Given what you have said about your work how do you understand leadership?

.....  
.....

13. Are there any special features that you think educational leadership has which distinguish it from the other forms of leadership you have just mentioned?

14. As a principal, how would you characterize your relationship with teachers?

.....  
.....

15. Can you tell me a personal story or an event, which you think, shows how male teachers relate to you?

.....



.....

.....

16. Can you tell me a personal story that shows how female teachers relate to you?

.....

.....

16. Can you tell me a personal story which shows how students relate to you?

.....

.....

17. Describe how school discipline occurs in your school. Or something about creating a school culture based upon your ideas of educational leadership.

.....

.....

18. How would you describe your relationship with parents in your school?

.....

19. Other than scheduled meetings with the parent-teacher association, which other social activities outside the school do you participate in? Do you think these social activities have a beneficial role in your school?

.....  
.....  
.....

20. In the United States young students are given some work experience. Typically, they would spend a day with an adult at her/his work place so that they develop a sense of work. If a student was to spend a day with you as a principal of this school, what are the daily activities that you think she/he will report on? (Describe your daily activities as principal)

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

21. How would you describe your professional relationship with the Central Office of Education?

.....

22. I would like to know more about your role as a more experienced teacher in this school. What roles do you play in assisting your teachers with instruction in the classroom?

.....  
.....

23. To what extent are you involved with syllabus design?

.....

24. As a parent I have always thought exams played an important role in determining the future of our students. Is that still the case? If so what roles do you play in preparing students for examinations?

.....  
.....

25. What role do you play in contributing towards the development of some of the teachers particularly the younger ones, who are inexperienced?.....

.....  
.....

26. Now that you have talked about how you became principal, what is it like? What does it mean to you?

.....  
.....  
.....

27. Can you briefly describe your educational background i.e. the high school,  
university you attended? .....

.....  
.....

28. Given what you have constructed in this interview, where do you see yourself  
going in the  
future?.....

.....

28. Are there any questions that you would like to ask me?

.....

Thank you for your time

END OF INTERVIEW

## VITA

### Rudo E Tsemunhu

#### Educational Background

Ph.D.	2005	The Pennsylvania State University Educational Administration
B.Ed.	1988	University of Zimbabwe. Educational Administration, Planning and Policy Studies
CE	1983	University of Zimbabwe

#### Professional Experience

2000-2005	Ph.D. student in Educational Administration, College of Education, Pennsylvania State University. Dissertation: Educational Leadership: A case study of Zimbabwean high school female principals
1997-1998	BEd. Student Educational Administration, Faculty of Education University of Zimbabwe. Research Project: An investigation into secondary school teachers involvement in school-based staff development programs in Harare South Circuit.
1984-1997	History teacher/Senior woman. Hatfield High School, Harare, Zimbabwe.

#### Paper Presentations and attendance at Professional Conferences

Tsemunhu, Rudo (2004). "Ethical dilemmas confronting educational leadership in developing countries" Paper presented at the Values and Leadership Conference. Southern Palm Beach, Barbados: October 01, 2004.