Female secondary school heads' experiences of leadership in the Gweru District of Zimbabwe.

By

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

In the

School of Education Studies

Faculty of Education

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UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE

December 2019

Declaration

I, CYNTHIA DZIMIRI, declare that the thesis, FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL HEADS' EXPERIENCES OF LEADERSHIP IN THE GWERU DISTRICT OF ZIMBABWE, submitted for the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Free State is my own independent work.

All the references that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references. I further declare that this work has not previously been submitted by me at another university or faculty for the purpose of obtaining a qualification.

SIGNED ………………….   DATE:………………………

CYNTHIA DZIMIRI

Ethics Statement

11-May-2017

Dear Mrs Cynthia Dzimiri

Ethics Clearance: Female secondary school heads' experiences of leadership in the Gweru district of Zimbabwe.

Principal Investigator: Mrs Cynthia Dzimiri

Department: Education (Bloemfontein Campus)

APPLICATION APPROVED

With reference to you application for ethical clearance with the Faculty of Education, I am pleased to inform you on behalf of the Ethics Board of the faculty that you have been granted ethical clearance for your research.

Your ethical clearance number, to be used in all correspondence is: UFS-HSD2017/0444

This ethical clearance number is valid for research conducted for one year from issuance. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension.

We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your research **project be submitted to the ethics office** to ensure we are kept up to date with your progress and any ethi**cal implications that may arise.**

Thank you for submitting this proposal for ethical clearance and we wish you every success with your research.

Yours faithfully

Dr. MM Nkoane
Chairperson: Ethics Committee

Language Editing

EDITORIAL REPORT FOR CYNTHIA DZIMIRI'S DOCTORAL THESIS

Working Title: Female Secondary School Heads' Experiences of Leadership in the Gweru District of Zimbabwe.

Date: 9 July 2019

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I, Betty Mutambanengwe, have thoroughly copy edited Cynthia Dzimiri's Thesis for the Doctor of Philosophy. Title of thesis: Female Secondary School Heads' Experiences of Leadership in the Gweru District of Zimbabwe. This was a very interesting and informative document which the editor enjoyed reading.

(Betty Mutambanengwe, Mrs)

Abstract

For us to understand women issues better, we need to listen to their stories and redefine their meanings in order to generate new perspectives, which was the focus of this study. The study provided space for women to articulate their experiences and perceptions in their leadership. This research was grounded on the radical, liberal and post-structuralist feminists' views. Feminist knowledge can come from examining the unique experiences of women especially where they experience different social lives from those of men. Career path model was also used to analyse women school leaders' experiences. This model posits that leaders pass through the anticipation, acquisition and performance stages in their development. This study was pinned on interpretive philosophical orientation based on individual stories and case study design was used. To collect data interviews, observation and document analysis were utilised. Female headed secondary schools were far apart hence the choice of only three participants who represented three categories of secondary schools in Zimbabwe, which are, rural, urban day and boarding schools.

Themes and sub themes which emerged from the collected data were used to analyse the findings. This research may contribute to the existing debates concerning women rather than an endeavour to find consensus. Findings from this study revealed that a good leader involves others in her leadership. Hard work and commitment were identified as virtues of a good leader. Also pain-taking, frustration, disappointment and depression were recognized as part of women leadership. They all agreed that leadership styles depend on the head's situation. The findings revealed that middle leadership was essential for anyone who aspired to be a leader and also that leadership training was necessary for all those who got leadership posts. The findings showed that leaders lacked instruction in their leadership because of other overwhelming duties which were within their jobs.

Key terms: Perceptions; experiences; feminism; leadership; management; power

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all my family members who supported me during my studies. Furthermore, completion of this study was going to be a nightmare without the support of my family. I would like to thank my husband, Wonderful, in a special way for supporting me morally when the studies were really tough for me. May the good Lord continue to bless you. Thank you my children, Blessings, Blissful, Diana, Patience, and my grandson Misha Tidings Emmanuel, for giving me space to do my studies. To you all friends and relatives, I say, thank you so much.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to render my profound gratitude to the Almighty who gave me strength and will power to complete my thesis in good health. My heartfelt appreciation also goes to my supervisor, Professor Jita. This thesis was never going to be a reality had it not been for you, I really salute you for the encouragement and support that you gave me. You inspired me a lot. I also want to extend my sincere thanks to the whole team behind Professor Jita for making this a success especially Doctor Jita, Doctor Tsakeni and Doctor Chimbi, you really assisted me to realise my dream and potential especially through Harare cohort sessions. I will cherish your academic and professional guidance forever. I am also indebted to SANRAL chair in Mathematics for supporting my studies financially from 2016 to 2019. This study was not going to be successful without their support.

I also acknowledge the support I got from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary schools in Zimbabwe who granted me permission to carry out the study in secondary schools. My gratitude is as well extended to the provincial and district officers who allowed me to get into the schools where I met very supportive female secondary school heads. I thank you ladies for your cooperation during data collection. I would like to thank my colleagues who also played a very vital role in my studies and the Great Zimbabwe University administration board who gave me travel grants to consult with my supervisor.

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Acronyms

AIDS: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

A' level: Advanced level

CEDAW: United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

       Against Women

CERD: Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination

DH: Deputy head

EASA: Education Association of South Africa

EO: Education Officer

H: Head

HOD: Head of Department

H/E: Home Economics

NASH: National Association of Secondary Heads

O' level: Ordinary level

SDA: School Development Association

Snr tr: senior teacher

SRC: Student Representative Council

TP: Teaching practice

ZNGP: Zimbabwe   National   Gender   Policy

CHAPTER 1: Orientation and background to the study

1.1 Introduction

The study explored the experiences of female secondary heads in relation to the daily execution of their duties as school leaders. Women's career experiences are important and they tend to shape people's behaviour, beliefs, values and even ways of thinking (Benham, 1997). In order to understand women's issues, one has to listen to their stories (Mogadime, Mentz, Armstrong & Holtam, 2010). As people listen to women's stories, they tend to redefine their meanings leading to new perspectives on women issues (Weedon, 1997). Basing on such information, I listened to female school heads' career stories through interviews, observations and document analyses. One way of d oing this is to analyse the collected data using the feminist lens (Davies, 1994; Fraser & Nicholson, 1990; Weedon, 1997). There are numerous versions of feminism most of them share universal features. In this study, I mostly used ideas from the radical, liberal and post-structuralist feminists to ground my discussion. These theories seek to liberate women from the situations that enslave them (Sherman, 2005). This study therefore focuses on exploring the lived experiences of female educational leaders so as to understand their perceptions and experiences in their positions of leadership.

Harding (1991) states that feminist theorists, such as the radicals criticise traditional social scientists for their selfishness in assuming that the world could be understood from men's perspective without bringing in women's perceptions and experiences. Consequently, for me to explore in women's ideas, I gathered and analysed their perceptions and experiences as secondary school heads so as to identify areas that need redefinition to understand women's situations better.

This chapter presents the general introduction to the study. First is a background that contextualises the study, followed by a statement of the problem. Next is the theoretical framework on which the study is anchored. This is followed by the aim and objectives of the study, research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, overview of the research methodology, delimitations of the study, limitations, definition of key terms, organisation of the study and finally summary of the chapter.

1.2 Background of the study

Leadership is entrenched in the long history of management and in education (Showunmi, Atewogun & Bebbington, 2015). Coleman (2012) and Parker (2005) concur that, leaders tend to be associated with gender, colour, class and heterosexuality. Ayman and Korabik (2010) and Eagly and Chin (2010) reinforce the idea that leadership is gender and culturally determined. Therefore, gender and culture are believed to have a profound effect on leadership in various complex ways (Ayman & Korabik, 2010). It was the focus of this study to find out how female secondary school heads perceive this male dominance in leadership and what their experiences as women leaders were like.

In USA some researchers concluded that Black women leaders' progress was being hindered by their cultural experiences and religious backgrounds (Alston, 2005; Jean-Marie, 2013). This shows that this gender inequality at leadership level is being experienced in different parts of the world. Review of existing literature by Peterson and Runyan (1999), Davidson and Burke (1994), Shakeshaft (1989) and Coleman (1994) among others, reflect debate and controversy on the principal reasons for the underrepresentation of women in educational management. Such information helps to strengthen the argument that women discrimination and oppression started long back. It was experienced in different societies and it came in different forms, making the issue of gender discrimination complex and emotional.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 1995, Chapter v, Article 82 calls on all governments to come up with a gender sensitive curriculum in order to make sure there is full and equal women participation in educational management, policy and decision-making. The argument is based on the fact that gender equality is not just an issue of human rights. It is a social justice issue and focuses on people's sustainable development (The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995). The invisibility of women in leadership positions is pronounced in African countries (Lumby, Azada, de Wet, Skervin, Walsh & Williamson, 2010; Greyvenstein, 2000; Lumby & Azaola, 2014) including Zimbabwe hence the justification of this study.

Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango (2009) note that the issue of gender inequality in school and college management structures has not received enough research attention in Zimbabwe and other African countries. Arguably, while Nieuwenhuis (2007) and Gwirayi (2010) concur that the discrimination of women manifests in different areas, such as political, social, intellectual, sexual and economical, gender equality is possible and necessary. Guided by such facts, this study focused on female secondary school educational leaders' narratives on challenges and opportunities in their career paths to school headship.

In terms of policies that fight for this gender equality, there are disparities between policy and practice (Musandu, 2009), which results in few women being seen in decision-making positions. In this study, some of the recruitment policies/circulars were analysed during the document analysis process. Similar observations were made by Coleman (2001) who comments that in a society where men dominate leadership positions, it is not surprising that women are less likely to plan for a career that includes leadership. In the face of these gender prejudices, women leaders find themselves working harder than their male counterparts to prove their worth (Crotty, 1998). This study aimed at exploring female secondary school heads' experiences with policies and processes that guide their work as school leaders.

In its effort to address the sex discrimination in the country, Zimbabwe has alluded to different national and international gender declarations and conventions. According to Chabaya et al. (2009), the under-representation of women in positions of leadership has led to the passing of new policies and laws, such as the Labour Relations Act (1995) which outlaws discrimination on the basis of sex and race among others. The Gender Affirmative Action Policy of 1992, Public Service Circulars Number 11 of 1992, Number 22 of 1996, and Number 1 of 1997 encourage heads of stations to identify and encourage women to apply for promotion posts (Chabaya et al, 2009). The above policies give women preference in cases where they hold similar educational credentials as men. All the participants in this study were encouraged by their school heads. Zimbabwe National Gender Policy (ZNGP) (2013-2017) states that such policies are within the framework of international declarations. These include the 1965 Convention

on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and the 1979 United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Commenting on the issue of policies, Kiamba (2008) reveals that in many institutions, most women were just ushered into leadership positions because of policies which were put in place by different governments. Otherwise, it was not because they were capable. It was my interest to find out the perceptions and experiences of female secondary school heads in relation to recruitment and selection policies and processes that are used to appoint school heads. After their research in South Africa, Moorosi (2008), Diko (2014) and Mahlase (1997) blame the institutional culture and the general societal expectations for the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. Makhasane, Simamane and Chikoko (2018) and Byrd (2009) also contend that men are believed to have more social power and control than women, which gives them more opportunities of being leaders. Female secondary school heads in this study gave their reasons for the under-representation of women in educational leadership according to their own perceptions and experiences.

Barnett (2004) believes that though the attitudes of people are shifting towards the expanded social roles of women, a lot still needs to be done to the people's perceptions and beliefs in terms of women's responsibilities in society. If female traditional responsibilities are not attended to, most women may end up facing a lot of challenges such as divorce, and mental and physical among other disorders (Perkins, 2011). On one hand, an overwhelming workload also discourages most women from engaging in leadership posts (Kochan, Spencer and Matthews, 1999). It is believed that school heads are believed to work between 60 and 80 hours per week (Read, 2000; MacAdams, 1998). The participants in this study believed that this increased workload has been caused by the intensification in expectations for school leaders. These include activities such as supervision, fund raising, school marketing and being a coordinator between school and the community. Furthermore, Loder (2005) observes that the massive movement of women into the workplaces was not moving together with the cultural expectations in terms of marriage and family responsibilities. In the same vein,

Diko (2014) emphasises that although women were appointed to high positions, the contexts in which they operate were not adjusted to accommodate them.

To address some of the challenges faced by women in taking up leadership posts, the USA school districts and universities have engaged school leaders and aspirants in training programmes for different leadership areas (Daresh, 2004; Brown-Ferrigno & Muth, 2004; Jackson & Kelley, 2002). Daresh (2004) emphasises that those who aspire to be in leadership positions need to have good mentors and also to be involved in the organisational leadership programmes which are formal. They also need to interact with practising heads so as to be encouraged, equipped with skills to manage personal and professional demands and to get the opportunity to network with significant people (Sherman, 2005). In the same spirit, Gardiner, Enomoto and Grogan (2000) argue that those aspiring for school headship and engage with the practising heads are more likely to end up in leadership positions than those who do not. Leadership and self-esteem training was suggested by The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (1995) as a way of empowering women with relevant skills for leadership. All the participants blamed lack of enough training as the cause of poor administration in Zimbabwe.

In the backdrop of gender equality policies, Zimbabwe's Masvingo province had 14 females out of 246 secondary school heads (Chabaya, 2004 in Chabaya et al. 2009). Preliminary research for this study shown in the Table 1.1 below revealed an equally worrying scenario in the Midlands Province.

Table 1.1 Distribution of school heads by gender in Midlands Province

District	Male School Heads	Female School Heads	Male Deputy Heads	Female Deputy Heads
Chirumhanzu	29	2	37	2
Gokwe North	35	2	28	2
Gokwe South	63	8	47	16
Gweru	43	24	20	18
Kwekwe	57	12	48	19
Mberengwa	68	14	63	8
Shurugwi	39	7	32	11
Zvishavane	34	12	36	10

Source: Primary Data

The evident invisibility and underrepresentation of women in posts of secondary school headship in the Midlands Province in Table 1.1 implies the existence of some push-back and push-out factors. It was pertinent for me to capture how female secondary school heads perceived and experienced the recruitment and selection practices and processes for positions of school headship.

1.3 Statement of the problem

This study focused on the experiences of female secondary school heads in the daily execution of their work as school heads. The bulk of existing research in different countries concentrates on underrepresentation of women in leadership positions (Grogan, 2010; Blackmore 1999, 2013; Coleman 2001; 2003b; 2005; 2007; 2012; Chabaya et al. 2009; Sherman, 2005; Smith, 2015 & Smith, 2018) and there is little attention given to the nature of the problems women face in administering schools efficiently and effectively (Makura, 2009). This study focused on the participants' living experiences of their leadership. Women in management and leadership in education have become a centre of attraction for researchers since the end of the 20th century (Shake, 1987 in Shapira, Arar & Azaiza, 2011 & Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Shapira et al.

(2011) note that a lot has been published in many countries encompassing various issues relating to gender and educational leadership.

Loder (2005) argues that barriers for both practising and aspiring women school heads include unfair promotion and hiring practices, lack of support from both home and organisation, lack of mentorship and the rooted belief that leadership is a men's domain. In the same vein, Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) in Uganda outline various reasons that make it difficult for women to attain leadership positions in education. The reasons include gender discrimination, pressures of family that subscribe to different roles for women as well as socio-cultural factors among others, which led to women`s reluctance to apply for promotion. Although women oppression differs from country to country and from society to society, the patriarchal nature of most African societies leave women with no room to negotiate and has profound effect in their future decisions, especially in issues concerning taking up high positions in society (Barmao & Mukhuwana, 2013). Culturally, there is stigmatisation attached to female heads since the positions are considered masculine (Manwa, 2002; Schein, 1994). In this study, the female secondary school heads narrated the challenges that women face in trying to 'walk' their career path including the cultural issues.

In Zimbabwe people such as Makura (2009), Chabaya et. al (2009), Naidoo and Perumal (2014) and others also researched on the under representation of women in leadership positions. This study focused on the exploration of female leaders' experiences and perceptions about their leadership so as to add to the feminist knowledge that is there. In addition to some of the experiences highlighted by the other Zimbabwean researchers above, the participants' perceptions are also worth considering hence the importance of this study.

The aim of this research was not to overthrow men out of leadership positions but to uncover evidence that can be used to promote the equal representation of women in positions of decision-making. Consequently, I feel that if causes of gender inequalities are identified and addressed, then more women will be in a position to occupy high posts. Women in high posts may assist in solving those problems that affect women directly which might be overlooked by men in positions of authority because of

ignorance or intentionally. In order to uncover relations and experiences that account for gender inequalities, the secondary female school heads narrated their perceptions and experiences of gender inequality in their day-to-day work as school leaders. We now look at a brief overview of the theoretical lens underpinning this study.

1.4 Overview of theoretical framework

This study was guided by the radical, liberal and post-structuralist feminist theories. Feminists in general believe that only women can articulate their disenfranchisement and experiences (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013; Giddens, 2009; Schaefer, 2010). The post-structuralist feminism theory posits that power has no sex, that is, there is no particular group of people who are expected to be leaders because power is believed to be dynamic and can be reversed if people agree to do so. Such beliefs form a strong theoretical base for this study which focuses on female secondary school heads' perceptions and experiences of their duties as school heads. Post-structuralist feminism epistemology further believes that "... feminist knowledge can come from examining the unique experiences of women in societies in which men and women experience social life differently ... it is there to discover the truth through understanding women experiences" (Haralambos & Holborn, 2008, p. 810). For one to understand women experiences feminist research is to be done. ''It puts at the centre of one's inquiry the social construction of gender, pose questions, locate absences, and argue the "centrality of gender in the shaping of our consciousness, skills and institutions as well as in the distribution of power and privilege" (Lather, 1991, p. 71). This was also supported by Smith (2018) who believes that feminism has highlighted women's invisibility in decision making and institutional hierarchies. Hence, it was the aim of this study to put women at the centre by exploring their experiences about their daily work as school heads through different feminist lenses.

To further understand the experiences of female school heads, the Career Path Model of Analysis (Van Eck et al., 1996) was also considered in this study. This model consists of three phases which are the anticipation, the acquisition and the performance. With the guidance of this model, the researcher was able to find reasons why some women

do not take up leadership positions even if the opportunities were available to them. Different barriers to women reflected in the study include personal, organisational and cultural barriers as observed by Van Eck, Volman and Vermuelen (1996) and Sachs and Blackmore (1998).

1.5 Significance of the study

After reading a number of publications and looking at issues from my own experience, I discovered that what interested me had triggered a lot of other people's interests before and it is also of great concern in other parts of the world. This makes my topic on the experiences and perceptions of female school heads quite relevant to contemporary concerns in the education system. While in Zimbabwe policies are in place for quite some time the difference between women and men in terms of gender roles is still very wide. The difference calls for further research on the causes which may, in turn, call for revisiting of policies and application of new strategies to address the persisting problems between men and women.

This study strengthens and adds to the present knowledge base that most societies are patriarchal in nature and that women oppression cuts across nations, classes and cultures (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013). The study strengthened the knowledge base by getting direct narratives of the female school heads' experiences in their career. The study brought out some suggestions that might help Zimbabweans in general and policy makers in particular to understand women issues by giving them equal power and opportunities as men in leadership posts without them feeling inferior or threatened. Also the research is meant to empower the girl child with helpful information which might encourage them to take up leadership positions later in their career life.

My analysis of the perceptions and experiences of female leaders in secondary schools will not exhaust all the issues related to the subject, and neither will it claim to come up with exhaustive solutions. It may succeed in arousing serious thinking about the subject in the hope that it will ultimately produce answers to many controversial issues and questions raised and partially answered in my study. Most of the research studies on this issue are western-based; hence miss the cultural aspect of the African setup in

terms of leadership in general. This study is carried out in Zimbabwe with the intention of helping men, women and policy makers to understand women issues better by using literature that is locally and culturally relevant.

1.6 Main research question

The main question that this study sought to answer was:

How do female secondary school heads perceive and experience their work as school leaders?

1.6.1 Sub-questions

To answer the main question, the following sub-questions were formulated to guide this study:

1. What are female secondary school heads' experiences of their career progression from senior teacher to school headship?

2. How does socialisation impact on women educators' decisions to take up leadership roles in schools?

3. What are the challenges and opportunities of female secondary school heads in the daily execution of their duties?

4. How can female secondary school heads' experiences about leadership be explained?

5. What recommendations can be made to improve women visibility in educational leadership?

1.7 Main aim

The aim of this study was to explore how female secondary school heads perceive and experience their work as school leaders.

1.7.1 Objectives

To achieve the above aim, the following objectives were set:

1) To explore female secondary school heads' experiences of their career progression from senior teacher to school headship.

2) To explore the effects of socialisation on the decisions of women educators to take leadership roles in schools.

3) To establish the challenges and opportunities of female secondary school heads in the daily execution of their school leadership duties.

4) To examine how female secondary school heads' experiences about leadership can be explained.

5) To determine recommendations and strategies that can be made to improve the visibility of women in educational leadership.

1.8 Overview of research methodology

This study adopts the interpretive paradigm which assumes that social action can only be understood by interpreting the meanings and motives on which it is based (Merriam, 1998; Bryman, 2012; Punch, 2011). So, the qualitative research approach is relevant in this study which is also in line with narrative research. The qualitative approach was adopted for this study in order to get the live stories of the participants. A multiple case study design was employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and capture the insider perspective (meaning of those involved) through narratives. The insights gleaned from case study can directly influence policy, practice and future research (Merriam, 1998; Denscombe 2008; Punch 2011). Female secondary school heads were interviewed where they expressed their feelings, experiences and perceptions on their progression to school head, their experiential reality of school headship, organisational challenges, cultural and other variables that influence their work.

In this study, the purposive sampling technique was used to select all the participants for this study. The sample was 'hand- picked' on the basis of relevance to the issue under study and privileged knowledge or experience about the issue. The study employed semi-structured interviews as research instruments to solicit the required data

from the female secondary school heads. These instruments are compatible with the feminist ideas in that they allow women the chance to speak out on the issues that concern them rather than having views imposed on them by the researcher without their direct involvement (Mahlase, 1997). Non-participant observation, such as shadowing the female school leaders in staff meetings as well as observing their interactions with subordinates, assisted me in getting data that could not be easily obtained through interviews and document analysis. Observation, according to Bryman (2012), provides more reliable information about events, apart from being economical. Document analysis of minutes of meetings, policies, circulars and other relevant documents was employed. The data collected was analysed through grouping, coding, classifying and categorising to identify trends and patterns as they emerged. Descriptions were applied under specific themes which were drawn from the literature reviewed and collected data.

1.9 Delimitations of the study

This study specifically looked at the perceptions and experiences of female secondary school heads in the daily execution of their work as school leaders. The study was carried out in secondary schools in the Gweru educational district of the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe. The educational district comprises urban, rural, peri-urban and resettlement areas with differing cultures, religious denominations and economic activities that can influence beliefs, ambitions and the situations of women generally. For me to gain more insights and information on female secondary school leaders' experiences and perceptions, I purposively selected one female from an urban boarding school, one from an urban day school and then the third one from a rural day school as participants.

Issues such as personal, cultural and organisational practices were considered in this research in detail. To get the required data, the mentioned female heads were interviewed and observed during shadowing and staff meetings. The deputy heads and teachers' behaviours were also observed during these meetings and even outside to see some unplanned behaviours. To complement the above instruments, a number of

related documents such as log books, duty roasters and many others were analysed. Data collection and analysis were done for more than six months during this study. This was not a smooth journey for me; there were challenges that I faced on the way as discussed below.

1.10 Limitations of the study

The secondary schools manned by female school heads were widely spaced. As a result I sampled those that were easily accessible to cut down on transport cost. However, this had the danger of compromising the results as some clusters were manned by males only. The researcher made an effort to ensure that the selected area had female representation. Financial constraints were also encountered in carrying out the study. Consequently, to mitigate financial constraints that would go with logistics to cover the whole province, the study was delimited to one typical district, which is Gweru.

In addition, the researcher as a full-time employee faced time constraints. I solved that problem by applying for special leave and off days to create time for the study. Permission was granted by the institution when I applied for five days per month for the period of six months I collected data. It became a challenge when I could not attend end of year closing meetings for some schools because school heads claimed to have a busy schedule as highlighted in chapter three. This pushed me to apply for more leave days at the work place.

1.11 Ethical considerations

To protect the participants from unintended damage, a consent form was provided which required the women's free participation as advised by Merriam (1998). A member check was also carried out to verify the transcriptions done by the researcher (Denscombe, 2008). For confidentiality, codes were used as identities for the participants. Permission to enter into schools for this research was sought from the Ministry of Primary and Secondary education in Zimbabwe and other relevant authorities. For me to maintain my integrity, I avoided plagiarism and fabrication of information which could damage my reputation as a researcher.

1.12 Definitions of key terms

Patriarchy: the systematic domination of women by men through unequal opportunities, rewards, punishment, the internalisation of unequal expectations through sex roles differentiation (Andersen & Collins, 2004). It is seen also as an aspect which requires power, causes repression and maintains control systems without which its existence would lose purpose (Vukoicic, 2017).

Power: The process of the dynamic interaction. To have it in fact means having access to the network of relations in which an individual can influence, threaten, or persuade others to do he wants or what he needs (Vukoicic, 2017). No one owns power it is awarded to individuals by other people surrounding them.

Educational leaders: These are people who lead schools, and in the case of Zimbabwe, these are formally called school heads. In this context these include school heads, deputy heads and heads of departments.

Gender stereotypes: These are socially constructed assumptions that people have about a particular sex's behaviour.

Gender discrimination: Providing differential treatment to individuals on the ground of their sex and this involves unequal distribution of income, resources and decision-making and participation (The Zimbabwe National Gender Policy, 2013-2017).

Gender equality: ZNGP (2013-2017) defines gender equality as equal enjoyment of valued resources and opportunities by both men and women.

Career path: This is the professional journey that educators undertake during their time of practice especially towards leadership positions. Career path refers to the growth of the employee in an organization. The employee may move vertically most of the time but also move laterally or cross functionally to move to a different type of job role (Van Eck et al., 1996). Furthermore, Van Eck *et al.* (1996) identified the three stage involved in the career path as the anticipation, the acquisition and the performance stages.

Feminism: It is about the claiming of the rights and opportunities people should have which are pinned on a non-gendered and non-discriminatory basis (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013). It has succeeded in establishing gender and gender perspectives as important themes in a range of academic disciplines and raising consciousness about gender issues (Heywood, 2002). Feminists as authors of feminism generally provide a critic of social relations and also focus on analysing gender inequality and promotion of women's rights, interests and issues (Vukoicic, 2017). However, feminism as a theoretical framework for this study is going to look at issues surrounding the leadership of female secondary school heads.

1.13 Organisation of chapters

Chapter one provided a general introduction to the study by contextualising the problem. Chapter two presents a review of related literature, which includes description of theoretical frameworks and the literature related to the problem. Chapter three delves into the methodology that details the philosophical orientation informing the design, tools and procedures adopted to navigate the study. Chapter four presents results, analyses and discussion of findings, entailing presentation of cases separately, followed by a cross-case analysis. Chapter five provides a summary of the study and conclusions thereof, ending with reflections and recommendations for practice, policy and further research.

1.14 Summary of the chapter

This study explored the experiences of female secondary school heads in the day-to-day execution of their work as leaders. The background has shown a context where there are more women than men in the teaching field and yet more men lead the educational institutions than women. It has also argued that women school heads have various perceptions and experiences of their work that only they can tell. The objectives and sub questions of the study were highlighted as posts that guided the study. The study's delimitations and limitations were stated with respective mitigatory measures proffered. The significance of the study to the teachers, school heads and the policy makers was stated. The theory/literature was spelt out. Methodology overview was

given followed by the contextual definition of the key terms. The chapter organisation of the report is given before a chapter of the summary was provided indicating key aspects covered in the chapter. The next chapter presented a review of related literature.

CHAPTER 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews previous literature from international, regional and national sources which are related to women leadership issues. The main purpose of this chapter is to explore how female secondary school heads experienced and perceived their leadership. Firstly, different feminists' views are given as a guiding theoretical framework for this study. Also, a career path model is outlined as a conceptual framework that underpins my work. The other concepts to be discussed include the impact of early socialisation on career choices, different factors that impede women's career development, conflict between work and family demands and also how lack of support from different organs causes lack of confidence in women leaders. Lastly, a summary of this chapter is presented.

2.2 Theoretical framework

Traditional and dominant leadership theories may not adequately explain the perceptions and experiences women gain in the carrying out of their jobs as female leaders (Bass, 2009). This study mainly focused on women issues as aspects of feminist concerns. Du Plooy and Viljoen (2011) view feminism as the flourishing of a practice and a theory that revolves around, and is aimed at recognition of, the oppressed position of a woman and the restoration of her rights in all economic, political and cultural spheres. Greyling and Steyn (2015) argue that although the feminists have a common goal of liberating women, they vary their views and even contradict when looking at women's situations and experiences in society. This indicates that there is no single, homogenous feminist school of thought to explain women behaviour hence the mixing of ideas from different feminists as a theoretical framework for this study. It is my interest to explore the experiences of female leaders using the radical, liberal and post-structuralist feminists' theoretical lens as the framework for my study. Also, to understand better these experiences, the discourse on leadership should reflect the social and cultural realities of the leader as reflected by the findings of this study.

By and large, the distinct world of women is not the same as men's and should be studied on its own. A feminist viewpoint on leadership would put more emphasis on interpersonal and inter-community relationships and a conceptualisation of 'power' as a multi-directional concept that could be used to empower others instead of controlling them (Shakeshaft, 1989; Sherman, 2000). This is supported by Wooldridge (2015) and St Pierre (2000) who noted that the post-structuralist feminist theory believes that power is universal and very dynamic. It does not belong to one group of people. Consequently, there is need for me to view women's leadership using different feminist lens, which are the radical, liberal and post-structuralist feminist theories. As a result, basing on the above facts, this enquiry aims to employ an interpretive and qualitative approach for in-depth understanding of female educational leaders' perceptions and experiences in their career paths.

Furthermore, one way of giving females a voice, analyse power relations and try to make alteration in educational leadership is by exploring data using post-structuralist theory lens (Davies, 1994; Grogan, 2010; Weedon, 1997; Smith, 2018). This theory helps me to go beyond binaries of male and female and essentialising practice as suggested by Wooldridge (2015). Similarly, in this study, I examined the discourse and power relations surrounding the educational leadership in order to establish what is most important in the lives and experiences of female secondary school heads and to identify areas that need to be redefined.

Schools are perceived as society in miniature and thus perpetuate societal values, beliefs and morals by transmitting them to the young generation (Crotty, 1998). Perkins (2011) argues that most of the inequalities affecting women in schools are not as visible as they used to be but covert in nature and many seem to be individual issues than collective ones. Perkins (2011) further emphasises that the focus of feminists' views in general is to make women's perceptions and experiences visible to the world. To tap these invisible individual experiences or issues from the school heads, I used different research instruments such as interviews, observations and document analysis.

According to radical feminists, gender roles develop over a long period of time and have become emended in our culture (Crotty, 1998). These roles are constructed by human

beings and similarly can be deconstructed by humans again by changing the social training that people get from childhood and by challenging the gender stereotyping that continues to discriminate women (Towler, 1993 in Perkins, 2011). Radical feminists also believe that gender inequality is the base for all other forms of inequalities and opportunities (Vukoicic, 2017). This might mean that all the other challenges experienced by female school heads in schools are because of the gender equalities that are still prevailing in societies and not being addressed.

Perkins (2011) observes that women oppression is based on economy and women are considered politically docile, seeing their work as secondary to their families, and as a result could easily be hired and fired according to economic circumstances. This was also observed by Gallhofer et al. (2011) who argue that although there are factors that seem to be barriers for women advancement, women tended to pay more attention to their children and roles as mothers. Nieuwenhuis (2010b) argues that radical feminists consider that the main cause of women subordination originates from power relations based on sexual differences and the accompanying discourses. The fact that the school leaders have other responsibilities, it can mean that their administration duties are affected if at all they are.

In support of the above views, Nieuwenhuis (2007) further observes that radical feminists blame marriage bond because women tend to be too dependent on men emotionally. Women are seen to have been indoctrinated from birth on the importance of marriage in heterosexuality to keep them passive to the extent that they do not want to leave their families and go where duty calls (Smith, 2015). This may hinder most female teachers from taking up leadership posts. The female participants explained how their home responsibilities conflict with their work demands.

Grogan (2010) claims that most of the research done on leadership has been tilted towards men and was just generalised to all without looking at the other gender, that is, women. In the same vein, Oplatka and Tamir (2009) argue that one of the common and strong criticisms raised by feminist researchers was that social science research theories and models were based on men's ideas and women were expected to adopt and implement them from men's point of view. Because leadership was male dominated

for a long time, it was explained from men's point of views, which is based on the male behavioural model (De Witt, 2010) which promotes self-assertion, control, competition and rationalism (Greyling & Steyn, 2015). It was the aim of this study to add feminist knowledge to the concept of leadership. In addition, Wooldridge (2015) emphasises that men see the world as their own work and describe it from their own perspective and confuse their perspective with the truth as portrayed by the post-structuralist feminist theory that power can be exchanged; it does not belong permanently to one gender. This means that research on educational leadership has portrayed a biased interpretation, which leans strongly towards men's ideas making the use of feminist theories in this study justified and relevant.

It is against this background that feminist inquirers called for the re-exploration and challenging of the epistemologies and methodologies of existing theories and concepts (Shakeshaft, 1989). This has led to the re-creation of innovative knowledge in which women are the focus of studies, rather than being merely another variable for consideration (Oplatka and Tamir, 2009) as demonstrated by this study. In light of the above, Andersen (2004) reveals that radical feminist researchers argue that women are better suited to capture diverse social reality than their male counter parts who are not able to see patriarchal legacies. This view was also observed by Crotty (1998) who argues that most feminists have broadly rejected the idea of methods premised on the idea of 'objectivity' being used to measure social knowledge. They have described such approaches as an excuse for a power relationship which kept women off the record in most, if not all, branches of knowledge by the simple process of men naming the world as it appears to them and describing it in relation to themselves (Crotty, 1998). To get the subjective side of social knowledge, women participants in this study gave their stories of leadership experiences.

Andersen and Collins (2004) reveal that knowledge is not value free and is produced by power and not by truth. Thus, both the radical and the liberal feminists believe that men cannot speak for women; women need to voice for themselves what they want (Crotty, 1998). Basing on the above views, policies may not be able to protect the women fully against discrimination because they are products of men who might not be able to know

what women want. Crotty (1998) further rejects the idea that men can be feminists because what is essential to being a feminist is the position of feminist consciousness which is regarded as rooted in the concrete, practical and everyday experiences of being treated as a woman. Therefore, there is need to get women educational leaders' everyday experiences and perceptions that affect them as women leaders.

Radical, liberal and post-structuralist feminists among others emphasised that feminist knowledge can only come from examining the unique experiences of women in society because men and women experience different social lives (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). It is in this spirit that the radical feminists insist that woman oppression is the oldest, most profound and most widespread oppression of all and could be used as a model to understand any other form of oppression (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013; Crotty, 1998). This study gave women chance to tell their own stories in order to be understood better by society as a whole.

The women's dispositions and self-perceptions, the demands of society (social expectations) and their interaction with the environment are all factors that affect women's aspirations to occupy high managerial positions (Greyling & Steyn (2015. In her studies in Western society, Perkins (2011) points out that after the Second World War, feminists advocated for equity with men in all areas of society. This continues today with the purpose of breaking the 'glass-ceiling' (socially constructed barriers) that separates women from their male colleagues both physically and mentally when it comes to high level administrative jobs of various sorts. In the same view, Choge (2015) agrees that the gap between men and women is still wide because discrimination persists in various forms, especially in recruitment procedures, training, and promotion. The promotion policies that are in place, together with career development opportunities, still favour men (Choge, 2015). Mbigi and Maree (1995) insist that there is need to shift perceptions and expand perspective on the aspect of leadership. Women in this study explained the recruitment and promotion processes they underwent and they gave their own views of leadership which may be co-opted in policy formulation.

Naidoo and Perumal (2014) also raised similar concerns when they highlighted that feminist theorists such as the radical, liberal and post-structuralists advocate for female

rights and have denounced patriarchy, gender stereotyping, unequal pay and oppression. Naidoo and Perumal (2014) and Zikhali and Perumal (2014)) support the agitation for deep structural and cultural changes as a way of destroying the patriarchal oppression in the society. This change is not going to be an easy path for women. For women to break through the 'glass ceiling' they should be determined, dedicated, endure challenges and have a good network structure (Coleman, 2012. Kanjeere (2011) believes that if women leaders are empowered they can strengthen the lives of their communities through the idea of *ubuntu*. Marlow and Patton (2005) also add that the liberal feminists see the key to reduce gender inequality in organisations as the speeding up of the slow advancement of women. The three participants suggested ways in which females could be visible in high positions in the education system. The major tenets of the above theories considered in this study are;

- Power does not belong to individuals, it is universal and dynamic.
- Women need to be given a platform to voice.
- Women problems are seen as individual problems and not as collective problems.
- Women experiences and perceptions should be made known to the world.
- Most research studies done on leadership were based on men perspectives.
- Individuality of women was destroyed by marriage which continues to perpetuate patriarchy, forcing women to extremely dependent on men emotionally.
- Social knowledge cannot be measured objectively but subjectively by examining women's unique experiences.
- Women need to work hard to break the 'glass ceiling' that seems to separate men and women in terms of leadership.
- Women must be given space to compete and express their own unique ways of knowing.

To continue guiding the study, Career path model was also used as the conceptual framework in this study. The experiences are explored using the career path model which reflects women's discrimination from the level of preparation, access into leadership as well as in their performances as leaders (Moorosi, 2010). Lack of uniform policies and the presence of cultural stereotypes seem to be working against women's

appointment and promotions in South Africa (Mahlase, 1997). This model was used to explain what women go through in their efforts to become school heads in South Africa. I am interested in using the same management model in exploring the experiences of the Zimbabwean female secondary school heads in this male dominated arena.

2.3 Career path model

This management model was by designed Van Eck et al. (1996). It is a model that is used to find out the experiences of women principals' career paths, from the preparation stage through to the access as they progress to the actual performance of their roles as school heads. In the first stage, which is the *anticipation*, according to Van Eck et al. (1996), the leaders are prepared to develop knowledge and skills which are in line with management. This could be achieved through attending leadership workshops, acting in managerial position within the organisation, attaining relevant qualifications, getting training and participating in informal networking. Moorosi (2010) argues that, it was revealed in other research that women normally were not exposed to such opportunities as preparation for their current positions. In the current study, the female secondary school heads revealed how they were prepared for leadership positions and the type training they received.

The second phase of this management model is the *acquisition*. This is the accessing of the opportunity to enter managerial positions which involve job applications, skills and ambitions and also support from all significant people (Van Eck et al., 1996). In South Africa, Coleman (2003a) and Blackmore et al. (2006) concur that this is the stage where government policies against discrimination protect women and yet that is where great discrimination is experienced. In my study, women in leadership highlighted their experiences during this stage, that is, the time they took to be called for interviews and the type of support and attitudes they received from the interview panel, their school heads as well as other people of significance.

The third and last stage of the career path model is the *performance* which shows the presence of gender discrimination even after appointment (Moorosi, 2010). Furthermore, Van Eck et al. (1996) explain that there are personal, organisational, and

societal factors that block female principals from carrying out their duties effectively as school heads. These barriers will be discussed on item 2.6 of this same chapter. The female educational leaders participating in this study aired their experiences in the actual performance of their roles, that is, the challenges they encountered and even their successes as school heads.

This study uses all the three stages of this model to explain women leadership. The first one is the anticipation stage. This is the stage where the participants explained how they were socialised in order to acquire skills and knowledge relevant for leadership. This was done through workshops, occupying middle leadership posts and even training. The second stage is the acquisition one. The participants elucidated how they accessed the chance to be in leadership positions. This covers the applications and interviews that they went through and even the support rendered to them by different people. The third and last stage is the time the school heads performed their duties. The heads highlighted the discriminations and barriers they experienced during the time of the execution of their duties, that is, after their appointments as heads of schools.

Before I look at the different barriers for women's success, I will discuss the concept of leadership, that is, what leadership is and what is expected of a leader as viewed by different scholars. This may clarify differences and similarities of male and female leadership styles and also the way the participants viewed their own leadership.

2.4 The concept leadership

Fitzgerald (2006) believes that women were particularly suited to teaching in the classroom and men were naturally equipped to manage and lead bureaucracies. Blackmore (2013) argues that women in leadership positions are subject to constraints regarding men's ways of knowing and leading. Women are being discriminated because of being women and being indigenous (Fitzgerald, 2006) and this can push some women out of leadership positions. In addition, some researchers found out that there are several factors that hinder women from staying in formal positions of leadership (Shakeshaft, 1989 and Hall, Gronn, Jenkin, Power & Reynolds, 1999). The participants

in this research gave a number of reasons why it was difficult for most women to take up leadership posts in their schools.

The teaching field is dominated by women and yet the management positions in the area are denominated by men (Coleman 2003a; Adler, 1993 in Msila, 2013). The belief that women teach while men manage is true in most countries both in the developing and developed world (Msila, 2013; Chabaya et al., 2009). This was illustrated by an example in rural areas where one can find a man walking in front and a woman following, and different reasons may be raised for such behaviour. Ultimately it illustrates the deeply held notation of leadership as masculine and society believes that this is inborn not acquired (Kiamba, 2008). The promotion of women is seen to decline as the age of students rises (Riley, 1994 in Msila, 2013). It was the aim of this study to get how the women secondary school heads were promoted into leadership.

The traditional beliefs that a leader should be someone (man) who is a hero and who makes all the decisions and sets direction for everyone to follow is entrenched in individuals (Abu-Tineh, 2012). These myths create a subconscious role in strengthening masculine leadership which makes it difficult for women to penetrate and be accepted as leaders by society. The women in this study emphasised how they understood the concept leadership from their own perspectives. Nevertheless, in this context, the terms school head, school leader, school manager, principal and head teacher are used interchangeably.

Nieuwenhuis (2007) emphasises that women should have equal rights and opportunities to develop their own talents and virtues and that they should receive equal rewards for equal performance just like men. Such perceptions may force women to use male leadership styles to be like men and to gain status (Nieuwenhuis, 2010b). Women leadership is difficult. It is possible for women to throw away their positive qualities and view them as weaknesses. In fact, the stereotypes of how women lead have made it difficult for women to access or even stay in leadership positions (Kiamba, 2008). In this study, female leaders shared during the interviews how they were managing to stay in leadership positions, despite the challenges.

In a series of studies on women's leadership, it was revealed that men and women were distinguished by the way they lead organisations and women were often considered more efficient managers than men (Shapira, et al., 2011). Also, it was observed that with increasing integration of women in leadership positions, the character of school leadership has altered (Addi-Raccah, 2006). Furthermore, recent research argued that successful leadership should be broadened by adding alternative leadership styles that incorporate women's perceptions and experiences (ibid). Crabtree and Miller (1999) observe that the ideal feminine involves nurturing and serving others whereas the ideal masculine involves agency and individual achievement. In this study, the participants explained how they led their schools and their reasons for leading them the way they did.

In many institutions, women's promotion was facilitated by implementation of equity policies and affirmative action, leading to the viewing of all women leaders with suspicion, even the capable ones (Kiamba, 2008). Therefore, it is not easy for women to climb the career ladder and stay there without disputes. The three in this study revealed the challenges they faced from the communities, families and institutions when they got promoted.

Feminist researchers identified several attributes that contribute to women leadership which separate them from male methods of leading and these include care, which is considered as an essence of education when women nurture the growth of both learners and staff (Smit, 2013). Vision was also another attribute of women leaders who tend to create a trusting environment for all, where colleagues participate and collaborate freely (ibid). Furthermore, Smit (2013) identifies courage as a good quality for women leaders who managed to break new ground, which involves some risk-taking and leaving one vulnerable and in a difficult situation. Lastly, intuition is regarded as an ability to give equal weight to experience, mind and heart which can only be found on a relational leader (mostly women) though it is meant for both men and women (Smit, 2013). This horizontal relationship with others is crucial for any leader and for women, power is meant to be shared with everyone because they believe that power is there to strengthen relationships and not to control them (Grogan, 2010; Wooldridge, 2015)

which is a post-structuralist feminist view. The participants explained how power could be shared and gave differences and similarities between male and female leadership.

In the same vein, Greyling and Steyn (2015) note the above attributes and add that women apply a more democratic and participatory management style and they represent their schools more effectively than men. Spillane, Diamond and Jita (2003) emphasise on distributed leadership style as a good quality for an effective leader. Women are also seen as having an ability to lease positive influences on both staff and learners though Powell and Graves (2003) observe that men tend to be more influential while women are more easily influenced. However, Stead (2013) emphasises that women leadership is regarded as dynamic and rational because women draw their experiences from the present and past, and from different areas such as relationships with others in the community and at the workplace. Female leaders are believed to lead differently by combining different styles in their management depending on situations (Naidoo & Perumal, 2014; Eagly, Johannesen & Schmidt, 2000; Growe & Montgomery 2000) as revealed by the participants in this study.

Furthermore, Growe & Montgomery (2000) argue that women are seen as having skills of resolving conflicts, having better listening skills and show more tolerance and empathy than men. Males are believed to lead from the front and believe that they have all the answers while focusing on goal achievement (Growe & Montgomery, 2000). For that reason, this study is worthy in finding out the experiences of women in educational leadership as they carry out their day to day roles.

In addition to the identified leadership traits women have, Naidoo and Perumal (2014) reveal that women principals of African descent usually include spiritual aspects in their leadership because they believe that inspiration is drawn from spirituality. Naidoo and Perumal (2014) further emphasise that women are seen as being more religious and empathetic towards the less fortunate than men. This was also revealed by some of the participants in my study. In the same spirit, Grogan (2010) observes that women leaders tend to use their personal strengths and spirituality to understand the world of others and they take more personal interest in their workplace than their male peers.

This fulfils a cultural feminist principle which believes that women lead by their caring and ethical nature.

Kiamba (2008) observes that women are better school managers than men and their schools tend to produce good results which at times are better than those of male managed schools. In the same view, Shakeshaft (1989) argues that successful administration typically has depended upon females adopting traditional (masculine) 'men in skirts' leadership style or else risk marginalisation. In the same light, Smith (2015) and Makhasane, Simamane and Chikoko (2018) note that both men and women equate successful management with male characteristics. To emphasise this, Burns (1978) observes that women have been stereotyped as dependent, submissive and conforming and thus, have been perceived as lacking in leadership qualities and characteristics. They are considered to be mothers who are nurturing or as feminists who are career oriented (Burns, 1978). These narrowly defined categories result in women doubting their own leadership abilities because of a perceived incongruence between womanhood and leadership forcing women to behave in line with societal expectations because of the socialisation process (Debebe, 2011). It was the aim of this study to find out the female school heads' views on how socialisation influenced their career decision making and how the rest of the community perceived them.

The common challenges for both men and women in leading is the ability to employ both legal and personal power in strategic leadership, innovation and ability to change, being flexible at work and dealing with others; for that reason, there is no correct leadership style as the styles vary depending on the situation one is in (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012). Educational leadership is not meant for males only as indicated by the post-structuralist feminist theory. Because of its great impact on individual behaviour, leadership is worthy being studied and paid attention to. Women who have succeeded in being school heads are perceived as exceptions and the accepted norm remains that this is appropriate and intended for men (Shapira et al., 2011). Even if women get higher educational qualifications than men, men are still preferred for coordination and management in schools (Shapira at el., 2011). This is made worse by the judgments

that are given to them by both men and women subordinates. Female participants in this study explained how they are perceived by their subordinates in their daily duties.

It is unfortunate that women were socialised to depict characteristics that are different from those of men and which could be misjudged as ineffectiveness in leadership positions. On the other hand, Appelbaum, Audet and Joanne (2003) argue that women's leadership styles are seen as more effective than men's styles, which is in line with the demands of today's world. In emphasis of the above, Sam et al. (2013) believe that school heads should be selected foremost based on professional and academic qualifications, experience should be considered later and gender and age should count less. Kiamba (2008) argues that leadership qualities can be acquired through training programmes which could be attended by anyone. The three female leaders in this research showed how some of these factors affected their work as school heads. One may not understand female educational leadership without looking at those barriers that hinder their career progress. Early socialisation, cultural, organisational and social barriers are going to be discussed below in line with women school leadership.

2.5 Barriers that hinder female teachers' career progress

There are a number of barriers that deter women from progressing in their careers especially when they want to take up high posts within their profession as discussed below.

2.5.1 Effects of early socialisation on individual's future careers

Socialisation is the process of acquiring knowledge, customs and ethics in a culture through involvement in that particular culture (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Gruce and Hastings (2007) also believe that socialisation is the process of helping individuals to grow into appropriate members of a social group through possession of rules, duties, standards, and values of that group. It is a continuous course in one's lifetime and occurs through communicating with the environment, family, teachers and many others (Gruce & Hastings, 2007). Socialisation determines most of the gender roles (Hofstede, 2000). The type of social communications and activities individuals are

exposed to, contribute to the increase of gender differences in terms of values, choices, skills, and expectations (Leaper & Friedman, 2007). Elliot (1991) highlights that such stereotypes put women at a low social position in society which disadvantages those who are professionals. It is my wish, in this study, to find out the extent to which socialisation affected the three female secondary school heads' choice of being school leaders.

Shaffer (1996) notes that girls are socialised towards the expressive role, that is to be nurturing, kind, supportive and compassionate in preparation for motherhood and being good wives. Similarly, boys are expected to be excellent husbands by being able to supply the family with material needs. They are socialised to take the influential role which is leading, being independent, aggressive and goal oriented. In the same light, while boys are prepared for government, church and educational services, trade and industry, girls are socialised for domestic services, such as cleaning, cooking, sewing and child rearing (Amadiume, 1998). Furthermore, Moore (2003) describes women as confined to intra and inter-familial relations unlike men who mostly work in public spheres of social life. In this study, the three participants described different ways in which they were raised as compared to boys in their families.

It seemed men are socialised not only to be overtly authoritative, but to own and have control over the main resources in the society of which women are considered to be a crucial part of those resources. Women are not supposed to desire equal high professional and occupational positions as men in society (Gaidzanwa, 1993; Addi-Raccah, 2006). They are likely to lack support and backing even after assuming leadership roles. My desire in this study was to find out the extent to which the participants were supported by their families, especially husbands in the execution of their duties as school heads.

Despite many issues which contribute to the socialisation of children into their anticipated gender roles, family, peers, school and the mass media have been classified as the major factors of socialisation (Powell & Graves, 2003; Leaper & Friedman, 2007). Eccles (2011) argues that the education and career choices individuals make are always controlled by their expectations of achievement and personal task value. In line

with Graves and Friedman (2007), Eccles (2011) further notes that these factors are influenced by socialisation which is gender biased at home, in school, and among peers. The home, being the first instant surroundings of the child and the first agent of socialisation, has a crucial duty in the child's growth as a whole and career choice. The way the child is psychologically programmed at home is hard to adjust (Hofstede et al., 2010). The parents' mind-set and beliefs about their children and sex roles influence the children's attention and capabilities, and that goes a long way in determining the future career of the children (Powell & Graves, 2003). Shafer and Malhotra (2011) observe that men often seem to be less helpful in the training of their girl children as compared to that of their sons. This is contrary to what I found out in this research.

 As everyone is born into a family, children start imitating the life of the elders, and that is how mental training starts and progresses right through one's lifetime (Hofstede et al., 2010). Similarly, this means that the women's interests and desires are shaped by their childhood social exposure. In the same vein, Muthivhi's (2010) research confirms that the social and cultural situations have direct influence on a child's educational performance which in turn determines occupational chances. These situations come from home which might have a strong impact on the children's future life opportunities.

In the same light, Rawls (2003) sees the family as the base for developing children's abilities and chances for their future roles and careers. In other words this means that primary upbringing and socialisation are related to fruitful parenting processes which pivot on how children come to appreciate the values and philosophical views that guide their thinking and actions afterwards in life. Hofstede (2000) also believes that the bulk of the gender roles are decided by the socialisation one got causing children to acquire different skills, values, preferences and even expectations as highlighted before by Leaper & Friedman (2007). In Butler's (1995) view, no one is born a man or woman but they tend to imitate gender roles which make them different (Hatty, 2000). This study looked at the duties that the women participants were engaged in during childhood which encouraged to take or discouraged them from taking up leadership posts.

Bandura and other social learning theory advocates suggest that parents who take on a more optimistic self-regulatory role automatically improve the preferences made by their

children and that can prepare the children for success in life for a longer period (Magomaeva, 2013). My focus in this study was to find out the extent to which the school socialised the three female secondary school heads for leadership positions. The next section looks at the effects culture and religion have on the making of the career choices of women.

2.5.2 Cultural, social and religious barriers

Social barriers such as sex role stereotypes, political, traditional and historical influences are problematic and difficult to eradicate since they are deeply rooted in the society and institutions (Moorosi, 2010). Most women in leadership positions are more worried about the barriers than the job itself and for them to be effective; the mind-set of the community needs to change (Moorosi, 2013). The three participants in this study revealed some of the challenges they faced which were caused by the communities they operated in.

When women enter professional leadership, not only will they have to deal with internal and external discrimination, they should also navigate through the scrutiny they often encounter (Jean-Marie, Vicki, Williams, & Sherman, 2009). Debebe (2011) observes that women are considered weak and incompetent or rendered invisible if they enact feminine behaviours or if they are seen as unfeminine. My participants explained how difficult it was for them to move from ordinary teacher positions to headship posts because of gendered assumptions and practices associated with females.

Women's career path to principalship has been very difficult in most countries. The hindrances include external obstacles, such as cultural perceptions that identify 'feminism' with ineffectiveness in terms of leadership (Blackmore, 1999). Although teaching is a female field and principalship is undergoing rapid feminisation, there is a good number of males in the sector with most of them being school heads and only a few women in that position (Addi-Raccah, 2006; Chityori, Chikwature & Oyedele, 2018). Sadie (2005) continues to argue that the patriarchal system which believes that power is in the hands of men is at the bottom of women's struggle to leadership posts in all societies. The same system prohibits women from speaking in public and going to

public places, and contributes profoundly to women's reluctance in applying for leadership positions (Sadie, 2005). The experiences of women leaders are likely to differ depending on location of schools, that is, whether they are in an urban or rural set up. In this study, I interviewed female educational leaders from both urban and rural settings in order to get experiences of women leaders from different contexts.

The patriarchal system that is there in most countries labels and influences the worth of both men and women which also influences their roles (Coleman, 2003b). Some researchers observe that both men and women leadership styles and behaviours are affected by contextual factors, such as socio-cultural, geographic or demographic variables more than gender issues (Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2000) hence the need to consider these variables in this study. Coleman (2007) believes that those women who have managed to get to the top where men dominate were considered 'abnormal' and 'outsiders' in their organisations because they went against cultural expectations of being followers of men.

Choge (2015) argues that for women to be 'noticed' as leaders, they need to work extra hard and prove themselves worth as compared to men who are readily accepted by society as leaders. This was also revealed by one of Coleman's (2003b) participants who said that one should prove one's worth at whatever level if one is to obtain promotion and added that it is not a matter of gender but a matter of working hard for long hours to exceed the performances of male leaders. Women are not allowed to make mistakes; they are judged more harshly than men and should be nice and efficient (Coleman, 2003b). The participants further said that women are expected to be very calm unlike men and should demonstrate toughness in difficult situations or in a crisis, and expected to be the first to arrive at schools and the last ones to leave (ibid).

 In support of the above observations, Greyling and Steyn (2015) concur that a common stereotype in the education system is that successful managers should follow a male behavioural model and style of communication, making women leaders' carrier paths very difficult. Greyling and Steyn (2015) find out that male leaders are given more space and freedom to explore and apply different management styles. In line with that, Moorosi (2010) believes that women educational leaders in South Africa need to be

fighting a constant battle against both social and organisational discrimination. Grant (2005) also notes that some of these women in South Africa have little or no credibility as leaders and are forced to prove their capability as leaders under trying situations in highly patriarchal societies. This study sought to find out from the female school heads how independent they are in terms of decision-making issues and their application of different leadership styles.

Although there is a remarkable change today worldwide on the promotion of women to leadership positions, they are still far from being equal with men, that is, both numerically and in terms of power relations (Stead, 2017; Chityori et al., 2018). In pointing out this oppression for women, Crotty (1998) emphasises that people need to put all oppressions aside and interpret life and situations anew and read them as they have never been read before. This study may assist in solving these contemporary issues, such as gender discrimination and other social problems that women face in society.

Although there is a noticeable change in leadership in terms of gender men still dominate in terms of authority as highlighted before by Msila (2013). Similarly, in China, positions are also considered to be too complex for women and that causes some women to think that they are not capable of doing such jobs (Coleman, 2007). In addition, the interviewed women in Greece revealed that women lack self-confidence, support and motivation and that hindered their progression (Coleman, 2007). Social perceptions within society also impeded career progress because women were questioned if they took up managerial posts while men were regarded as failures if they retired without any position (Kaparou & Bush, 2007). Kaparou & Bush (2007) conclude that the Greece system was quite impartial; it was the individuals who discriminated each other at work, which was in line with culture and socialisation. Women in this study emphasised that women need to know that they could do it and were worthy.

Blackmore (2013) claims that the women's images and practices as leaders are informed by perceptions shaped by cultural and religious expectations also maintains that same line of argument. Kiamba (2008) also believes that besides cultural factors, religion also contributes to women's downfall because it tends to cement these

discriminatory norms of culture or society which do not allow women to take leading roles in church. In religious schools, women administrators are very few because of the traditional way of defining women's gender identity which excludes them from 'masculine' jobs, such as administrative roles (Moore, 2000). In fact, women in such schools have very low expectations of promotion to administrative positions because such positions, in religious schools, are considered as religious mission rather than a professional job which needs expertise in management (Addi-Raccah, 2006). Because of such reasons, my study could not include any female head at a religious school.

Pandor (2006) argues that women who gain access to high positions do not support and encourage other women to advance; they want the status quo to remain as it is. This causes disapproval and negative reactions and consequences and some case studies done showed that women in such positions experience stress, dissatisfaction and conflict (Blakemore, 1999). These women normally distance themselves from other women so as to reduce the threat to their authority and effectiveness as school heads (Blackmore, 2013) hence denying gender differences between leaders. Ignoring of gender discrimination helps women leaders to survive in their leadership positions (ibid). Although there is some consistent evidence in my research that male leaders tend to encourage women to leadership positions, Addi-Raccah, (2006) observed that women in positions seem not to give full support to other women who aspire to be school heads. Nevertheless, women in my study revealed the great support they got from their women leaders in the execution of their duties as school heads.

In a research by Perkins (2011), some women expressed happiness in their careers as school heads because they were free to lead as women and not adopt the role of headmaster (male stereotype of leadership). However, Blackmore (1999) believes that the 'queen bee' syndrome is recognised among women in power where women leaders resent other women who seek to enter senior positions. Interestingly, few male school heads also revealed that they experienced gender discrimination when they applied to head girl schools and argued that there are also stereotypes when people make assumptions about male behaviour (Perkins, 2011). Although this study is not looking at male leadership directly, it is necessary to take note that men can also be discriminated

in some situations. Besides cultural and religious barriers, women leaders could face family and work conflict as obstacles in their career progression.

2.5.3 Family and work conflict

Once appointed as principals, women face role conflict (Shapira et al., 2011). Sherman (2000) reveals that distances travelled to meetings by female school heads might mean one being away from the family for a greater length of time causing most of the women not to apply for leadership posts. Furthermore, meetings in the evenings can mean missing supper time with the family (Shapira et al., 2011). In line with the above ideas, the interviewed women in this study also revealed their feelings of being invisible in meetings where men's contributions are considered more than theirs, adding to their feeling of discrimination. In his research, Makura (2009) shows that the meetings were described as being very male-oriented, very top down and nothing more than a dissemination of information.

Moreno and McLean (2016) argue that success often requires total commitment to one's job and commensurate reduction of the time people can devote to their families and to their personal lives which may be a price many women simply are not willing to pay. Furthermore, many women do not apply because of the expectation to work all the time, being available 24/7 (Moreno & McLean, 2016), and the inadequate recognition of women's leadership contributions as perceived by women (Dominici, Fried & Zeger, 2009). For married women to be able to balance work and personal lives, they need supportive husbands (Clark, Caffarella & Ingram, 1999). In line with this, Oplatka and Tamir (2009) concur that the balancing of women's professional and personal time and responsibilities is the biggest obstacle that keeps women from occupying top leadership positions because family obligations still rely on women. Despite the above challenges, Moreno and McLean (2016) note that some of the women they interviewed agreed that being in leadership has given them the chance to enjoy being heard, meeting important people, travelling, enjoying a variety of social settings and above all, being independent and recognised. This was also noted by my participants.

Barriers to women's career progression emanate from the tension between their public and private lives and their career pathways are locked into and shaped by developments in their personal lives (Barmao & Mukhwana, 2013). Morris (1999) notes that natural responsibilities and dispositions hinder women from involving themselves wholesomely in their chosen careers as they should balance work and household responsibilities. Similarly, Chabaya et al. (2009) found out that women do not take up educational leadership positions because of family attachment and they do not want to separate with their families, especially in cases where they are given schools which are far from their homes. This was confirmed by my research. Culturally, women are expected to manage the home and family and at the same time earn a living and contribute to the smooth running of the society, which is very challenging for women. To a greater extent, this fortifies their leadership skills which unfortunately go untapped, and yet, despite barriers, women are believed to be hard workers if given the chance to prove themselves (Barmao & Mukhwana, 2013). This study captured women educational leaders' experiences in trying to balance their work and family demands.

In the same vein, Makura (2009) also notes that some women had to move from their homes to work in places far away because of promotion which affected their administrative job on the other hand. Dorsey (1996) and Mahlase (1997) associate such attachment with the way women were socialised which emphasised that the women's place is in the home. Chabaya et al. (2009) also note that besides the cultural belief that women must remain below men in all spheres of life, the women teachers interviewed revealed that they were safeguarding their marriages by not taking up their leadership positions, especially these days of HIV and AIDS.

Furthermore, Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2007) found out that in England, most women do not take up leadership posts because the responsibilities conflict with those of the family. School management duties call for attention, even during weekends when one is supposed to be with the family, and such demands caused some leaders to resign from their management positions (Moreau et al., 2007). De Beauvoir (1972) in Msila (2013) perceives the marriage institution as being oppressive and destructive to women because they get stuck in that 'perverted' institution. Family and motherhood are

the main factors that hinder women from taking up leadership positions (Barmao & Mukhwana, 2013). Again, Moreau et al. (2007) note that some women always move with their husbands when they relocate because these women view themselves more as child-carers than career women with aspirations. Contrary to this, the women interviewed by Chabaya et al. (2009) revealed that some women saw child caring as a choice and not as oppression. Women in this study with different marital statuses explained how they handled their work and family issues.

Although most of the women perceived school administration as consuming and incredibly difficulty, from her experience as a school head, Perkins (2011) finds it less challenging because no work is carried home. In this study, I found out that some Zimbabwean female school heads enjoy their careers as heads and they also encourage those who aspire to be in management positions. Furthermore, Perkins (2011) adds that while men are exposed to the 'old boys' network, women seem not to have platforms which are good for leadership preparation. School heads should teach those aspiring to be school heads, how to navigate their way up through mentoring relationships. In Perkins's (2011) research, although some women revealed that they could manage their multiple roles and have accomplished their goals, they all agreed that they did not give quality time to their families, especially children. This also came out in the interviews I had with selected female secondary school heads.

Though work and family had been redefined as highlighted before, females still take the bulk of the responsibility because of culture (Coleman, 2007). Barnette (2004) observes that the sharing of household responsibilities increased between 1992 and 2002. Furthermore, Perkins (2011) suggests that there is still more to be done in terms of shifting the society's attitudes, perceptions and beliefs with regards to family responsibilities. This will serve professional women from the side effects of being overworked, such as divorce, and mental, emotional and physical deterioration (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). Without family support, the participants confessed that their lives in general would be affected negatively.

Davidson and Burke (1994) emphasise that married male managers concentrate on their careers fully while the married female managers tend to give more attention to their

families at the expense of their careers. Coleman (2007) also notes that there is a difference in the proportion of married women (or single ones with children) and men. Dual demands of family and work force most women to defer promotion and concentrate on family issues or not have children at all and pursue their careers (Coleman, 2007; Msila, 2013). Women taking up very high posts are more likely to be single parents and less likely to be married and have children than men (Msila, 2013). Women leaders who have children are likely to take most of the responsibilities with children compared to their partners as expected by society causing pressure for women (Coleman, 2007). Coleman (2003b) concludes that the majority of male school leaders are married and have children something which is not very common among women leaders, and that there are more divorces among women leaders than male ones. This was noted by my participants who aired that if people do not support each other in their careers divorces are very possible.

Furthermore, Coleman (2003b) adds that exposure to stress at work can create tension within marriage, due to negative moods and preoccupations at home, so it could be argued that the potential for tension is greater when there are two stressful jobs. Her findings reflects that most young female leaders live alone and are childless despite the existence of maternity leave which guarantees job security for them when they come back. My participants were married and one was a widow and had different ways of handling their family issues. Conversely, they all emphasised on family support as the main issue for them to be effective both at work and home.

2.5.4 Lack of support

Once women obtain the administrative position, they are a role model for other women, leading to promotion of women to leadership positions within the school (Chen & Addi, 1995). This idea was also raised by Addi-Raccah (2006) who believes that when women get into higher positions, chances for other women to be promoted to administrative positions are also high. Women in educational positions were found to empower other women more than men in the same positions do for other men, and this was also observed in non-academic settings (Addi-Raccah, 2006). For example, Jewish

women were seen to be encouraging and empowering others to take up leading roles in the school (Fuchs & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1996). From the above research, it showed that the behaviours of women leaders towards other women are diverse.

Stereotypical opinions of women rest on a specific idea of typical female characteristics which are a lack of self-assertiveness, a poor self-image, a lack of self-confidence, over-emotional reactions and dependence (Kruger, 1996), among others. On acquisition, which is the second stage of the career path model, Moorosi (2010) found out that it was not easy for women principals in South Africa to get leadership posts in secondary schools where the positions were mostly dominated by men. Those who got leadership posts revealed that it was difficult because the interviewers wanted to recruit 'strong' men for the posts and some women were just promoted because of their long stay in certain schools (Madikizela, 2009). On performance, the third and last stage of the management model motioned above, Moorosi (2010) revealed that discrimination continued even after appointment and included negative attitude from both inside and outside the organisation. Such lack of support puts pressure on the woman leader to work extra hard in order to prove her worth both in the organisation and community as reflected by the three participants in this study.

Lack of support from family, especially spouses, was also noted to be a big barrier for women who wanted to progress in their careers (Moorosi, 2010). This was also reflected in this study where female secondary heads expressed how lack of family support affected their career choices. Sachs and Blackmore (1998) note that in Australia, women get isolated, lonely and frustrated when they lack support especially from female colleagues and this was reflected in different research, such as those done in South Africa (Greyling & Steyn, 2015) and in Zimbabwe (Mapolisa & Madziyire, 2012; Naidoo & Perumal, 2014).

Lack of women models and mentors in the educational leadership may also cause some women to lack aspirations for leadership (Choge, 2015). Some women in leadership positions may be so beset with problems created by resentful female and male teachers who are unwilling to accept a woman 'boss' to the extent that the example they provide does not encourage other women to face the same ordeal

(Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010; Choge, 2015). Interviewed senior women teachers in Uganda revealed that they lack encouragement from mentors and heads when they want to move upwards, and at times they are even discouraged (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010). The findings of this study showed that there were some women in high positions who supported and encouraged the three participants in their careers as school heads. According to Sperandio & Kagoda, (2010), some of the participants indicated that they would not apply for leadership positions in school because the benefits of promotion were not enough to off-set the time and effort needed to get it. Although the three participants in this study also revealed lack of attractive incentives in their careers as school heads, they mentioned a number of other benefits which encourage them not to give up on leadership.

Besides lack of support from the family or the system, women's under-representation may be attributed to their own decisions not to apply for leadership positions in education (Oplatka & Tamir, 2009). Some of their reasons for not applying include lack of necessary aspiration, lack of awareness of the promotion system, lack of confidence that they will succeed, gender-based socialisation, fear of failure and lack of competitiveness (Limerick & Heywood, 1993). In my study, I found out how the female heads were supported by different people in their career choices and how they supported others who were their subordinates.

Subordinates frequently do not have respect for female heads like they have for male leaders (Greyling & Steyn, 2015). Sadly, some women leaders were even found to be verbally abused by teachers (Dorsey, 1989), and this was attributed to the cultural belief that men are managers by nature while women are followers as highlighted before. This is also highlighted by Makura (2009) who reveals that most of the stress comes from other female colleagues, the old and experienced staff members and male teachers. My aim in this study was to find out how the participants worked with their subordinates and community as female school heads.

The preliminary informal interviews that I carried out with a few female heads in Mashonaland Central and Manicaland Provinces of Zimbabwe also revealed the need for support from staff and the local community. Three of the participants in those

interviews indicated lack of support from male teachers as a major setback in the carrying out of their duties as school heads. Two of them were deputy heads and their school heads were men. They all agreed that in meetings, male teachers always opposed what these heads suggested. Two deputy heads indicated that this was only done when the school heads were not there. Nevertheless, most of the female heads indicated good community support. On the contrary, one female deputy head in Manicaland Province showed that the community resisted when she was appointed from a different province, although there seemed to be a slight positive change at the time of the preliminary informal interview.

Naidoo and Perumal (2014) also found out that female heads received resistance from the staff as well as the School Management Team (SMT) and that there was no strong support from the community which was shown by poor attendance of general meetings during their research. Greyvenstein (2000) describes this as insubordination and sabotage by staff and yet the female school heads sacrifice more time at work than their own family responsibilities so as to remain competent. On the contrary, the School Development Association (SDA) minute books I perused for all three schools in my study showed good turn up of parents during meetings. Makura (2009) found out that when some female heads try to find help from other male heads or male superiors, their intentions are misconstrued when suggestive comments and offers which they describe as morally and professionally weird are made. Traditionally, mingling and interacting with the opposite sex may lead one to be labelled by society as 'loose or unfit' to be a good mother or wife. This was reflected by one of my participants who is a widow.

Although polices are in place for women's appointment in leadership positions in Zimbabwe, the question whether do they practically continue to support these female leaders after their appointment remains. School heads need to be supported by the system through some training programmes, especially when they are new in the game which was noted by Makura (2009). Makura (2009) found out that the Zimbabwean education system does not give enough support to school leaders in terms of training. School heads were found to be just senior teachers who were promoted or appointed without any pre-service leadership training and for them to survive they resorted to the

'sink or swim' principle, especially women heads (ibid). The findings of this study showed that all the three participants never received formal training before assuming their duties as school heads. From the same angle, Irvine and Brundrett (2016) notice that those who take up leadership positions need a different set of skills to that of classroom teachers and yet those appointed do not often receive the appropriate training or guidance on leadership development. The participants stressed the importance of leadership training for new school heads.

It also surfaced in the research by Sperandio and LaPier (2009) that it is vital for urban women to be inducted and trained into school leadership positions in order to operate effectively in multicultural schools where equity issues presently loom large. However, these training programmes have been accused of transmitting traditional male modes of leadership that do not serve women well (Shakeshaft, 1989; Grogan, 2010). On the other hand, Zikhali and Perumal (2014) reveal that those school heads who were already heading schools received some refresher causes where they were staff developed, though not all female school heads they interviewed in Zimbabwe indicated this. The female school heads in this study agreed that they also received some self-development courses after they were already heading schools. Makura (2009) argues that the school heads were just appointed based on good teaching, which is regarded as a common practice in Africa. This was based on the belief that good teachers can automatically be good school heads. On this note, this study found out that training was not formally done for the school heads during the time the interviewed heads were appointed.

Zikhali & Perumal (2014) note that similar training programmes or courses are given to aspiring school heads in some countries, such as England, France, Malta, Scotland and the United States of America. Such supporting systems seem to help improve readiness in those aspiring to be school heads. Aspects involved in such programmes are the management of human and financial resources and the management of external relations (Zikhali & Perumal, 2014). Several countries, especially the developing ones, depend mostly on middle management experiences and those that people get from on-the-job training (Makura, 2009). Zikhali & Perumal (2014) reveal that in Masvingo

Province in Zimbabwe, school heads were also oriented by clusters or local supervisory team, that is, the group of school heads within the same cluster would visit each other's school to share ideas on how to improve their leadership skills. The three female secondary heads interviewed indicated that such a program was once suggested in their district but was never carried out.

Provision of effective training and support for women aspiring to school leadership and removal of the barriers women face in developing countries is a challenge that must be met if women are to have a voice in educational development worldwide (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010). This may enable those women who reach the starting line to have the power and means to finish the race. Msila (2013) advocates for women friendly organisations to empower women. This can be done through gender balance in recruitment and those recruiting, induction and progression of women at different career stage. In this research, the participants elucidated the importance of such programmes to empower school heads in the Midlands Province of Zimbabwe.

Still on the issue of support, in England it was discovered that mother support was found to help successful female leaders to overcome the above barriers, while father support was imperative in many developing countries (Coleman, 2002). To explain this scenario, I want to believe that most of these developing countries are patriarchal in nature and because of that, children are socialised to associate success with fathers. For that reason, they have more faith in fathers than mothers when it comes to the issue of confidence. Abu-Tineh (2012) also notes that if women internalise these negative perceptions and stereotypes, they will tend to view themselves as less deserving of praise or promotion compared to their male counterparts. Lack of support from the start normally causes lack of confidence, especially in new and or young school heads as reflected by the female secondary school heads in this study.

2.5.5 Lack of confidence

Generally, the common problems faced by women leaders in different countries and societies are social, political, organisational, personal and cultural (Al- Jaradat, 2014). Personal problems involve lack of confidence and low-esteem. Daresh (2004) believes

that mentorship is one of the most powerful approaches to the development of a person professionally. This is supported by a number of researchers who agree that there is lack of enough role models and mentors for women in educational management to develop confidence (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010; Chabaya et al., 2009; Perkins, 2011; Zikhali & Perumal, 2014; Coleman, 2007). The women school heads in this research explicated that role models are few in schools because women lack confidence to take up the challenging positions.

Cubillo & Brown et al. (2003) argue that there is a group of theories which posits that lack of confidence, competitiveness and a fear of failure contribute to women under-representation in management position. On the other hand, Kruger (1996) believes that most women use the above qualities as strengths not weaknesses where they use adaptation and conflict avoidance to solve conflicts successfully unlike men who are generally competitive and unlikely to apply such strategies to solve problems. Kruger (1996) continues to say what men call lack of confidence in women has much to do with women being on unfamiliar ground where only men used to tread than lack of faith in them. This means that once women are familiar with leadership, they will gain the confidence to compete with men.

Blackmore (1999) points out that these women will be 'outsiders inside'. This means to say women have been in the organisation but they are not part of the leaders (male leaders' group or 'boys club'). In the same vein, Schein (1994) points out that women could be viewed as outsiders since leadership is culturally associated with men. The fact that there are few women administrators means they are often excluded from the 'old boys' network, an expression commonly used to refer to the informal web of contacts that practising administrators use to recommend people for jobs and to promote themselves and their friends (Chabaya et al., 2009). The in this study experienced this when they went out for conferences as school heads.

Most principals revealed that training workshops for school leaders helped them to gain confidence, something they did not value before their appointment as leaders (Moorosi, 2010). Also, being in a middle management within the organisation helped most school heads to gain confidence and prepare them for principalship (Moreau et al., 2007). The

female school heads I interviewed expounded that middle leadership skills were a necessity for one to be an effective leader. Furthermore, lack of exposure to management is recognised as a factor causing lack of aspiration in women to be principals (Moorosi, 2010). However, Dunne (2007) reveals that men are the ones who are given leadership in organisations while women remain subordinates or lead social clubs, such as Scripture Union. In my study, the women school leaders described different ways in which they were exposed to similar opportunities in preparation for headship.

Coleman (2007) highlights the following sentiments concerning barriers against women leadership at the time of appointment which she identifies as overt and covert discrimination:

- Women are seen as lacking confidence which hinders them from planning for their future careers.
- Women are associated with caring and pastoral roles that are not seen as related to leadership qualities.
- Women face a lot of challenges in combining family and career responsibilities.
- Essentialist stereotypes view women as weaker leaders than men.

Coleman (2007) also believes that, although there are some women who have ambitions to be school leaders from early years of their schooling, most women and a few men do not plan to be school heads but are just 'pushed' into it by colleagues. It is the aim of this study to discuss the career path experiences of female leaders who participated in this research.

After their research in Zimbabwe, Chabaya et al. (2009) conclude that women lack self-confidence and have low self-esteem. Chabaya et al. (2009) further emphasise that gender identity has a profound effect on one's behaviour, perceptions and effectiveness and this only comes after socialisation. Kaparou and Bush (2007) concur that women's socialisation experiences leave them with a lack of self-confidence, a poor self-image, and lowered aspiration though other barriers are caused by lack of opportunities

because of hiring practices and other contributing factors. Psychologists believe that women are conditioned by their early socialisation where they are taught not to compete with men but to accept that they are a weaker sex (Chabaya et al., 2009). In support of this, Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) agree that lack of confidence in women leaders could be caused by male dominance in senior administrative positions and the appointment and selection processes. In this study, the way the three participants in this study were socialised contributed a lot to their career choices. Although some of them were affected by selection processes at first, they eventually managed to rise to leadership positions.

While some authors see lack of confidence in women leaders, Kiamba (2008) reports that there are some women who fight for recognition as leaders despite being labelled and/or breaking family ties. Using the same lens, Musandu (2009), points out that some women manage to transcend cultural barriers and rise to top positions in society but more often than not, it means having to juggle cultural expectations and their leadership roles. The participants in my study expressed how they were appointed to middle leadership and then to school leadership positions. They also explained how some of them were labelled and discouraged in their first year of appointment as secondary school heads.

Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) note that women in educational leadership are risk takers and see themselves as leading schools for improvement against the odds, often in strained financial situations and socially conservative societies. Sometimes women tend to question their own capabilities when it comes to management skills because of lack of self-esteem or aspiration and seem not to have confidence to describe themselves as good leaders (Greyling & Steyn, 2015). Women leaders are more prone to criticism than men leaders (Coleman, 2001) leading to women conforming to the stereotype given to them by society which does not accept women as leaders (De Witt, 2010). The participants in this study revealed how they dealt with criticisms from society and their families.

Sachs and Blackmore (1998) consider being unable to keep emotions under control to be part of personal barriers that could hinder women leaders' career progress. They

also note that there is a lot of courage needed in leadership because there is pain, disappointment, dissatisfaction and even depression which all have to be kept invisible for the sake of effectiveness (Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). In the same spirit, Hall et al. (1999) emphasise that managers need to wear a face for the public even when things are not right. Blackmore (2013) also notes that women experience pleasure if they achieve goals and frustration when they fail to make it, especially after a job application, and would cry in private. The women participants described how they managed their own emotions and those of others in the execution of their duties as school heads.

The upshot of this is that educational leaders need to have an ability to manage their emotions in order to relate to people whose orientation is different from theirs (Mestry and Schmidt, 2012). This means being able to recognise one's own feelings as well as those of others and manage them accordingly. Failure to handle emotions may lead to one being labelled as an incompetent leader as reflected by the three participants in this study.

Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) argue that those who are in leadership positions may be breaking new grounds and unable to offer mentoring and encouragement to other women that many find necessary to overcome their lack of self-confidence and self-esteem. In the results of research by Greyling and Steyn (2015), it was found out that some women could not take up leadership positions because of responsibilities attached to leadership, such as heavy workloads, too many demands and expectations from all stakeholders, and the psychological and emotional burden that the school head had to carry. The perceptions and experiences of those already in school leadership revealed a number of reasons why most women were not keen to be school heads.

2.6 Summary

This chapter looked at feminism as the theoretical framework of this study. Different feminist views were revealed and their application to this study was reflected. The career path model which looks at the discrimination of women leaders from the level of preparation, access into leadership as well as in their performances as school heads was applied to this study. The chapter also discussed various scholarly perspectives on

leadership as it applies to both men and women. Different barriers to women career progress were discussed under the following sub-headings: cultural, social and religious barriers; family and work conflicts; lack of support and lack of confidence. The next chapter gives the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER 3: Research methodology

3.1 introduction

This is a multiple case study that explored the experiences of female secondary school heads in the execution of their day-to-day work as school heads. This chapter described the methods used in this research to answer the questions that anchor this study as stated in section 1.7 of Chapter one. The purpose of this study is to explore how the interviewed women progressed to school leadership. Also, the research looked at how socialisation impacted on the women's decisions to be school heads and the challenges and opportunities they experienced in their day to day leadership roles.

This chapter starts by looking at the use of interpretive paradigm and qualitative approach in this study as well as their justification. It goes on to discuss the case study design and how relevant it is to this study. Population and sampling procedures are outlined next. The chapter continues to discuss the interview, observation and document analysis as the appropriate research instruments for this study. The last section of this chapter deals with issues of trustworthiness before the summary.

3.2 Research paradigm: Interpretivism

Paradigms refer to a set of beliefs that guide the research process and how people perceive the world around them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Worldview or philosophical assumption or orientation, are some of the terms used to describe a research paradigm (Creswell, 1998). Paradigm is also defined as a framework of beliefs and values within which a research is carried out (Jaubish, Khurram, Ahmed, Fatima & Haider, 2011).

The choice of a research paradigm is crucial because it relates to the motivation for and expectations of any particular research (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). The choice is also determined by the type of knowledge needed and the researcher's interest in the field of study (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Creswell (1998) argues that the researcher's cultural, historical and personal background plays an essential role in the interpretation of phenomena during investigation. In trying to understand other people's worlds, the researcher gets fully involved in their world and becomes a core creator of meanings by

bringing his or her own background and subjective experience into the study (ibid). For instance, my understanding of female school leadership issues assisted me in the interpretation of the female secondary school heads' experiences in their daily lives as school heads. Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) emphasise the importance of choosing a research paradigm by saying, without it there is no strong base for the choice of methodologies and methods and even the relevant literature. Such a point of departure helped me to choose a qualitative paradigm (interpretivism) over the quantitative paradigms, such as, positivism which operates scientifically to verify facts (Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Creswell, 1998). The choice of the interpretive paradigm assisted me in my choice of interview, observation and documentation analysis as my research instruments.

Interpretive paradigms focus on how individuals perceive and experience the world around them and how they interact with others in their different settings (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). This notion is also revealed by Reeves and Hedberg (2003) who note that the interpretivist researchers are concerned with understanding the world as it is from experiences of individuals. In this study, I relied on the information I gathered from the female secondary school heads to investigate their experiences of leadership. This is in line with the interpretive paradigm which is concerned with subjectivity and meanings as indicated before. Babbie and Mouton (2010) concur that instead of surveying a large group quantitatively; qualitative researchers take a close look at individuals or small groups in their natural settings.

In my case I chose just three female secondary school heads as participants. That enabled me to collect rich and detailed information through in-depth interviews, observations and document analysis. In the same light, De Villiers (2010) describes interpretive researchers as those researchers who are concerned with people's beliefs, values and meanings without generalising the findings. In this study, and to be in line with the interpretive paradigm, I interviewed three female school leaders who expressed their feelings, perceptions, experiences and beliefs about their own leadership as women.

Interpretivism paradigm is flexible; it allows participants to express their concerns which should be appreciated by the researcher (Yin, 2014). Furthermore, the paradigm enabled me to create credibility and trustworthiness by gathering accurate and dense data using a variety of research instruments. For me, the contexts in which the female secondary school heads operate influence the meanings they make out of their environments, which is in line with interpretive paradigm, unlike in a controlled environment where the researcher will be in control of everything as observed by Cohen et al. (2007). For me not to disturb the natural settings of participants, I carried out all the interviews within their school premises. Likewise, observations were done during staff meetings and also while moving around the school for two days with each of the school heads. Documents were analysed within the school premises and nothing was photocopied for ethical reasons.

Regardless of all the discussed strengths of interpretive paradigms, Hammersley (2005) feels that its subjectivity and the researcher's inability to generalise results contribute to its weakness. Hammersley goes on to argue that the interpretive researcher's beliefs and values are likely to influence the entire process and findings of the study since the researcher will be the main data collector. In this study, I tried to rely as much as possible on the participants' narratives to avoid influencing the processing of the data. Despite the few weaknesses highlighted, I find the interpretive paradigm to be the best for this study because it allows participants the freedom to express themselves which, according to Cohen et al. (2007), creates a situation where the researcher is not in control of the participant's feelings or expression. The female secondary school heads told their stories of leadership freely without the researcher's interruption or bias. I only made sure I guided the conversation tactfully so as not to wander away from the focus of the study.

Huissain, Eyas and Nasseef (2013) point out lack of standardised data collection as a weakness for interpretive paradigm because there is no hypothesis development; instead, all the explanations are given by the data which makes replication of the findings more difficult. To counter these challenges, I chose not to work with assumptions or hypotheses. It is my aim to base my findings on the actual responses

given by the participants about their experiences of school leadership, hence the use of the interpretivist paradigm.

Huissain et al. (2013) criticise interpretivist researchers for not being in a position to anticipate all issues theoretically since they deal with them as they arise in the field of study. This is contradictory to what Creswell (2003) observes when he argues that interpretivist researchers do not begin with a theory (preconceived ideas); instead they generate one. Similarly, as my way of studying this phenomenon, I looked at the reality of specific situations as noted by Gray (2004) using different feminist lens. In addition, I used multiple research instruments qualitatively in order to get an in-depth understanding of the issue I am studying. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) believe this reduces bias and increases validity. The interpretive paradigm's principles are in line with the tenets of the qualitative approach as shown below.

3.3 Qualitative approach

Qualitative research stresses on the socially constructed nature of reality while seeking answers to questions that emphasise how social experiences are created and given meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research is not only meant for specific areas but it is an inquiry that cuts across disciplines, fields and subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Basing on this background, my study was well situated in the qualitative approach because I looked at social experiences of female school leaders and tried to come up with the meanings of their narratives.

Just like the interpretive paradigm, the qualitative approach allows the researcher to carry out the study in a natural setting where the participants express themselves freely (Cohen et al., 2007). In my case, the female secondary school heads told their stories while they were in their schools where their daily experiences were happening. By using this approach, I was able to get an in-depth understanding of these women's stories which Bryman (2012) describes as understanding issues beneath surface appearance. In order to get rich data, the qualitative approach allowed me to immerse myself in the research process (Maree & Pietersen, 2007). Thus, I was central in the progression of collecting, selecting, constructing and interpreting qualitative data which is a crucial

characteristic observed by Silverman (2006). In addition, qualitative research allows women's voices to be heard and thus, reducing exploitation according to Bryman (2012). It was my aim in this study to give female secondary school heads a platform to air their stories on what they experienced in their school leadership.

Furthermore, Scott (2010) reveals that many feminists prefer qualitative research because they believe they are interested in women's experiences. On the other hand, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) highlight a number of criticisms about qualitative research. They see it as too subjective in that the results rely on how the researcher views what he/she thinks is significant and also on his/her relationship with the participants. In the study, I relied on what I collected from the participants without putting my own ideas to avoid the above weakness. Another weakness pointed out by Bryman (2012) is that the results are difficult to replicate because the researcher is the main instrument, hence may influence the outcomes by his/her age, gender, interest or personality since the research procedures are not structured.

My age could have affected the respondents since we were within the same age range but I tried to guard my own interest by recording the exact words said by the women leaders. Stake (1995) points out that, qualitative approach is surrounded by problems of generalisation because the scope of the findings is restricted to one or two cases. Conversely, Bryman (2012) argues that qualitative results can be generalised through what he called 'moderatum generalities,' that is, where certain aspects of the phenomenon being studied can be applied to a broader context. In this study, I collected in depth data from participants of different schools so that certain cases may benefit from the results of this study. Lack of transparency was noted also by and Lincoln (2003) on the choice of participants and even on the procedures followed to reach the findings, again the reason being lack of strict guidelines and directions for the research process.

After all has been said and done about the qualitative research, I still subscribed to it in my research because I found it to be the best approach to use in order to capture in-depth data about female secondary school heads' perceptions and experiences of their daily work as school leaders. I did this through use of interviews which allowed the

participants to tell their stories freely to me. The qualitative approach allowed the participants to be interviewed in their natural settings. The use of interviews gave me room to probe issues deeper and used observation and document analysis to complement the findings. In line with the qualitative approach and the interpretive paradigm, this study was treated as a narrative research.

3.4 Narrative research

Narrative is from the word 'narrate' which means to relate a story (Denscombe, 2008). In a narrative research, investigators describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about people's lives and experiences. This means it focuses on studying a single person's stories, experiences and their meanings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Narrative research helps participants to feel the importance of their stories and their voices are heard. It captures data that is normal and familiar to the participants (Denscombe, 2008). On the same note, Best and Kahn (2006) reiterate that narratives are used to study individual people's life stories rather than a broader context and they call for a great understanding and collaboration between the researcher and the participant.

My study is in line with education narrative research because of its focus on educators and their teachings and I did this through interviews, observation and document analysis and even informal conversations. My choice of this type of research permitted me to gather data directly from the participants through their stories by using different instruments. Narrative research agrees with the feminist lens, which are after providing a voice for those who are seldom heard (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011) hence the justification of this study to let women school leaders voice their views and concerns about their leadership as females.

Researchers in a narrative research, focus also on understanding the past experiences and how they influence the present and future experiences (Punch, 2011). Such data can be collected through various methods as indicated above. Women in this study were given a chance to express how their past lives influenced their career choices of being school leaders. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) argue that the researcher can retell the stories in his/her own words to bring sequence to the stories which might have been told

in a haphazard manner. In my study, I have re-arranged the stories without changing their contents in order to suit the demands of the study. On the other hand, narrative researchers must be wary of false data since narrative research relies heavily on self-reported information (ibid) although Riessman (1993) in Denzin and Lincoln (2011) argues that any story told has some grain of truth in it. In order to reduce the gathering of false information in this study, probes were used during interviews and different instruments were used to complement each other. Together with this type of research, I employed the case study research design.

3.5 Research design: case study

Yin (2014) sees research design as a logical sequence that connects the empirical data to a study's initial research questions and ultimately to its conclusion. He further describes research design as a 'blue print' dealing with four problems in a research and these are: which questions are relevant to the study, which data are relevant, which data to collect and how to collect and analyse the data. Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) believe that research design directs the researcher to collect, analyse and interpret observations.

This research design allowed me to collect data using different instruments such as making some observations during staff meetings. In the same light, Babbie and Mouton (2005) define a research design as the design and methodology followed in the carrying out of a study in order to investigate the problem as formulated. This design gives room for in-depth understanding and descriptions of actions and effects as observed by (Cohen et al., 2007).The need to use both the interpretive paradigm and the qualitative approach became strong after I had chosen the case study design for my study.

Yin (2014) views a case study as a study of reality situations, and not just a claim, an abstract or hypothesis. Furthermore, qualitative case study is seen as an exhaustive and comprehensive examination of a particular scenario under study (Merriam, 1998). It is believed to cover the unit of study, the research procedure and the end product of the studied phenomenon and this could be done as single cases or multiple cases (Stake, 1995). I opted for multiple-cases in this study where I explored perceptions and

experiences of three female secondary school heads from different contexts with the aim of producing knowledge. Cross-case analysis was done at the end because analytic conclusions from independent multiple-cases are more powerful than from a single case alone as observed by Yin (2014). Creswell (2008) argues that the use of multiple-case studies tends to dilute the overall analysis leading to lack of depth in analysis. To mitigate this weakness, I tried to consider all the given narratives in my cross analysis and recorded the similarities and differences in the women's stories.

Baxter and Jack (2008) believe a case study to be a tool for researchers to study complex situations within their contexts using varied research data sources. In this study, I used interviews, observation and document analysis as the research instruments so as to meet the above requirement of a case study. Multiple data sources are a hallmark of case study research that enhances data credibility (Yin, 2014) and strengthens the findings (Rule & John, 2011). The case study design gives room for close collaboration between the researcher and the participants while allowing the participants to tell their story for the researcher to understand their actions and views of reality (Crabtree & Miller, 1999). In this study, I worked closely with the participants in order to get their stories in depth.

Furthermore, Yin (2014) describes a case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real world context, for example, exploring female secondary school heads' perceptions and experiences of the leadership in the schools they head. These circumstances were explained using the 'why' and 'what' questions to get the in-depth facts about the phenomenon. Using the case study method sheds light on other similar cases thereby creating room for transferability (Rule & John, 2011) and also compliments the strengths and weaknesses of other types of research (Yin, 2014). Case study design has some disadvantages over other designs and its choice depends on what the researcher wants to understand according to Yin (2003). In my study, I chose case study design in order to understand the experiences and challenges of female school leaders.

Cohen et al. (2007) believe that a case that is descriptive speaks for itself not to be appraised by the researcher. To come up with a comprehensive story of the female

secondary school heads' experiences of school leadership, there is need for such a descriptive approach. A case could also be heuristic in nature, meaning it must enhance the understanding of a phenomenon being studied through confirming what is known, discovering new meaning, clarifying the phenomenon and extending the experience of the reader and/or the researcher as revealed by Merriam (1998). It is my hope and trust that the results from this study will add value to the existing feminist knowledge about the experiences of women in educational leadership and new meanings may be revealed so as to understand women issues better.

Knowledge from a case study is seen as unique compared to other designs in that it is more practical and resonates with the researcher's own experiences making it very relevant rather than abstract (Stake, 1995). In support, Yin (2014) observes that the use of case study also causes the knowledge production to increase as new knowledge replaces the old one. This knowledge can be confirmed before it is published because a case study allows feedback to the participants so as to confirm or improve their contributions leading to the accuracy of the collected data, that is, the trustworthiness of the data (Stake, 1995), an issue I discussed in detail later.

Case studies are not sampling units because they are too small to represent any larger population; instead, they should be considered as opportunities to shed empirical light on certain issues as perceived by Cohen et al. (2007). Yin (2014) argues that the results from case studies may be applied to a variety of situations which might not even be similar to the studied case or even implicate new situations. The findings of this study may be used to understand related circumstances or even unrelated ones because Stake (1995) reiterates that people do not study a case in order to understand other cases; individuals can generalise the results after reading the case.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) also criticise the case study design when they observe that it lacks a systematic way of handling data and reporting the findings. They argue that there is a high risk of bias since the researchers will use purposive sampling techniques in choosing participants. Again, Denzin and Lincoln (2011) notice lack of consistency, short sightedness and unreliability as the gathered information will be based on participants' opinions. To mitigate these weaknesses, I used interview, observation and

document analysis as data collection instruments. This gave me an opportunity to make meaning and give in-depth descriptions based on contexts and circumstances of actions which surrounded each case.

Crewell (2012) observes that a case study lacks great rigour because the researcher is allowed to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions, something which is assumed to be less likely when using other methods. On the same note, Cohen et al. (2007) notice that case studies lack control causing difficulties in making cause-effect inferences. This is also likely to be influenced by the researcher's or participant's bias since only the researcher/participant knows what he/she wants to understand causing the unethical researcher to be selective on the data to be analysed (Cohen et al, 2007; Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

However, Merriam (1998) supports the use of a case study design as the best design to answer questions since its weaknesses are eclipsed by its strengths. In this study, I adopted this design because of its strengths and I encountered the weaknesses by budgeting enough time for data collection, using simple language during interviews and being faithful in my recording and transcription and also in the narrative report as a whole. On the other hand, in order to extract a relevant sample as a good data source, one has to consider the population from which the sample comes.

3.6 Population

A population is regarded as a group of people with specific attributes or characteristics from which a sample is taken to mark the boundaries (Creswell, Plano & Clark, 2007; Maree & Pietersen, 2007; Singh, 2007). Similarly, Babbie and Marton (2005) describe research population as an aggregation of elements from which a symbol is selected. Thomas (2011) simply considers population as a total number of all the people in whom the researcher might be interested. This includes the "total number of possible units or elements that are included in the study or the totality of people, organisations, objects or occurrences from which a sample is drawn" (Gray, 2004, p. 403). The population for this study comprises all female secondary school heads in Gweru District of Midlands

Province in Zimbabwe. It was from this population that the sample of this study was drawn.

3.7 Sample and sampling procedures

It is not possible to sample every unit in a population of study, hence the need to sample those units rich in data as perceived by Yin (2014). Studying the whole population in this study was not possible. A sample which comprised three female secondary school heads, one from an urban boarding school, the second one from an urban day school and the third one from a rural day school was drawn from the population. These participants were chosen purposively. Purposive samples are particularly useful in the study of special and hard to find populations according to Bernard and Ryan (2010).

In this study, female secondary school heads were chosen basing on the evidence that they were very few hence a hard to find group. They were also chosen basing on Nieuwenhuis's (2007) observation that qualitative researchers generally use non-probability and purposive sampling. Saunders (2012) elaborates that purposive sampling allows the researchers to select the participants who have the relevant knowledge needed for the research at hand. In this study, the female heads were chosen because they were the ones who could provide feminist knowledge on issues surrounding women leadership.

Furthermore, Babbie and Mouton (2010) add that the selection of the participants depends on their specific purpose, such as unique position, meeting research requirements and their willingness to participate. The sample in this study is very relevant to the study because they meet the demands of the study of exploring female secondary school heads' experiences of their school leadership roles. I chose these few individuals so as to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon and also because of the typicality of the case as highlighted by Cohen et al. (2007). The three women were chosen because their schools represented the typical set up of Zimbabwean secondary schools. Secondary schools which were headed by females were very few and they were very far apart forcing me to concentrate on those that were

accessible because of financial and time constraints. Cohen et al. (2007) contend that in a convenience sample, individuals who are nearest are chosen for study and what I did was in line with Best and Kahn (2006) who observe that a good sampling procedure should consider economic factors.

Babbie (2007) and Yin (2014) describe purposive sampling as 'judgemental sampling' because the units to be observed are chosen basing on the researcher's judgement. It was out of my own judgement that I chose the three female secondary school heads as the sample of this study. I did this after looking at their suitability for the study since I am studying women issues using the radical, liberal and post-structuralists feminist lens. Since these were practising women, I hoped to get very rich and in-depth data about their experiences in their career path, that is, from senior position to their current positions.

As a researcher, I believe that the natural way to explore experiences of a person is to ask the very person. I also feel that to complement this, observations have to be made and documents analysed. Collectively, these instruments produced strong data which enabled me to understand issues deeply as reflected below.

3.8 Data gathering methods

Lichtman (2006) considers data gathering methods as the sources for rich data in order to understand deeply human phenomena, interaction and discourses. In his view, Lichtman further describes human phenomena as an issue of people's lived experiences which are communicated through different interactions in terms of behaviour and purpose. For this study, in order to gather rich information about the perceptions and experiences of female secondary schools heads in their day-to-day duty execution as school heads, I employed semi-structured interviews, observations and document analysis techniques. Each of these instruments were discussed in detail below.

3.8.1 Interviews

An interview is a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee with the aim of generating data based on the beliefs, views, ideas, opinions and behaviours of the participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Maree & Pietersen, 2007). Cohen et al. (2007) believe that interviews differ from ordinary conversations in that interviews are guided by questions posed by the interviewer, which Yin (2014) describes as a guided conversation with questions that are fluid and not rigid. In this study, I gave room for free answers but made sure they were within the demands of the study.

Furthermore, interviews are considered necessary when one cannot observe behaviour, feelings or how people interpret the world around them. They are also useful when one wants to get information about the past that we cannot replicate (Merriam, 1998). To achieve this, I used semi-structured interviews to solicit data on perceptions and experiences of female secondary school heads. This is supported by Rule and John (2011) when they echo that in order for a researcher to capture the uniqueness and complexity of an issue, there is need for the researcher to be a bit flexible with participants' freedom of expression. I made sure I reconstructed my questions whenever the situation demanded and probed answers so as to get the full depth of the experiences and also to make sure the salient aspects of the issue were attended to as advised by Yin (2014).

Interviews are regarded as the most appropriate instruments for a qualitative research by Merriam (1998). Cohen et al. (2007) concur that an interview allows the verbal, non-verbal and oral and aural sensory channels to be used. Babbie and Mouton (2005) specifically assert that where the participant does most of the talking, the interview is likely to take the unstructured or semi-structured form. In this study, I listened to the participants telling their stories in their own words, voices and language during interviews. The participants were free to use the language they were comfortable with to answer the interview questions while giving me a comprehensive picture of their perceptions and experiences, beliefs and situations within the phenomenon as pointed out by Smith (2015). All the participants preferred to use English during data collection

in this research although in a few instances they had to quote other people's words using the mother language.

This type of interview allowed me to sail through with the female secondary school heads as they explained their perceptions and challenges, beliefs and other experiences in their daily work as school heads. To be sure that all data are captured during the interviews, I audio recorded the conversations with the participants' consent. I did this because audio tapes provide a more accurate recording of interviews than taking down own notes as Yin (2014) reiterates. While I relied heavily on audio tape, I also took down some major points in case the machine failed me. For instance, there were moments where I had to phone the participants for clarity where information was not clearly recorded. For me to get detailed and rich data about the women school heads' experiences, I rephrased, reordered and clarified questions whenever necessary because interviews can not bound by a set of rigid questions.

On the same note, Cohen et al. (2007) believe that the strength of interviews is that the researcher is able to read non-verbal or body language during discussions thereby acquiring a perspective of how the participant could have felt towards the issue being investigated. In this study, it was very necessary for me to be very observant during interview so as to be able to pick up some of those non-verbal behaviours to enrich my discoveries.

Like any other research method, interviews have their limitations. Babbie (2012) notes that the interviewees may want to please the interviewer by saying what they think the researcher wants to hear. Again, Babbie observes that the presence of the interviewer may intimidate the participant. To reduce this, I familiarised myself with the participants by visiting them first to secure the interview appointments and make myself known well before the interview sessions. Also, interviews can be spoiled by poorly framed questions which may cause misinterpretation by participants (Cohen et al., 2007). For me to be sure that my questions were clear, I gave them to my colleagues for comments before administering them in the field which some authors call peer debriefing. This is also going to be discussed later as the chapter progresses.

Polkinghorne (2005) points out that at times people tend to change when they narrate their experiences and this is considered as another weakness of interviews when gathering data, yet the researcher has to solely rely on these narratives. To combat this weakness, the researcher employed triangulation where observation and document analysis data complemented data from interview sessions. During interviews, I also used probes to get the details and clarity of raised issues whenever I doubted the truthfulness of the provided data and of the facts. I also verified through observation.

3.8.2 Observation

Yin (2014) suggests that case study is preferred when looking at contemporary issues where researchers use direct observation, interview and many other methods because it has the ability to deal with a variety of techniques for data collection and does not control behaviour as done by experimental techniques. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) believe that for qualitative researchers to get a deep account of human action and interaction, they use observation method. During observation, the researcher must take note of the language patterns used during interaction (Bailey, 2007).

Observation is deemed relevant for this study because I observed the behaviour and interaction of female secondary school heads and their subordinates during meetings and also the language patterns used. I also captured useful observation even outside the meeting venue because Bryman (2012) observes that if people know that they are being observed they are likely to change their behaviour. This brings in the advantage of participant observation (which I could not do in this study) where with time people tend to go back to their normal way of behaving.

I employed the non-participant observation technique so as to get the information in its originality. Just like interviews, observations are believed to be time consuming and may not be able to cover a wide context without assistant observers according to Yin (2014). I was not able to pick up every behaviour portrayed during the meeting but, with the heads' permission, I audio recorded the interactions which I transcribed later.

I could not attend some of the closing meetings because of the school heads' busy schedules. On another note, although I finally managed to attend Mrs Moyo and Mrs

Sibanda's opening meetings, it was not easy. During data collection, that is end of year, when I phoned Mrs Sibanda she told me that she would not be around on the day of the closing meeting because of sports commitment. Similarly, Mrs Moyo told me the same and added that the closing meeting was going to be held by the deputy. As for their staff minute books, Mrs Moyo told me that she had misplaced them, and Mrs Sibanda said they were still with the secretary who was said to be away from school for some days. As a result, I made new appointments to attend opening meetings which I did when they opened schools. That was the same time that I managed to look at their staff minute books as part of the analysed documents.

3.8.3 Document analysis

Denscombe (2008) notes that document analysis is crucial because it may reveal information that is not accessible by using other research methods, such as interview and observation. Documents may be considered suitable in augmenting and corroborating data from other sources of evidence according to Yin (2003). In my study, it is there to complement data from the interviews and observations made. Bryman (2012) observes that documentary information is likely to be suitable for any case study hence its choice in this multiple-case study. The technique is believed to be stable, that is, there is room for review, the information will not change and always communicates what it is supposed to communicate without changing details, references or names, and also because they are not affected by the presence of the researcher like interviews and observations (Yin, 2014; Merriam, 1998). Documents cover a long period and there is also wide coverage in terms of events and settings which was useful to me for rich data collection.

Confidentiality was considered for this technique where school heads offered the documents willingly. These documents comprised minutes of meetings, circulars and any other materials relevant to the study, such as log books, just to check on the punctuality and absenteeism of teachers. Information from such documents enriched data from the interviews and observations (Janesick, 2000; Richardson, 2000) and added worth and credence to the findings of the research as stated by Fine, Weis,

Weseen and Wong (2000). Still on the use of documents, Babbie (2007) emphasises that to understand document content, one needs to read it several times in order to identify gaps, themes, history of the case and questions to ask for further understandings during further research. I spent a day at each school looking at different documents and at times had to ask for particular documents during interviews or observation for verification of issues.

State documents, such as policies and other legal frames, are most appropriate sources of information for social researchers because they can be considered to be authentic and meaningful (Bryman, 2012). However, credibility could be questioned because documents in general cannot be regarded as free from errors (Janesick, 2000), hence the need to use them with other sources of evidence as I did in this study. The documents may be biased because someone wrote them, so should be used with caution.

Official documents derived from private sources, such as newsletters, organisational charts, minutes of meetings, internal and external communications and memos may be difficult to access hence social researchers mostly rely on public domain documents (Bryman, 2012; Yin, 2014; Fitzgerald, 2007). During data collection, two school heads withheld some documents which I suspected had interesting data for my study and some information was removed from some of the documents for confidentiality reasons. I dealt with only those documents that were given to me, and where I felt the data were incomplete I made sure I pursued it in the interviews in a very tactful manner. For the first two schools, I observed duty lists, time-tables, discipline record books, School Development Association (SDA) and Head of Department (HOD) minute books and a few circulars. As for the third school, I managed to access staff minute books and all the other documents mentioned above. I negotiated with the heads to accept me in their opening meetings. Both heads invited me when they held their opening meetings at the beginning of the year and I managed to get access to their staff minute books after the meetings.

Bryman (2012) believes that the internal documents have a true story about the organisation and therefore are regarded as windows of social and organisational

realities. It was for this reason that I insisted on looking at the schools' minute books. On the other hand, Artkinson and Coffey (2011) argue that they may not reflect organisational realities but the author's intentions and the targeted group, for they are meant to convey an impression. For example, from my own experiences, there were times when the school director would ask me, as school head, to write an impressive report about the organisation so as to win a donor's favour or a tender. This was only meant to impress the reader and yet in reality it was not like that. Because of such loopholes in the documentary content, I complemented document analysis with the interview and observation techniques which tried to get the reality of the organisation.

Some documents are generated from other documents, such as mission statements or previous meetings. This shows that data have been collected and processed by someone for a particular reason and normally re-analysed for a particular purpose (Babbie, 2007). It was of paramount importance for me to ask for a variety of documents so that they could complement each other in my gathering of findings. While there are various ways of analysing data, the final onus about the narratives resides with the researcher because he/she is the one who is supposed to convince the reader with his/her story as highlighted by Yin (2014). To validate the discussed research instruments that I used, a pilot study was carried out.

3.9 Pilot study

Merriam (1998) sees a pilot study as a mini study which involves the checking of effectiveness of the instruments to be used. The main aim of piloting is to make sure that the researcher gets the result he/she wants from the study (Davies, 1994) after refining data collection plans and procedures to be followed as observed by Yin (2014). Piloting assists the researcher to gauge time frames for interviews and it gives confidence to the researcher on the effectiveness of the research instruments, for example, clarity of the language to the participants (Davies, 1994; Merriam, 1998). I chose one secondary school led by a female which was not part of the sample, to test the consent form and the research tools. The day-boarding school comprised of about 1 500 students, and 47 teaching and non-teaching staff.

After reading the consent form, the participant did not hesitate to sign showing that it was clear. I could see that the scheduled 2 hour interview was too long for the busy school head who was attending to other school issues every now and then. So I adjusted the interview sessions to only one hour and decided to have three sessions with each of the school heads who were to participate in the study. During the pilot interview, I noticed a number of questions that needed to be clear so I had to add more probes in order to get the rich data I was looking for. I also identified a number of issues during my day with the school head that needed to be pursued in the interview sessions. This move helped me to adjust all my protocols to meet the needs of the participants and to capture in-depth data by developing relevant questions as indicated by Yin (2014). Ethical considerations were also observed in the pilot study and in my actual research.

3.10 Ethical considerations

"Ethics [concern] the system of moral principles by which individuals can judge their actions as right or wrong, good or bad" (Denscombe, 2008, p. 175). Qualitative researchers are considered as guests in the private spaces of the world and are expected to behave well and have a strict code of ethics according to Merriam (1998). Tuckman (1994) believes that researchers should be conscious of their actions because participants have the right to privacy and confidentiality. On the same note, Bailey (2007) emphasises that violating confidentiality can cause harm to the participants, hence the need for them to sign the consent form. This is a form in which participants offer their participation voluntarily in research projects after understanding the aim of the research and the risks that maybe involved in taking part (Babbie, 2007).

In addition, Bryman (2012) and Babbie (2007) go on to say the consent form protects both the researcher and the participant in the case that any adverse issues are raised by participants themselves or some other people after or even during the study. Cohen et al. (2007) also concurred that there is need to protect participants from embarrassing situations that could be caused by research. To protect both the participants and myself, all the three participants signed some consent forms which informed them about the

purpose of this study and no direct benefits were promised to be given as incentive to the participants after the research. This study only acted as a forum for women school leaders to air their concerns, perceptions and experiences which in turn might influence policy matters.

The participants in this study were informed about the nature of the research as highlighted by Henning, Van Rensburg, & Smit (2004) and permission to access information was negotiated from time to time as need arose. Bryman (2008) believes that the records and identities of individuals must remain confidential. Even when the results are being published, care must still be taken. While use of pseudonyms is a common practice in qualitative research, it might not mean there is no possibility of identification (Bryman, 2008). It is not easy to predict harm in a research and prevent it before it reveals itself but it goes without saying that protection of participants from harm by researchers is essential and cannot be over-emphasised (Bryman, 2012). In addition to pseudonyms, codes were also used to protect the actual identities of participants. In addition to confidentiality, the data that are produced during a research need to be trustworthy.

3.11 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness involves the reliability and validity of the generated data according to Bryman (2012). The trustworthiness was ensured through collecting data in all honesty and remaining objective. Narratives were used to ensure participants' ownership of the data. Cross-referencing of data from different sources was employed in this study to ensure validity and reliability. Single methods in research have their own challenges and these can be reduced by applying triangulation (Flick, 2005). In my study, I used semi-structured interview, non-participant observation and document analysis to get deeper understanding of women issues in connection with school leadership.

Member checking is one technique that could be used by researchers for participants to verify and confirm their transcribed stories as viewed by Rule and John (2011). This is considered by Guba and Lincoln (2005) as credibility. This helps the researcher to assess the intentions of the participants (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Rule and John

(2011) emphasise that member checking improves the accuracy and completeness of the generated data and members are allowed to adjust where they find fit or even remove information that they are not comfortable with. They can add more information which would have been stimulated by the play back process. In my study, after transcribing the data I took them to the participants for verification and all was acknowledged as correctly recorded.

On the other hand, there are some problems which may emanate from member checking process. Sandelowski (1993), Morse (1994) and Angen (2000) agree that member checking might not be the best process to establish validity and trustworthiness of the study because the researcher's and participant's interpretation may differ, causing confusion on whose interpretation to consider as correct. The same scholars also noted that researchers and participants have different agendas to promote in a research and results may be affected by participants trying to please the researcher by providing incorrect information and the researcher striving to be a good scholar. Another problem cited by Bryman (2012) is that participants may deny some of their stories when they realise the impact the stories may have on them or other people or when they encounter new experiences which are no longer in line with what they might have said in the interviews. To reduce these problems, I relied on the participants' interpretations because they are the owners of the stories. Also, I allowed the participants to remove any information they were not comfortable with after recording the narratives. I reminded them to tell the truth because their identities were not going to be disclosed.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) reiterate that trustworthiness may be established through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of results. Together, Babbie (2007) and Lincoln and Guba (1985) concur that credibility could be achieved through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer briefing, reference adequacy and member-checking. They further agreed that prolonged engagement calls for the researcher to spend a long time in the field until data saturation point is reached. In this study, I familiarised myself with the female secondary school heads before carrying out the interview protocols. I also had more than one interview session with

each school head in order to reach a point of data saturation. In some cases, I had to go back to the field for clarification of certain facts which I found not clear during transcription and analysis.

To ensure credibility, I employed triangulation as suggested by Nieuwenhuis, (2010b). For peer briefing, I asked my other colleagues in different PhD programmes to comment on my work. This agrees with what Babbie (2007) advised that the peers should not be my juniors or seniors but they should have the same status as me.

Babbie (2012) describes transferability as the magnitude to which the results can be applied in other settings or with other respondents. Furthermore, Babbie (2007) further clarifies that unlike the quantitative research where the researchers attempt to illustrate how their findings can be generalised, the qualitative results rest with the reader. Transferability may be established by thick descriptions of data regarding each case which will allow the readers to make their own judgements on generalisation as observed by Gray (2004). If the results are credible and transferable, they are also likely to be dependable and confirmable as Babbie (2012) argues. In this study, I made sure the data I collected were very rich to give room to readers to make their own judgements as far as transferability and dependability of the findings are concerned. After all the data were collected, there was need to analyse them so as to draw conclusions about the phenomenon.

3.12 Data collection and analysis procedures

I collected data through the use of semi structured and open ended questions that were informed by the research questions which aimed at tapping lived stories from three selected female secondary school heads in their leadership experiences. The participants were interviewed in their school settings hence the need to analyse the three women's type schools. I made sure the participants had freedom to express themselves without my interference and that helped me to understand women issues beyond the surface. I did not use any formula on data collection because I wanted the participants' stories in their originality although Huissain, Eyas and Nasseef (2013) take it to be the weakness of the interpretive paradigm.

Permission to record the interviews was granted by all the participants. Because of the women school leaders' busy schedules, the interviews averaged about one hour for each of the three sessions that were conducted with each of the female heads selected. Shadowing of the school heads was not easy because of their tight schedules. I managed to spent two full days with only one head (Mrs Toga) and I was with the other two (Mrs Moyo and Mrs Sibanda) for only half a day each for the two days I shadowed them because they had to spend the other half of the days at district sports meetings.

I started data collection from the participants' early socialisation so as to understand their choices of career. I used audio tape recording for more accurate data as advised by Yin (2014), than just note taking. Also, I attended staff meetings at all the three schools as a non-participant observer in order to get information as it was. I also made some follow up interviews whenever necessary, by phoning to selected participants for clarity of information. The transcriptions were sent back to the participants for confirmation of correct record of information which they provided as responses to interview questions. This is referred to as member checking by Rule and John (2011). After data collection, I analysed them as described below.

Daymon and Holloway (2011) describe data analysis as the process of organising, structuring and constructing meaning from the collected data. It is seen as a dynamic and creative process. After organisation of the data, the researcher needs to make sense out of them as noted by Creswell (2014). In the same light, Robson (1993) observes that if data are left on their own, they mean nothing and their message will remain hidden unless they are analysed to be meaningful. To be in line with the above reasons, I analysed the data I collected in order to make it meaningful.

Merriam (1998) suggests that organisation of data involves breaking down, conceptualising and putting the emerging pictures in a new way. This is done through reading the data several times which helps the researcher to familiarise with the data as revealed by Marshall and Rossman (2011) and Leedy and Ormrod (2010). In this study, I listened to my audio recordings and read the noted data several times. Soon after collecting all data, content analysis is of paramount importance as suggested by Babbie and Mouton (2005), Schurink, Fouche and de Vos (2011) and Singh (2007). Ololube

and Kpolovie (2012) add that the organising of the collected materials is systematic and it brings meaning to the data so that they can tell a story to others. It is my wish that my study gives readers an in-depth understanding of issues that surround women who are in school leadership positions.

Flick (2005) believes that to analyse voluminous data from qualitative research, the data need to be transformed "...through analytic procedures into clear, understandable, insightful, trustworthy and original analysis" (p. 408). In my study, I managed, organised and analysed the collected data following Merriam's (1998), Cohen et al.'s (2007) and Miles and Huberman's (1984) systematic strategies of analysing data. Merriam (1998) observes that the researcher is able to generate more data if the analysis is done simultaneously with the gathering of the data. By using this approach, I was able to reflect on the collected data and come up with more questions leading to more information. Some statistical data collected was presented on tables before being described qualitatively.

In support of Merriam's views Smit (2013) argues that data analysis is an on-going process. To follow Merriam's (1998) and Smit's (2013) advice, I analysed the collected data in the evenings after every session the moment I got home. This helped me to record everything that I remembered about the conversation while it was still vivid. After the summaries, I would listen to the audio recordings several times before transcribing. This also assisted me in picking as much as possible from the interviews including some hidden messages such as those shown by the pitch of the voice. This enabled me to identify gaps that I filled in the proceeded interview sessions.

3.13 Summary

This chapter discussed the methodology used in this study to collect and analyse data using the interpretive paradigm and case study design. The population and sampling procedures were also outlined. The research instruments were validated through pilot study which complemented the worthiness of the findings. Ethics of the research were also considered in this chapter. The researcher collected the data through interviews,

observation and document analysis and tables and narratives were used to present and analyse the data which is reflected in detail in chapter four.

CHAPTER 4: Data presentation and interpretation

4.1 Introduction

The study is aimed at understanding the experiences of female secondary school heads in Zimbabwe. Data were generated from three female secondary school heads in their natural settings, that is, in the schools. The major data generation techniques used were interviews, supplemented by observation and document analysis. Data are presented on each of the three women leaders using pseudonyms, first separately as cases 1, 2 and 3, after which a cross-case analysis that incorporates a discussion based on the literature reviewed is presented to bring out similarities and differences between the three participants in chapter five. Each case is presented according to the themes that emerged from the participants' personal accounts during the study. Of note is that all the names used in this study are fictitious. To have a clear picture of the participants, their biographies, experiences and characteristics are summarised in Tables 4.1 and 4.2 below. An explanation of the contents of each table is also given below:

4.1.1 Who are the three female school heads?

Table 4.1: Biographical data and experience

Biographical Data				Experience (years)			
School	Head	Age	Professional qualifications	As a junior teacher	As Senior teacher	As Deputy head	As School head
A	Mrs Moyo	53	Bachelor of educational Administration degree; Masters in Educational Management	5	1	1	23
B	Mrs Sibanda	52	Bachelor of educational Administration degree	4	12	1	11
C	Mrs Toga	52	Bachelor of educational Administration degree	15	3	1	11

Source: Primary data

The three participants are identified using pseudonyms: for school A (Mrs Moyo), for school B (Mrs Sibanda) and for school C (Mrs Toga). Table 4.1 shows that the three participants are almost of the same age. The relevance of the table is discussed under the sections that look at the experiences and perceptions of the different participants.

To understand these women's issues better, I found it necessary to also look at several other characteristics as summarised below:

Table 4.2: Characteristics of the qualitative sample

Characteristic	Mrs Moyo	Mrs Sibanda	Mrs Toga
District area Urban	Y	Y	N
Rural	N	N	Y
Type of school Day-secondary school	Y	Y	Y
Boarding secondary school	Y	N	N
Size of school Female teachers	40	21	7
Male teachers	14	10	3
No academic staff	12	5	1
Students	1875	1305	370
Parental status Mother	Y	Y	Y

Source: Primary data   Key: Y- yes; N –no

Table 4.2 shows the characteristics of the three participants and their schools. Of interest in the table above is the fact that the data seems to reflect that the size of the enrolment maybe influenced by the location of the school. School A, which was in a low density suburb neighbourhood had more students than the other two, while school B in a high density suburb had more students than school C which is in a rural setup. Also another element to note is that in each of the schools shown in Table 4.2, there are more female than male teachers. Below, a summary of the themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories that emerged from Mrs Moyo's narratives is presented.

Case 1-Mrs Moyo's story

Table 4.3: Summary of themes for Mrs Moyo

THEMES (FROM SUB-QUESTIONS)	SUB-THEMES	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGORIES
4.2 Influence of socialisation on career choices **(Theme 1)**	4.2.1 Induction into leadership through primary socialisation	4.2.1.1 Early socialisation	4.2.1.1.1 Family position influence
			4.2.1.1.2 Family member influence
	4.2.2 Induction into leadership through education	4.2.2.1 Secondary socialisation	4.2.2.1.1 Iron sharpens iron
			4.2.2.1.2 Life after secondary school
4.3 Career progression **(Theme 2)**	4.3.1 Perceptions	4.3.1.1 Induction into leadership through different perceptions	4.3.1.1.1 Competence and motivation
			4.3.1.1.2 Morning wellness check
			4.3.1.1.3 The place of young, inexperienced female heads in the community
			4.3.1.1.4 Parents' views on woman leadership
			4.3.1.1.5 Token of appreciation
			4.3.1.1.6 Dealing with students' indiscipline
	4.3.2 Experiences	4.3.2.1. School headship	4..3.2.1.1 Leaders develop leaders
			4.3.2.1.2 Joining the community of school heads
			4.3.2.1.3 Getting direction from a subordinate as a way of induction
4.4 Challenges and opportunities **(Theme 3)**	4.4.1 Challenges	4.4.1.1 A frustrated female head	4.4.1.1.1 Lack of staff support
			4.4.1.1.2 An unreceptive staff and community
		4.4.1.2 Family issues	4.4.1.2.1 Work and family demands
			4.4.1.2.2 Need for family support
		4.4.1.3 Surviving strategies	4.4.1.3.1 Balancing work and family responsibilities
			4.4.1.3.2 Joining social clubs and functions
			4.4.1.3.3 Community involvement in school functions
			4.4.1.3.4 Maturing as a female leader
			4.4.1.3.5 Mitigating challenges from teachers
			4.4.1.3.6 Dealing with ill-disciplined students
	4.4.2 Opportunities	4.4.2.1 Social life of a school leader	4.4.2.1.1 Benefits of being a leader
		4.4.2.2 School achievements	4.4.2.2.1 Academic progress
			4.4.2.2.2 Sports achievements
			4.4.2.2.3 Culture of togetherness
		4.4.2.3 Grooming females	4.4.2.3.1 Grooming the girl child for leadership
			4.4.2.3.2 Grooming female teachers for leadership

Table 4.3 reflects all the data collected about Mrs Moyo's experiences and perceptions in terms of her career choices. The data are discussed under different themes as set out below:

4.2 Influence of socialisation on career choices (Theme 1)

This section explains how Mrs Moyo's choice of a career seems to have been influenced by different people during her early years of education up to tertiary level. It considers the influential factors, such as early and secondary socialisation.

4.2.1 Induction into leadership through early socialisation

In this context, primary socialisation involved the role played by the immediate family to prepare the participant for a leadership career.

This section looks at the influence of family members and family position on the participant's choice of a career.

4.2.1.1 Family member influence

Mrs Moyo's narrative shows that she took after her father. She was inspired by him and he trained her by engaging her in his 'clothes-making' business as reflected in the excerpt below:

> My father wanted me to be a business woman, something I did not manage to do in my life. He would make sure that during every school holiday my elder sister and I assisted his workers in the shop. Also he would assign us to do things such as sewing buttons on or pressing sewn clothes and at times cutting out garments or writing a progress report for the day.

The excerpt shows that the participant helped a lot in her father's shop. She was even trained on how to write reports, a skill which turned out to be useful later in her own leadership. Again, she spoke of her father's influence as follows:

> Unlike my mother, father did not have much interest in gardening, though he would encourage us to water it in order for us to have fresh vegetables always. I understand now that maybe it was because he was a very busy man who tried to balance his work with his shop demands. He encouraged all of us to work and I remember we used to complain with my other siblings that father was too strict because he would not take it lightly if he found anyone not at home.

Mrs Moyo was being trained to be responsible and it looks like she enjoyed it, although she saw her father as more of a strict man. The father wanted his children to be focused

and work as hard as himself, something the children, probably because of age, may not have understood. Although Mrs Moyo did not say a lot about her mother, in our conversations, she clearly learned some important things from her in her childhood years:

> My mother was very quiet but hardworking. We used to have a lot of garden produce because that was her special area. I also remember her saying … *mabhuku ndiye murume wako wekutanga zvimwe zvoteera* [education is your first husband then the rest will follow]. I kept her words until now and it always gives me strength whenever I am down.

It is clear from the excerpt that Mrs Moyo was inspired by her mother to some extent. As we walked around the school, she showed me a very big and beautiful school garden in which she demonstrated a lot of interest. "Almost every day, I come to the garden, especially in the morning before school starts. I love gardening." After this confession, I understood where the interest could have come from – the mother was a gardener and may have influenced her daughter to become a gardener, although it seemed like Mrs Moyo did not stay with her mother that often while growing up.

Mrs Moyo also added that, through her father, she came to know Mrs Brown (not her real name) who also seemed to have inspired her a lot:

> I used to feel proud whenever I accompanied a coloured woman, Mrs Brown, to Harare on business issues. We would spend the whole day offering catering services at some big functions in Harare and would tell my friends about it when college opened. I liked it more than spending time in my father's sewing shop (laughing) but it is only now that I realise my father was trying to equip me with life skills.

The quote reveals that Mrs Moyo's holidays were often busy. Besides being in her father's sewing shop, she also seems to have assisted with catering services. She further described her position in the family, which may also have contributed to her career choices.

4.2.1.2 Family position influence

Mrs Moyo is the second born in a family of five children. The first child is a girl and she explained that:

There was a wide age gap between us and the other three siblings and as a result, my sister and I used to do all the work that was expected of us. Because most of the time we were staying with our father and had no maid, it meant that all the cooking, cleaning and clothes washing were to be done by us. It was not because my father could not afford to pay a maid, but he wanted us to work, something which was not easy to combine with school work.

From the extract, it appears as if the participant was trained from a tender age to do different jobs. Furthermore, the extract shows that since Mrs Moyo and her sister were the eldest, they had to shoulder all the household chores, leaving them with little time for their studies. She added that:

Although we were in town where we did not fetch water or firewood, we had no quality time with friends. We would only play when father was still at work; once he was back, no one was expected to get out of the house. He wanted to see everyone's homework before bed time and for him, sleeping time for the children was not later than eight at night. He did not want us to disturb him during the eight o'clock news hour.

The narrative shows that although her father seemed like a busy man, he was attentive to his children's education. She continued:

I remember during the holidays when we were in secondary school, my sister and I, my father used to call us in the evening to come and listen to the news. He used to say, 'You must know what is happening in your country; you are now adults.' We would sit and listen because at times he would ask us what was said. Even when he was not around we would listen to the news and report to him when he was back.

Evidently, the father was intent on having his children keep abreast with the current affairs in the country. However, it is not clear that the children enjoyed it because from the sound of it, they could have been forced to do it. It was interesting when Mrs Moyo revealed that:

I was too young to notice some of these things but I think my father was a politician (laughing). It's only that he was not doing it openly because during that time, politicians were detained in prisons. Also, I want to believe that it was the reason why he ended up being the first town clerk of Chitungwiza. If it were these days, I am sure we would have been people of high class, but it looks like things were not very rosy for us, although I cannot say we were poor, no. Of course, we were seen as better people in the community.

From Mrs Moyo's statement, she is not sure how her father became a town clerk. Also, she considered her family to be more working class, even though the father was a town clerk. However, the influences of the family on her leadership career may not be far off. Education also seems to have inspired her as discussed below.

4.2.2 Induction into leadership through education

This section explains how Mrs Moyo appears to have also been influenced by her primary, secondary and tertiary education into leadership.

4.2.2.1 Secondary socialisation

There are numerous secondary socialisation agents that can influence one's career choice. In this context, I, as the researcher, was interested in how the participant was influenced by different people during her time at school.

4.2.2.1.1 Iron sharpens iron

Mrs Moyo never held any leadership position as a primary school learner but there were a few woman teachers whom she admired during her time in primary school:

> The whole of my primary education I was never taught by a female teacher, but it was my wish to have a woman as my teacher. There was a certain grade four teacher – Mrs Maruva (not her real name) I used to like her so much. She was tall, massive and very smart. She was our volleyball trainer. I always wanted to walk close to Mrs Maruva when going for volleyball training. She ended up assigning me and the other girl to carry training equipment and we felt very proud.

The excerpt shows that part of Mrs Moyo's inspiration might have come from her interactions with female teachers, such as Mrs Maruva. Although Mrs Moyo did not say clearly that she wanted to be like that particular teacher, it is evident from the way she described her that she admired her a lot, which might, somehow, have influenced her career choice and leadership aspirations. Her secondary school life improved in terms of leadership experiences as indicated in the following quote "… I was appointed the assistant group leader in form three and that was it till I finished form four."

Furthermore, she described how her secondary Home Economics female teacher was very strict but she admired the teacher's character. The teacher's character was a demonstration of authority and being in charge, which also might be the reason why she was attracted to Home Economics (H/E) as her major area of study. She recounted as follows:

> Miss Jaunda (not her real name), my H/E teacher at secondary school, was not a very nice person in general, but I had no problem with her. She was full of authority. I could see controlling skills within her and she was strict and serious most of the time. She had no time to joke with students. I was very good at sewing because of exposure to these things so she would always refer to my work as an example of good work but she never gave me any leadership role (laughing).

An analysis of the above segment suggests that Mrs Moyo clearly associated power and authority with control and strictness as portrayed by Miss Jaunda. Furthermore, Mrs Moyo disclosed that, "I was a very quiet person which could be one of the reasons why I was not often given leadership responsibilities or positions during my learning." Foregoing analysis seems to provide some evidence that she was somewhat influenced by the female teachers both at primary and secondary school. She further explains her tertiary life as described in the next section.

4.2.2.1.2 Life after secondary school

In general, Mrs Moyo spoke very little about her tertiary life experiences. Responding to the question on how she became a teacher she said:

> Up to now I do not even know how I became a teacher, maybe because it was one of the noble professions which were on the market during our time. I just remember accompanying my friend to one of the teachers' colleges to submit her application letter and I ended up applying also. What really pushed me, I don't know.

A close analysis of this narrative shows that the participant never planned to become a teacher, even though she described the job as noble. It looks like she was motivated by a friend without actually realising it. She continued:

> When I went to teachers' college, life was not very exciting, although I cannot say it was boring. I had a number of friends. When I went for teaching

practice, I went with two of my female friends and two male students. That was the most exciting part of my training that I can still remember. We would go to town for our shopping every month-end. Our school was very close to the main road and it was because of my father's request that I was deployed there. He would visit me frequently, although I did not like it very much (laughing).

Although Mrs Moyo did not have much to say about her time in college, she seemed to be excited about the time she spent doing her teaching practice. What was not to be revealed here is the reason why she did not like her father's frequent visits while she was on her teaching practice. However, she later disclosed that:

Before end of that year, I fell pregnant and I did not tell any authority about it except my friends till schools closed in December. Knowing my father very well, soon after closing schools I just decide to go straight to my boyfriend who was living in the same neighbourhood. When I did not return home after schools had closed, my father looked for me until he found me. I don't know how he traced me because I did not tell even my sister but I think he was watching me closely (laughing).

Mrs Moyo knew that her father was not going to take it lightly and that could be the reason why she did not go home straight when she fell pregnant. Yet it looks like the father knew about all her movements making it easy for him to trace her. This also could explain the reason why she was not comfortable with her father's regular visits. She further recounted:

I never saw my father fuming the way he did when he discovered that I was pregnant. He almost beat my boyfriend before turning to his father and said, '*Kana uchida mwanasikana wangu mwanakomana wako anofanira kumira nekuti achiri mudiki kuti anzi mudzimai wemunhu, anofanira kudzokera kuchikoro'* [if you are interested in my daughter your son will have to wait because she is too young to be someone's wife and she needs to go back to school]. I really disappointed him and I felt very bad because he was shaking and sweating.

The father was so emotional and upset that he wanted to beat up the boyfriend. Mrs Moyo's narration also seems to imply that she might have been still young when she had her first pregnancy. Also, it looks like she regretted what she did. She added:

He took me home and three months after giving birth, he sent me to a one-year executive secretarial course, which I did while staying with him. Soon after completing the secretarial course, he sent me back to college to

complete my teacher training. I was more focused when I went back and was then living with my in-laws. I thank my father because I managed to finish off my studies and graduated.

The account might suggest that the father wanted her child to have a professional qualification before she got married. The participant seems appreciative of the effort that her father made to ensure that she completed her teacher training programme.

In summary, the data presented so far suggests that the participant was inspired by a number of people to pursue her education. These included her parents and some of her teachers. Her father and Mrs Brown involved her in their businesses, which somehow inspired her to take up Home Economics as her area of specialisation. Some of her teachers also seem to have inspired her along the way. In the next section, I examine Mrs Moyo's account of how she advanced as a qualified teacher.

4.3 Career progression (Theme 2)

This part of the study covers the time Mrs Moyo worked as a junior qualified teacher up to the time she became a school head.

4.3.1 Mrs Moyo's perceptions of leadership

In our discussion, Mrs Moyo explained how she perceived middle leadership as she took me through her various experiences. The narrative shows how she was influenced by the induction she received from different people during her time as a middle leader.

4.3.1.1 Induction into leadership through different people

The data in Table 4.1 shows how Mrs Moyo had only taught for five years as a junior teacher after graduating from the teachers' college before being promoted. She said,

> … before promotion, I used to be an H/E classroom teacher. I did not think of any promotion because that is the time when I was busy producing babies (laughing). I didn't even want to be assigned any duty besides my teaching load. To me, it was like leadership was full of unnecessary stresses.

The quote above shows how Mrs Moyo did not aspire to have any leadership post after obtaining her teaching certificate. She appeared to be satisfied with being an ordinary classroom teacher and a mother.

She highlighted that, "I remember my Head of Department (HOD) hardly delegated to her subordinates any tasks, for instance, standing in for her at subject area meetings even within the station. She trusted no one, even though she was not very harsh." Mrs Moyo further explained that:

> When I asked one of the women why the HOD was like that, she said, 'she believes that women are jealous of her so they can do anything to engineer her downfall.' I remember one time when she fell ill and she left the departmental keys with the woodwork male teacher. For anything we wanted as H/E teachers, he would open the inner office for us and made sure he was inside while you got whatever you wanted, and you would record and sign in his own record book.

The narrative provides some confirmation on how the particular HOD did not seem to trust her female colleagues. However, the fact that the woodwork male teacher also remained in the room while they collected their materials might suggest that he did not trust them either. However, there was something Mrs Moyo learned from those experiences with the HOD.

4.3.1.1.1 Competence and motivation

Mrs Moyo got motivated by her HOD's report which showed that she was competent. She went on to talk about her HOD as follows:

> I worked with her for about three years before she got promoted to another school. Although I learned very little from my HOD in terms of leadership skills, I worked with her well and she was a hard worker. She wrote me very good teaching reports, which led to my appointment as HOD after her. The H/E teachers really motivated me because I did not want the post and they were very cooperative. We worked together well and used to have our own departmental workshops.

What is reflected in the extract above is that Mrs Moyo got promoted as a result of her competence at work and her motivation to work with the team of H/E teachers. She still indicated that she was not interested in the promotion. She added that, "…we would

take turns to make presentations during the workshop because I also wanted other female teachers to have a feel of being in charge. People used to like it so much and some of those teachers are now school heads. These were the people who encouraged me until it got into me."

The preceding section seems to suggest that although the participant was not interested in the post at first, she was keen to groom other female teachers into leadership through workshop presentations. Besides being motivated by other colleagues, Mrs Moyo pointed out the importance of relations and togetherness as characteristics of female leadership that scored success and achieved goals. In her words:

> Women leaders are associated with the physical development and maintenance of schools ... and I always tell people around, both females and males, that if we work together as a family we will succeed. There is no way a school head can work on her/his own and be effective. The truth is we need each other for the organisation to operate efficiently.

From the statement above, it looks like Mrs Moyo emphasises the point of cooperation in the organisation. She clarified her belief that everyone had a role to play in the development of the school. She continued to emphasise the importance of working together and family orientation in an organisation through interacting with subordinates.

4.3.1.1.2 Morning wellness check

Her concept of togetherness appears to be the foundation even at the school she is heading currently. I observed that Mrs Moyo stood by the gate in the morning to greet staff members and students as they came in and she described this clearly when she explained, "… it is a wellness checking procedure for everyone". From the observations I made while I was at the gate with her, several female and a few experienced male teachers were answering back with smiles and some would even exchange one or two jokes with the head. The following is a typical conversation between Mrs Moyo and one of her teachers:

> **Mrs Moyo**: Good morning Annah (not real name)
> **Annah**: Morning ma'am and how are you today?
> **Mrs Moyo**: I am quite ok dear.

Annah: Yaah I can see that winter is still on (they both laughed, because the head put on a heavy jacket that day even though the weather was quite warm – it was summer time actually).

On the contrary, I also noticed that there were some young male teachers whose responses, after being greeted, were hardly audible; their faces were quite serious. From the above observations, I thought that there were some teachers who were not as appreciative of her as school head, though her explanation for the behaviour was not exactly in line with what I thought when she said, "… some of these young men and women have their own social problems, which they bring to work. In fact, it needs a mother's eye to see that."

The school head seems to suggest that she was able to identify some of the young teachers' problems because she was a mother who could easily see change of behaviour in children. She emphasised on women's roles when she narrated experiences of her very first year as a school head in the section below.

4.3.1.1.3 The place of young, inexperienced female heads in the community

Mrs Moyo narrated her experiences when she first joined the community as a school head. She revealed that:

> When I got the post of school head, after my first application … the area Education Officer (EO) used to call the young school heads by their first names during meetings. There were only three female secondary heads in the district then, and we would be assigned to do catering duties or writing minutes during the meetings.

The quotation gives the impression that, even the authorities may not have expected much of a meaningful contribution from the young female heads, thus assigning them to do traditionally feminine roles, such as catering and minute taking. Closely related to this was Mrs Moyo's observation when she stated that:

> There were quite a number of male school heads, who were even younger than us, who were attending the meetings while our duty was to make sure that the EO and other male counterparts were comfortable during the meetings' deliberations in terms of food.

This comment suggests that Mrs Moyo and her other female colleagues were not treated as equals with men in leadership, even by education officials in the system. However, an important matter of concern was how they were going to know what was discussed during the meetings. In response to that question she said, "… when we joined the meeting after cooking, the EO just said, 'we did not discuss much while you were away … you will read it in the minutes.'" To consolidate her facts, Mrs Moyo added, "…even the other male counterparts would ask such questions as … why don't you request to be in meetings so that some female teachers can be asked to cook for us because you lose a lot?"

Mrs Moyo's explanations seemed to justify that not all men had a negative attitude towards them as women leaders, for there were some, who felt that they were supposed to attend the meetings in full like all the other school heads. She further elaborated:

> …because we were young and also excited that we were some of the few female secondary school heads, we did not mind at all and thought we were being favoured and noticed by the Education Officer. It's only after some years that I realised that no, we were just being taken as place holders in those schools because most of the time we were told what to do by those authorities. There were quite a number of things that we were not allowed to implement or make decisions on unless authorised by the Education Officer of the area.

What appears to be implied in the interview excerpt is that, even the EO seemed to have no confidence in the particular women school heads' capabilities and performances. According to Mrs Moyo, even some parents had their own perceptions about women in leadership. She showed a lot of concern when she narrated an incident she was involved in with some parents at the school she currently heads.

4.3.1.1.4 Parents' views on woman leadership

Mrs Moyo explained how she handled students' indiscipline cases and how some parents perceived it. For serious cases, Mrs Moyo indicated that "… I would call the learners' parents so as to find out the type of parents the child had." She recounted one

incident when she called the parents after their girl child misbehaved at school. She had this to say:

> The fact that this school is right near the city centre means that students are very difficult to control especially day scholars. I heard a lot of bad stories about them from people who worked in town. This even included taking off uniforms before they reached home, dating older men, drug taking and also fighting over girls or boys. I was given one of the girls' name and decided to call the parents.

She shared the above sentiments showing concern, which might imply how she felt as a parent. She admitted that students were causing problems at the school. She went on with her story and added that:

> … when I called the parents of this particular girl, I was shocked. The mother was even defending the child's bad behaviour saying, '… *misikanzwa yevana vachiri kukura zvinopera* [that is how children behave, they will grow out of it]'. The father even blamed me by saying, 'I told people that this school is too big for you, *panoda murume chaiye pano* [a real man is needed here]. You can't even control our children, more so a girl'. That only showed that some men still perceive women in positions of authority as weak, as if we are just place holders in these offices. Our promotions are not taken as genuine promotions, but just favours.

From the excerpt above, it appears as if there were some parents who were not happy with her leadership purely on the basis of her gender. The above parent (father) also seems to believe that females are not able to handle big schools and also expected Mrs Moyo to be able to control girls in a better way than boys. However, not all parents were against her as shown below:

4.3.1.1.5 Token of appreciation

Some praises, which were recorded in the School Development Association (SDA) minutes on different issues, showed how happy some parents were with Mrs Moyo's leadership. For example, one of the parents was recorded to have said, "… *chikoro chino chachinja kubva zvauya mai Moyo, dai vaX vaidzoka vaishamisika* [this school has changed a lot since the coming of Mrs Moyo; if Mr X (the real name was provided) was to come back, he was going to be shocked]." Another parent echoed that, "… we

can see where our fees are going now, *paya dzaingodyiwa* [during the former leadership, the funds were being abused]."

The quotes show that Mrs Moyo was hired soon after a male head had left the school. However, the expressions also show how some parents appreciated Mrs Moyo's leadership and the developments she made at the school. For example, for the good results, Mrs Moyo said, "… the parents bought me that clock on the wall as a token of appreciation for excelling in different disciplines." Therefore, this could mean that there were some parents who supported and liked her leadership even in terms of discipline, as discussed below:

4.3.1.1.6 Dealing with student indiscipline

In dealing with misbehaving students, one parent suggested that:

> … students with serious cases must be expelled from school so that they do not spoil some good students here. It should be done after engaging their parents and the school disciplinary committee.

This action was taken once, according to the discipline record book, when some male students were found taking drugs during break time. Mrs Moyo explained that, "… the mentioned students were expelled from school after a number of warnings …" and this was supported by what was reflected in the discipline book on the 20th February 2017, where a student was given a warning:

> … the disciplinary committee sat down and looked at Jabulani's (not the real name) reported case of bullish behaviour. After looking at the boy's clean record of good behaviour before, the committee just decided to give him some warnings and a punishment.

Also, another warning recorded on the 20th June 2017, indicates that,

> Three form four boy students (names were recorded) were found at the girls' dormitories and were punished severely as a first and last warning.

She added that, "Not all parents see me as weak; some are quite happy with the change in students' behaviour at this school."

The information from the discipline record showed that students were not just summarily expelled from school without warnings. Information from the SDA minute book also indicated that there were some parents who were concerned with the welfare of their children when they were at school. As a result, they wanted their children to be protected from bad influence by making sure that bad elements were removed from the school.

Although Mrs Moyo gave the impression that there was change of behaviour in her students, a group of students came without notice rushing from an examination room and nearly bumped into us as we were walking around the school. She had to stop them; some were even shouting in their mother tongue, something she said was a taboo at her school when she said:

> English is our medium of instruction here, any student who is found communicating in any other language will be punished. I even encourage teachers to be exemplary. All students who are found using their mother language will be punished.

Even after reminding them of the punishment, the noise did not stop completely, and she ended up assigning one of the boys to write down the names of the noise-makers and take the list to the deputy head.

From the foregoing discussion, it appears as if the deputy head was the one in charge of discipline at the school. The fact that the students continued to talk might mean that there was no strict punishment that discouraged students from such behaviour. To get a better understanding of Mrs Moyo's experiences in her leadership journey, we have to start from the time she was appointed HOD to the time she became a school head.

4.3.2 Mrs Moyo's leadership experiences

Mrs Moyo's experiences cover the journey from HOD, senior woman, deputy head and then school leader. These experiences start from the time when she joined her husband in the Midlands province, before being posted back to Mashonaland province upon promotion and then back to Midlands where she was at the time of this research.

4.3.2.1 School leadership

The participant took me through her leadership journey, that is, how she was prepared for leadership.

4.3.2.1.1 Leaders develop leaders

The data suggest that Mrs Moyo got leadership preparation from her immediate leaders, who gave her opportunities to carry out administrative tasks, long before her promotion to school leadership. This is revealed in the excerpt below:

> While I was an HOD, the school head [male] used to send me to attend workshops that had to do with management. After the attendance, I would report back to the management team in the form of staff development workshops. This groomed me, built confidence and courage in me, which I think led to my promotion to senior woman [teacher] position (a position given to someone who assists the deputy head). I worked for only two years as an HOD before being promoted to senior teacher at the same school in Midlands.

Mrs Moyo's narrative shows that she got most of her grooming from male school leaders. Another critical finding is the fact that she appeared to have built confidence through practice. She added, "I moved to deputy head very fast, after just a year."

4.3.2.1.2 Joining the community of school heads

After being a deputy head for a reasonably short period of time in the Midlands province, she applied for a school head position in Mashonaland and got it. Mrs Moyo explained that:

> At the age of twenty-seven, I had my last child, the fourth one and I became a school head at a relatively young age of thirty. It was the time when secondary school leadership was a new ground to tread for females. I had all my children before taking up the actual school leadership post. This helped me to concentrate on my work better without going for long breaks, such as maternity leave.

From the discussion, it appears as if women in secondary school leadership were relatively few at the time that Mrs Moyo got promoted. Though she did not say openly, why women were not very visible in leadership, she seems to suggest that child bearing

contributes to women's slow career progression. She further explained her first experiences.

4.3.2.1.3 Getting direction from a subordinate as a way of induction

As a female school head, Mrs Moyo was made to stand guided by a male subordinate at her new school in Chitungwiza. As she put it:

> When I got the post as a school head, the EO for Chitungwiza came two weeks after my appointment and introduced me to the staff. He told me to rally behind the deputy head (male) because he was the one who was used to the community and staff. I thought it was a good idea, but only realised much later that the deputy head was now sort of leading me in everything. It was not easy for me to reclaim my position as a school head. I could feel the conflict when it came to decision-making by us as administrators. In the end, it was a battle of control and power.

Mrs Moyo's excerpt highlights how she was supposed to be assisted by her deputy head, since she was new in the area. However, she makes a strong point about how the situation created conflict and tension between her and the deputy. The next section discusses more challenges and opportunities that she encountered in the position.

4.4 Challenges and opportunities

This section covers the challenges that the participant came across and also how she solved some of those problems. Also, she highlights some opportunities that school heads encounter in the execution of their duties after the presentation of challenges.

4.4.1 Mrs Moyo's challenges in leadership: A frustrated school head

Mrs Moyo outlined the challenges she experienced when she climbed up the career ladder. She gave details of the challenges she encountered at her new school when she moved to the deputy head position before her promotion to Chitungwiza. She apparently did not get the support that she expected from the members of staff at the new school.

4.4.1.1.1 Lack of staff support

Mrs Moyo's movement to her new post as a deputy head, was not an easy ride as shown below:

> I worked as a senior teacher at my first school just for a year before transferring, on promotion, to another school where I became a deputy head. Again, at that new school, I worked for a year. It was not a very smooth road for me, though very short. I had problems with some of the male teachers who could not accept me as their new deputy head. They really queried my appointment because there were a number of teachers at that particular school, who had also applied for that same post.

From her descriptions, Mrs Moyo moved very fast from her senior woman post to deputy head position. It looks like she met resistance from the male teachers, who were not cooperative. She further elucidates:

> For instance, two of the male teachers asked me openly how I was appointed. When I told them they said the interviews were not fair because they thought they were much better than me. One of them even told me that, at one time, when the deputy head fell ill, he was the one who took up the post for almost two months. I am sure they wanted to frustrate me so that I give up the post. One good thing was that, my head [former head] was very supportive and encouraged me to apply for school head post in 1994, when Mashonaland posts were advertised. I applied, got it and moved. It was a great relief for me because the stress was getting into me slowly.

From the extract, one could be led to believe that there were some male teachers who wanted to demoralise the participant. However, the support that Mrs Moyo got from her former school head encouraged her to go for the school leadership post. Furthermore, she explained more challenges that she faced after receiving her appointment as a school head, especially from the staff and community.

4.4.1.1.2 An unreceptive staff and community

The staff, together with the community, showed a negative attitude towards her as she described below:

> I had my first experience, as a school head at a well-known school, which was named after a certain government minister in Chitungwiza (a small town

about 30km from the city of Harare). The local community of that school were known to be unfriendly to the school heads that had been there before me.

Furthermore, Mrs Moyo gave more details of what she heard about the school:

> I heard that if the community did not like the school head, they would open the school garden gate and drive their goats in, just to provoke the school head. The goats would eat all the green vegetables.

These extracts, together, show the extent to which the particular community would go just to frustrate the school heads. Mrs Moyo went on to describe this type of community further:

> The community was known to be very hostile, they would throw school heads out of the offices and lock [office doors]. My father, being a former town clerk of that place, had a clear history about the school so he encouraged me to stand firm, of which I did. I was afraid of everyone, including the deputy head that happened to be so mean to me. I would go back home miserable every day and at times I would cry behind closed and locked doors. This went on for some time until I moved from Harare to reside at the school with most of my staff members … things began to change for the better.

From her narrations, it appears Mrs Moyo was uncomfortable with everyone at her school. Also, it appears as if her relationship with the staff members improved when they stayed together. In the following excerpt, it is apparent that she had her own share of challenges:

> … I remember at one time, when almost all the staff members' houses were broken into during the weekend. It caused a lot of commotion at the school, as people tried to rationalise on why mine and a few others were the only ones left. It was not easy for me to prove my innocence before the staff members. I really worked hard to get the trust back.

It is clear from this quote that even the staff members at the school did not trust her. She had to develop strategies to survive, which are discussed under surviving strategies (4.3.1.3). In addition, she also highlighted work-family conflict as another challenge she faced because her family lived in another province.

4.4.1.2 Family issues

Right from the start, Mrs Moyo showed a lot of concern for her family, especially after being promoted.

4.4.1.2.1 Work - Family demands

As the work-family conflict emerged more and more as an area of concern for her, I probed further to understand how she balanced family and work responsibilities.

4.4.1.2.2 Need for family support

Mrs Moyo indicated that her father and siblings supported her from the beginning of her career, as a school head. She, however, said, "…my husband was not very supportive at first, though not very much against it." Nevertheless, that was not the same with her in–laws especially the father-in-law as she disclosed:

> When I told my in-laws about my promotion, it did not go well with them, although my mother in-law did not comment. My father-in-law just said openly, 'These things break marriages. How can you separate yourself from these young children and your young husband?' I am sure my husband was afraid of his father because he did not say anything to support me. Maybe it was culturally correct for him to be quiet (laughing) because young ones are supposed to respect elders.

The discussion seems to indicate that Mrs Moyo's in-laws and her husband were not very supportive of her decision to become a school head. She further describes the possible challenges that were to emanate from her decision as indicated below:

> … because my new post was in another province, it meant that I had to leave my family in the Midlands Province while going back to Mashonaland. For sure it was not easy; it's true that societal expectations influence decisions, because I nearly gave up. When I told my husband about my second thought he encouraged me to take it up and showed a lot of support all of a sudden. Anyway, that was all I needed. To be honest, if only my husband had said no I was prepared to let go.

Clearly Mrs Moyo was aware of the consequences of her decisions and how cultural expectations sometimes stand in the way of women's development. The excerpt also illustrates the importance of family support (especially from a significant other) for women leaders. It is for that reason that Mrs Moyo later confided that the family should get first priority when making career decisions. She opined that:

> One's decisions should not affect her/his family negatively. Importantly, the husband and wife should agree on such big decisions so that they can

encourage and help each other during the execution of duties. In fact, it should be like that so that no one is blamed if anything goes wrong because of the decisions.

It is clear that the promotion to headship, somehow took a toll on Mrs Moyo and her family. She explained her challenges as follows:

After taking up the post, when we went home for holidays and I would cook *sadza* [thick porridge] for the family, my father in-law would always comment on the texture. Such comments as, 'I can tell it's the "headmaster" who cooked; it is hard because she is used to being hard on her subordinates'. Such comments used to annoy me a lot but with time I got used to it and I would just laugh it off. Inwardly, I just thought the old man was jealous because I was a leader while his son (my husband) was a subordinate at his workplace (laughing).

Mrs Moyo, however, appeared to take pride in growth and advancement. She further explained that, "… some do not feel comfortable when their wives get jobs that are higher than theirs." Although she did not point out that her husband might have had the same feelings, she emphasised that, "… most men are too proud to say it openly, as a result, they just discourage the wives by giving petty reasons."

Interestingly, what seemed to be a recurring theme here was the view that some men were not very comfortable to have wives who were leaders in their work places. What was not said here was the reason why some men might feel so, though she suggested that jealousy might sometimes account for that. Below, Mrs Moyo highlighted some of the strategies she used to mitigate the challenges.

4.4.1.3 Survival strategies

Mrs Moyo explained how she managed to balance her work and family tasks as a school head.

4.4.1.3.1 Balancing work and family responsibilities

While discussing how she navigated some of her challenges, Mrs Moyo also reflected on other factors that contributed to the invisibility of women in leadership:

Besides husband support, motherhood and family are the main factors that hinder women from applying for promotion. That's why I decided to apply for

leadership after bearing all my children, although they were still young to be separated from the mother. Through my own observations, single or widowed are in a better position than married ones who have young families, when it comes to decision-making on career promotions.

Mrs Moyo seems to think that family responsibilities are a major factor in women who consider leadership responsibilities. Taking me back to the time when she was first appointed as a school head, Mrs Moyo divulged that:

I got stressed the time that I was called for leadership because I was not expecting it even though I had applied for it. It meant leaving my four young children with my husband. It was really a tough decision to take.

The welfare of the family really challenged her decision-making to leadership:

My first child was in grade four, the second in grade three, the third in grade one and the last one was still in pre-school and they needed a minder... I had to ask my husband's sister to come and stay with the children ... I would travel back home every Friday so as to attend to the family needs, such as washing clothes, cleaning the house and replenishing food and other supplies. To make life easier for my family, I would prepare and pack relish for the whole week during weekend home visits, and every Sunday I would catch an afternoon bus back to work.

Cremer (2000) concurs that most women leaders often endure so many challenges, which are even worse for those with families. To her credit, Mrs Moyo was able to develop strategies to alleviate the pressure on her family, such as cooking and packing meals for the week. Mrs Moyo was, however, almost a victim of these pressures as she explained:

After three years of working away from my family, my husband started complaining; promotions can cost marriages. At one time he told me to leave the post because, according to him, it was costly both socially and financially. That happened to be the very year that I got a transfer to this [Midlands] province.

Her transfer to the current post is, by coincidence, what kept her in a leadership position. This was pure luck and coincidence.

4.4.1.3.2 Joining social clubs and functions

Speaking further of her coping strategies, Mrs Moyo related the importance of social clubs and functions:

> When I asked the village head to help find the people who broke into the teachers' houses, I was shocked when he told me that the culprits were his own sons who wanted to get rid of the teachers whom they believed to be proud and full of themselves … I had to apologise on behalf of the teachers for the situation to normalise. After a few months, I had to form social clubs at that school, which involved both staff members and the community, such as gardening and poultry projects; that is the time when things really changed for the better at the school.

Mrs Moyo seems to have prioritised community involvement as a strategy for uniting the community and school staff for the benefit of the school. She further elaborated that:

> I would encourage my staff to go to church where they lived [Chitungwiza] rather than to the city where their families were. I met resistance … but later several of them agreed. Quite often, my father would drive about thirty kilometres with my other siblings on Sundays to be with me at the church.

It would appear like Mrs Moyo was not very comfortable to meet the community on her own, and thus, invited both her family and staff for the church service in the community. She went on to say:

> It was easy for me to convince teachers and even the community on many issues, when I started staying with the staff. For instance, I would emphasise on things, such as the need to work together, supporting each other during times of crisis and so on. I would attend local funerals and at times would sleep over, like what neighbours usually do, comforting the bereaved. I would also go to their weddings with some staff members and that is how I won the support of the community at that school.

Gaining the support of the community seems to have come with some sacrifice on her part. She had to leave the comfort of her father's home (since he was a former town clerk) to go and stay in the small town and participate in community functions in order to gain the trust of the people, who were around her. From her narrative, family and community support and other essential elements were important for her as a female school head, as well as husband support mentioned before. In addition to the listed

strategies, the involvement of the community in the school programmes was also critical.

4.4.1.3.3 Community involvement in school functions

Mrs Moyo went on to explain another strategy she used to win the support of the community and even staff members:

> Also we put in place some committees which looked into different issues, such as school educational trips and family days and these included parents who would also accompany students when going out for trips. We formed new committees in the school and they were welcomed by both the parents and the staff. The committees managed to raise a lot of money, especially on family days where even students were helping with the selling of food and different items that they ordered from town.

This quote reinforces the importance of community involvement in the development of trust and loyalty. She further emphasised that:

> … by the time that I left that school, we were in very good relations with both the community and the staff. Maybe all the other male school heads, that had been to that school, lacked humility and patience, which is a quality found in most females. Patience pays … I had to go very low in order to be recognised by society. I also got family support at the time I needed it most.

Importantly, the findings so far suggest that family and community support may be critical factors for female leaders. Mrs Moyo seems to underscore the point that most women leaders may be humble and patient, a set of qualities that she demonstrated as chronicled below.

4.4.1.3.4 Maturing as a female leader

Before elaborating on the issues of her present school, Mrs Moyo began telling me about her experiences when she first headed a big urban school in Gweru (one of the ten provinces of Zimbabwe) and how she matured through that:

> When I transferred to Midlands province, I joined a big urban day school and people in that community did not like me because I was from a different province. Worse off, I was the first female head in the history of that school. The deputy head even went to the district office to complain that he could not work under a female boss. When I got to hear about it, I called the deputy

head and said to him, 'don't worry you are not going to work under me but we will be working together' (laughing).

The way that Mrs Moyo addressed her deputy head shows confidence and maturity. She treated the matter as just a correction that needed to be made. She added that, "I think it is not easy for male deputy heads to work well with incoming female leaders because this is the same problem that I faced in Chitungwiza." She had to find ways to work well with both the staff and the community. Furthermore, she said:

> To win the deputy head, at times I would give him a lift in my car when going out for sports or to town. I would make sure I ask for clarity on most of the issues so as to make him feel to be more knowledgeable than me. After a couple of months, we turned out to be very good friends and colleagues and he even started cooperating very well at work.

What came out from the excerpt is the tactful ways used by Mrs Moyo to win her deputy head, such as consulting him on most issues. Nevertheless, Mrs Moyo said:

> …during my tenure at the school, several school development projects were successfully completed. With great support and commitment from the parents, we planned and completed construction of a basketball pitch and a tennis court. Mind you, this was during my first year at the school and it did not go well with me when I was transferred from there to this school (laughing) because I wanted to show the community that I was a woman but could lead the school to great heights if we work together.

The discussion shows that Mrs Moyo worked hard to bring everyone close to her. Also she managed to put up some sports facilities for the school with the intention of proving to the parents that she could do it. Mrs Moyo also explained how she managed problems that emanated from her staff.

4.4.1.3.5 Mitigating challenges from teachers

Responding to the question about how she dealt with challenges from the teachers, Mrs Moyo indicated that:

> I talk to them as both a school head and as a mother – an element which is found in very few male leaders. I did it several times and it really worked. Most of these teachers' behaviour is changing now.

Although I noticed a different behaviour while I was with her at the gate, as discussed what she said above was evidenced by one of the young teachers, who came to her office while I was there. He was very humble and even softly passed some jokes to the head calling her 'mother'. She went on to ask him, "How is your wife at home?" He just said, "She is growing", and they both laughed. When he left the office, she said to me:

> The young man used to be very annoying and stubborn when he joined the school until I called him here and talked to him face-to-face about his unbecoming behaviour. From that day, the young man has changed completely, especially in the way he dresses, and even in the way he carries out his duties in general.

The critical finding that seems to emerge from the conversation is that there were some young teachers who had respect for her. Mrs Moyo also seems to believe that the talk that she had with the young teacher contributed to his change of behaviour. Besides dealing with mischievous teachers, Mrs Moyo explained how she also used similar strategies to reduce misbehaviour among students.

4.4.1.3.6 Dealing with ill-disciplined students

Responding to the ways of reducing bad behaviour among students, Mrs Moyo pointed out that:

> Most of the problems come from boys, both day scholars and boarders, and in some cases day school girls as well. There are a number of cases that are reported to the disciplinary committee almost every week. The staff members help in solving some of the problems through close monitoring during lessons. They must make sure that registers are marked thoroughly before teaching every day.

I, as a researcher, also noticed the emphasis on discipline in the opening meeting I attended where the deputy head stressed on the need for discipline among both students and the staff. He said, "… our students need a firm hand from us, especially these male students, who are really becoming a problem. We can only control them, if we show them good behaviour ourselves". To that effect, Mrs Moyo added that, "… you should monitor closely the students' attendance during lessons, especially boys …"

The opinions expressed by both the school head and the deputy head seem to indicate that male students were the ones who misbehaved more than the female ones. Another implication which comes out from the deputy head's statement is that there were some teachers who also misbehaved, which might make it difficult for them to control the students.

Mrs Moyo also clarified that, "…one of the ways to deal with naughty boys is to beat them at assembly while the other students are watching. This at least reduces mischief among the learners". The beating was evidenced by the log book where the school head signed after administering corporal punishment on a student. Interestingly, Mrs Moyo even revealed that, "… I have a prescribed 'tool' to use for corporal punishment and even the method of doing it as required by the Ministry Policy Circular No. P35".

Apparently, the Ministry is aware that there are problem children in schools, who need to be controlled through beating and had even prescribed a way of carrying it out. While Mrs Moyo expressed a lot of problems in the execution of her duties, she indicates, on a positive note, that there are opportunities that go with women leadership as indicated in the next section.

4.4.2 Opportunities for female school heads

In her different areas of operation, Mrs Moyo appears to face many difficulties as highlighted above. However, there are also opportunities that came her way as a female school head.

4.4.2.1 Community of practice and social activities

There are a number of social gatherings that are done by school heads where they play different roles as discussed below:

4.4.2.1.1 Benefits of being a leader

Mrs Moyo did not regret the time she spent far away from the family: "… my children grew up being very clever and responsible because of my absence and that's made them who they are today." In our discussion she indicated that all her children were

grown up, working and married, and she no longer had family challenges to balance with her work. While she observed that there was a lot of gender bias in their association as secondary school heads, she proudly said:

> I now enjoy my work as a leader more than before because my husband is now very supportive and when we go out for National Association of Secondary Heads (NASH) Conferences he always says, 'You deserve the break because you work so hard for the school'. I feel we are now recognised as women leaders and would travel to official functions where we would meet important people like the Minister of Education. I like such gatherings because we would share notes with other colleagues, both male and female.

This is in line with Perkin's (2011) belief that women leaders enjoy going out where they meet different people and see places. She believes that it is perfect time for women in positions of leadership to discuss and solve the challenges they meet in their careers. Mrs Moyo also wished to put herself on the map through good performance of the school.

4.4.2.2 School achievements

The school's success in academic and other disciplines is analysed below with the help of tables.

4.4.2.2.1 Academic progress

The results for both Ordinary Level (O' Level) and Advanced Level (A' Level) for the school are presented and discussed. Mrs Moyo openly admitted that there has been a lot of change at her school from the time she joined, in terms of teacher and student behaviour and their relationships. She had this to say: "… the good relationship between teachers and learners has led to great improvements in terms of students' O' Level performance". This is also confirmed by the pass rate analysis chart:

Table 4.4: Results analysis (O' Level)

YEAR	PASS RATE (%)	POSITION IN THE DISTRICT
2013	88%	8 out of 18
2014	89%	10 out of 18
2015	96%	5 out of 18
2016	98%	1 out of 18

Source: Primary data

The 2016 national examinations show that the school had the highest pass rate in Gweru district. In 2014, the year she joined the school, the pass rate percentage went up but the position of the school in the district was not as high. What it might mean is that in 2014, most schools performed well in the Ordinary Level (O' level) national examinations. However, the good results and district position were maintained from 2015. Evidence of achievements, in form of trophies and school certificate awards, lies on display in her office showing the dates they were obtained. Mrs Moyo further comments that, "… yearly we receive many trophies for excelling in different disciplines, such as sports and academics. This is another opening where we can beat men if we really work hard as women leaders." She said women leaders may prove their worth through good results in the schools they lead.

During the opening meeting which I attended as a non-participant observer, the good results were also highlighted by her deputy head: "… we expect our pass rate this year to be even higher than last year. We give all the credit to you our teachers." The teachers responded by clapping hands. After the meeting, we went to the office and the deputy head's words were further evidenced by the results analyses which were displayed on the walls in the head's office. Part of the analyses is shown below:

Table 4.5: Results analysis (A' Level)

YEAR	PASS RATE (%)	POSITION IN THE DISTRICT (Gweru)
2013	81%	8 out of 18
2014	88%	6 out of 18
2015	87%	7 out of 18
2016	89%	4 out of 18

The results show that the school competed fairly well with the other schools. When I asked the school head why the A' Level pass rate was lower than the O' Level one every year, she just said, "… it is because A' Level is more challenging." I could tell from the way she answered that she was not very comfortable with the subject, so we just dropped it and started discussing other areas that she succeeded in as a school head.

4.4.2.2.2 Sports achievements

Talking about sports, Mrs Moyo showed a lot of interest. She showed me a sports progress chart which was on display.

Table 4.6: Sports results

SPORTS ACHIEVEMENTS BY DISCIPLINE				
YEAR	AREA	DISTRICT POSITION N=18	REGIONAL POSITION N=20	AWARD
2014	Soccer	2	3	Trophy + $200
	Netball	3	NIL	$150
2015	Soccer	1	2	Trophy + Cert + $450
	Netball	2	2	Trophy + $400
	Hockey	5	NIL	NIL
2016	Soccer	3	NIL	$150
	Netball	3	NIL	$150
	Hockey	7	NIL	NIL
2017	Soccer	1	2	Trophy + Cert + $450
	Netball	2	3	Trophy + $200
	Hockey	6	NIL	NIL
	Tennis	3	NIL	$150
	Swimming	14	NIL	NIL
	Tsoro	16	NIL	NIL
	volley ball	4	NIL	$100
	chess	12	NIL	NIL

Key: Cert-certificate

Table 4.6 reflects a number of sporting activities available at the school. Mrs Moyo expanded as follows:

We participate in a number of disciplines at Gweru District level and in a few at regional levels. Most of our awards come from soccer and netball. Yes, here and there we scooped some prizes from other disciplines. It is not easy to sail through in some areas because there are schools out there that specialise in sports; they are ever at the grounds practising. Our students have limited chances to win in these elite sports. As you can see, all those disciplines written NIL, show that we did not participate at regional level.

Mrs Moyo revealed that her school is good at soccer, netball and tennis but not very competent in the other sport disciplines shown on the chart. She further explained:

Nowadays, we compete in traditional games, such as *nhodo* and *tsoro*, even traditional dances. From my observation, it looks like children from urban schools are bad performers in these games, maybe because of lack of exposure. It is a new ground for them to tread which was brought about by the 2017 New Curriculum, which demands that children be taught various games. That is the reason why there are more games for 2017 than the other years.

Mrs Moyo reflects that Gweru urban schools were not as good as rural schools in traditional games and dances because students in town were not familiar with the games or dances. She further indicated that, "… the money that those competitors bring to the school is used for field maintenance and refurbishment of the equipment used in different areas. However, part of the money is given to teams for their victory celebrations." What she said was evidenced by the newly painted posts and neatly constructed shades that I saw at the sport field. Mrs Moyo has other ways that she uses to emphasise on unity.

4.4.2.2.3 Culture of togetherness

To cultivate and strengthen the relationship between teachers and administrators, Mrs Moyo divulged that:

…we take our tea together as administrators and do the same thing with all invigilators and examination coordinators during examination time. With the other staff members, both academic and non-academic, I would pay morning visits to their work places regularly, especially in the mornings.

This is evident from my observation notes on two separate days that I shadowed Mrs Moyo. We visited different classes just to greet the teachers and doing her management rounds. For instance, at one of the classes she said to the teacher, "… I think your

students forgot to pick up papers around your block today." The teacher just laughed and sent all the students out to pick up the papers. That conversation meant that such informal settings could provide opportunity for the school head to address and remind teachers and staff of work issues. By the time we got to the last classroom, she looked tired though she claimed in the extract above that she did it quite often. In the same vein, this is also evidenced by the conversation below:

> **Cook**: Good morning ma'am
> **Head**: Morning dear, are you alright?
> **Cook**: I am ok thanks but I have a small problem
> **Head**: Let's hear if we can solve it
> **Cook**: My friend's father passed on the day before yesterday; may I go and attend his burial at the town cemetery?
> **Head**: No problem, that's alright, but did you correct that issue about today's lunch, which we discussed yesterday morning?
> **Cook**: Yes ma'am, everything is ok today.
> **Head**: Fine, arrange for a short workshop for your staff before the end of the week; don't worry I will provide the facilitators.
> **Cook**: Thank you ma'am (smiling and leaving the office).

The conversation suggests that there was something that did not go well in the catering department the previous day. From their talk, it became clear that the school head was setting up a workshop for cooks to improve cooking skills, which I felt was a very considerate way of solving problems rather than staff dismissal or disciplinary route because of incompetence. Before I even asked her, Mrs Moyo explained that:

> Some parents, including students, are not happy with the way some relishes are being prepared, so I want to engage a certain woman who offers catering services in town and has a diploma in tourism and hotel catering to have a workshop with all the cooks.

Another point from the excerpt is that Mrs Moyo did not want to disappoint the parents so she tried to keep the school standards high. Further to our discussion on the opportunities, Mrs Moyo identified another strategy that female heads could use to enhance visibility of women in school leadership.

4.4.2.3 Grooming female leaders

In this section, Mrs Moyo explained how she prepares both female teachers and girls for leadership posts in their future life.

4.4.2.3.1 Grooming the girl child for leadership

Responding to the question of how she groomed the girl child in her school, Mrs Moyo expresses her views thus:

> I would assign hard and challenging tasks to girls more than boys so as to instil confidence in them in preparation for leadership … I always tell girls that they are not different from boys except biologically, otherwise the brains are the same if not better … the fact that they can put ingredients together and come up with a good and healthy meal for the family, something which most men cannot do, shows that girls are smart.

Mrs Moyo grooms girls by giving them different tasks because she believes that girls were just as good as boys in performing duties. Furthermore, Mrs Moyo added that most girls lack confidence to take up leadership roles as she illustrated as follows:

> At one time, we appointed one of the girls, who was very good at English, to chair the debate competition, which was to be held here. To our disappointment, she did not come to school the following day … reason being she had started her monthly circle so she could not attend the session (laughing). She was good but I am sure she had no confidence to lead many students so she just thought of a way out.

What Mrs Moyo implied is that there is need to be deliberate about grooming girls so that they can be good leaders. Hence, she sees it as necessary to assign girls different leadership tasks, such as head girl or prefect posts, to boost their confidence and self-assurance. Female teachers are also on the spotlight for grooming at her school.

4.4.2.3.2 Grooming female teachers for leadership

Mrs Moyo described the female teachers at her school as follows: "… there are two groups of female teachers at this school. There are some who are willing horses. These ones ask for anything they will do without any excuse. The other group is of 'wheel-barrows'. They always need to be pushed and persuaded to do certain tasks." When I

asked Mrs Moyo how she caters for the two groups in terms of grooming them for leadership, she revealed that:

> When there are leadership workshops to be attended, I would send them or when all administrators are out on school business, I would just pick anyone to run the school during our absence without giving him/her a chance to say no, although I sometimes meet resistance, especially from those who always want to be pushed around (laughing).

Mrs Moyo believes that all teachers are potential school heads, hence the trust to leave any of them with the school. The 'wheel-barrows' are identified through their resistance when tasks are assigned to them. However, she further explained that:

> At first most of the teachers did not like me for that especially women because they argued that people have different talents so they must volunteer to do certain tasks. Knowing that people have different characters there are some who will never volunteer but just need to be jump started, even men. Once you do that they produce very good results. With time, some of the females thanked me for the exposure where they were taking leading roles among men at workshops. When they come back, I would ask the women or men who attended the workshops to facilitate similar ones at school level to further build confidence in them.

Of interest is that during our discussion, Mrs Moyo showed that even male teachers were also groomed to some extent, in the same manner as females. While Mrs Moyo claimed to groom female teachers for leadership, what seems anomalous is the list of HODs (All names and titles were provided, that is, Mr …/Mrs …/Miss …) which made it easy for me to identify the gender of the HODs:

Table 4.7: Heads of Departments (HODs)

AREAS OF SPECIALISATION FOR HODs	
DEPARTMENT	NAME OF HOD
1.Humanities	2 Males
2. Sciences	2 Males
3. Vocational and Technical (Voc-Tech)	Home Economics (Female) Other subjects (Male)
4. Languages	Female and Male
5. Sports and Mass displays	2 Males

Table 4.7 shows that there are only two women who are HODs, one for Home Economics and the other for the Languages department and the rest are males. Since

this is a very big school, there are two HODs in each department adding to a total of ten altogether. When Mrs Moyo realised that I was reading the list, she was quick to explain, "… I am still using the list I inherited from the former head," even as she claims to have been at the school since 2014. She further highlighted that:

> I told the females that if any of the HODs decides to go away then they must be prepared to take over, but some really refuse to be in any leading position. I have realised that women are good at complaining on paper that men oppress them but on the ground, women are really cowards when it comes to leading. At school level, for anything that needs to be done, women are the ones who are quick to suggest men as a way of avoiding being selected.

Mrs Moyo's sentiments reveal that women's oppression may not only come from men alone but sometimes it is also encouraged by women themselves through lack of confidence to do certain duties. Also, the fact that women are the ones to nominate men for particular tasks might be a sign that women may suffer from the belief that men are better than them at work.

In summary, the data on Mrs Moyo illustrate how the challenges she encountered in the Mashonaland Province were similar to those in the Midlands Province. For example, she met with resistance from both the staff and community in both provinces and evidently, she was the first female head at all the three schools she headed. However, her narratives also outlined a number of mitigation factors to the challenges she faced, such as involving both staff and community in projects and also in the organisation of school functions. More significantly, Mrs Moyo's narratives also identified some opportunities for her as a female leader, including social networking with other leaders and people in high positions, such as Ministers. Also she recognised the opportunities to produce good results as a way of marketing themselves and getting noticed as female school heads.

Case 2: Mrs Sibanda's story

The second case of Mrs Sibanda is hereby presented. The summary of the themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories that emerged from Mrs Sibanda's story is presented below:

Table 4.8: Summary of themes for Mrs Sibanda

THEMES (FROM SUB-QUESTIONS)	SUB-THEMES	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGOERIES
4.1 Impact of socialisation on career choices **(Theme 1)**	4.1.1 Induction in leadership through primary socialisation	4.1.1.1 Early socialisation	4.1.1.1.1 Life in the home
	4.1.2 Induction into leadership through education	4.1.2.1 Influence of schooling	4.1.2.1.1 Emerging as a leader
			4.1.2.1.2 Leadership in the secondary school
			4.1.2.1.3 Life begins at college
			4.1.2.1.4 Life as a student teacher
4.2 Career progression **(Theme 2)**	4.2.1 Experiences and Perceptions	4.2.1.1 Experiences	4.2.1.1.1 Life as a qualified junior teacher
			4.2.1.1.2 The rise in leadership
		4.2.1.2 Perceptions	4.2.1.2.1 Limited distributive leadership
4.3 Challenges and opportunities **(Theme 3)**	4.3.1 Challenges	4.3.1.1 Position held as a school head	4.3.1.1.1 An organised school head
			4.3.1.1.2 Misconduct of staff members
			4.3.1.1.3 Effects of school location
		4.3.1.2 Work and family clash	4.3.1.2.1 Lack of husband support
	4.3.2 Opportunities	4.3.2.1 Differences in power relations	4.3.2.1.1 Unfair distribution of power
		4.3.2.2 School success	4.3.2.2.1 Academic accomplishment
			4.3.2.2.2 Success and effectiveness of a woman leader
		4.3.2.3 Empowering females	4.3.2.3.1 Preparing women for leadership

The themes, sub-themes, categories and sub-categories above are used to analyse Mrs Sibanda's perceptions and experiences of school leadership. The first section focuses on how early socialisation influenced her professional journey.

4.1 Impact of early socialisation on career choices

I begin by unpacking Mrs Sibanda's life at home, to understand how she might have been influenced by it in her career choice.

4.1.1 Induction into leadership through primary socialisation

In this context primary socialisation refers to roles played by different people in imparting the norms and values of society to individuals while they are still young. Early socialisation is part of this discussion.

4.1.1.1 Early socialisation

This focuses on the role played by Mrs Sibanda's immediate family members in influencing her career decisions.

4.1.1.1.1 Life in the home

Mrs Sibanda is born into a family of six; four girls and two boys, with her being the fifth one as she narrates:

> … I am the youngest girl in my family and most of the work at home was done by my two elder sisters. The first and the last born in our family are boys. I grew up a spoiled girl on a farm where my father was the manager. That was something my other siblings always complained about because I did not care who was doing what. My mother would always give excuses for me when I was asked to do anything, such as, "… she is not well" or "she is too young to do it".

From this brief segment, it would be very difficult to conclude that family position influenced Mrs Sibanda's career choice. Mrs Sibanda does not seem to have had any responsibilities during her early childhood; moreover, she did not even appear to appreciate what her sisters were doing. She grew up on a farm where her father worked. She goes on to explain her schooling life as follows:

4.1.2 Induction into leadership through education

This section reflects on how Mrs Sibanda may have picked up the leadership key during her years as a student.

4.1.2.1 Influence of schooling and emerging as a leader

Mrs Sibanda attended a primary farm school in a farm where her father worked as one of the managers:

> …before going to school, I used to admire others who were of school going age and it was unfortunate that during our time there were no pre-schools, you would only go to school at the age of not less than seven years. The favour was on the white man's child who had access to education at a very early age. So you can imagine my first day at school, I really enjoyed the day.

Mrs Sibanda blames the education system then for not having pre-schools for black children because the whites had their own system where children started school at an early age. As argued by Zvobgo (2000:31), "… because of the Land Apportionment Act, pre-schooling during the colonial period was racial in its policy … in the sense that pre-schools in purely European residential areas accommodated only Europeans …"

Mrs Sibanda's expression suggests that she was very keen to go to school even before attaining the expected age. She was prevented by the education policies of the time in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). However, she explained how she felt when she finally went to school:

> When I finally went to school I was a bit disappointed because I did not get much attention from the teachers as I expected, especially during the first years of my primary education, which is grade one to three. While my performance was good, it suddenly changed to very good when I went for my grade four and that is when I was elected one of the school prefects … it was one of the most exciting things that happened to me … I couldn't wait to get home and tell everyone about it (laughing loudly).

The account captures Mrs Sibanda's ambitions to be in leadership since childhood. She expresses it with great excitement. Upon further probing about why she was given the role of prefect she had this to say:

> I am sure I was selected to be one of the prefects because of my father's position on the farm. Also I used to be very smart because our father could afford to buy us school uniforms, even our house was different from the majority. Almost all of the children who were from the management team had positions in the school. So I was just excited by wearing a different uniform from that of the majority, not that I knew what I was doing as a leader.

It is interesting that even to this day Mrs Sibanda still sees her nomination as a favour and not on merit because of her high performance in class. She thinks it was because of the position held by her father that she became a prefect and not through her own efforts. This might suggest that she doubted her own capabilities. She elaborated further showing some strain:

> I continued to be a school prefect up to grade six level, then I got elevated to the post of an assistant head girl. Unfortunately, that is the year my father passed on and life was not the same …, after which we relocated to our rural home. Life was not easy for us, imagine moving from an urban-like set up to a completely rural one; I felt shattered. I had to enrol at a nearby school. During the first few months, I was like a misfit in the school, but I think that gave me a lot of commitment to my school work, which led to my appointment as the second head girl again at this new school.

Clearly, Mrs Sibanda's confidence seems to have come from her father and his death really disturbed her as a child. However, she now acknowledges that at the rural school she was promoted on the basis of hard work as her father was now no longer in the picture. Mrs Sibanda describes how she and her other siblings helped their mother with subsistence farming for the family's welfare:

> Although we had our father's pension for our welfare, my mother used to sell peanut to supplement it and my elder brother and sister assisted with our school fees. My biggest dream was to get a good job after school and support my mother. During that time good jobs were easy to get once you obtained relevant qualifications

It appears like Mrs Sibanda's life changed significantly after the death of the father. She further reflected on this period as follows: "… teachers encouraged me by assigning several responsibilities to me, such as chairing debate sessions and that built my confidence back." What seemed to be apparent here is that Mrs Sibanda needed someone's reassurance for her to regain her confidence. After primary school education, Mrs Sibanda went on to secondary school.

4.1.2.1.1 Leadership in secondary school

Reflecting on how she went through her secondary school education, Mrs Sibanda had this to say:

At secondary school level, it became a little bit different. Although my school work was still good, it was not easy for me to be noticed amongst some bright girls who came from better backgrounds than me. By that time, I had moved from home and was staying with my cousin brother who was the principal of the school where I was learning. We used to call him 'hard master' because he was very strict. In fact, I didn't want to be a teacher in the first place because of him and I just told myself that all teachers are hard hearted; they used to beat us like snakes, especially at secondary. I think if it was today, most of them were going to rot in jails because of abuse (laughing).

Mrs Sibanda seemed to struggle with low self-esteem in the company of some girls from ''better families'' meaning that she was comparing herself with those other girls. In this excerpt, she also confessed that teaching was not her dream job while growing up. Mrs Sibanda mentioned that:

I was then appointed one of the prefects at form four level and was responsible for form two classes. It was not very challenging to look after lower classes than upper classes because they still gave me the respect I deserved and that made me feel big (laughing).

The fact that Mrs Sibanda continued to be a school prefect provides evidence that the school environment was in part responsible for cultivating her leadership skills. Although she told me before that she enjoyed being in leadership, I was curious to know how she ended up taking the teaching profession:

…it was my last option. This cousin brother of mine sort of forced me into the teaching profession. I wanted to be a nurse, which was considered as another good job for 'decent' women (laughing) but got the replies from nursing schools late, [that is] after I had already joined teaching. I grew up being quiet and shy, a character people used not to associate with teaching let alone leadership. Teachers were believed to be people who talked too much and had high voices, it's only after I joined the profession that I realised that what was being said was not very true.

Mrs Sibanda appears to have joined the teaching profession largely because of her brother. In her own mind, she thought she was not the right material for the profession because of her personality. After completing form four, she then enrolled at a teacher training college, where she trained as a secondary school teacher.

4.1.2.1.2 Life begins at college

Mrs Sibanda described her life after completing her secondary school education as awesome:

> I enrolled in a college to train as a secondary school teacher. It was at the time when going to secondary teachers' colleges was seen as a sign of being very bright and parents used to be very proud when their children go to colleges. That also motivated me somehow.

According to Mrs Sibanda, secondary school teacher training was taken as prestigious, especially by parents and that encouraged her. Looking at the time she went to college, Mrs Sibanda reflected as follows:

> Although it was not my choice to go to college, I ended up liking it after my mother showed a lot of excitement. If there was anything I did not want to do was to disappoint my mother. Her wish was my command (chuckling) and it's like I was living for her.

Mrs Sibanda clearly anchored herself on her mother and decided to join the teaching profession to make her mother happy. She further explained that:

> My life began at college, we used to enjoy as young women … we would even entertain our male friends in the common rooms during weekends and that's the time I started realising myself as a woman (giggling). During our time, girls used to be less than boys in secondary teachers' colleges so they would compete for us (laughing loudly), but one good thing was that people were very disciplined then and we had respect for each other. I remember that for the three years that I was at college, no one was expelled from college because of misconduct.

These views express the excitement that Mrs Sibanda experienced during her time at the college. Also, she explained how today's college life may be different from the one she experienced. Another important point she raised is that there were fewer girls than boys in secondary teachers' colleges. She further added that:

> I had very good friends who were from different backgrounds. Some of them were even double orphaned and I considered myself lucky to have one surviving parent. Although I did not manage to hold any leadership position myself, there were quite a number of girls who were in charge of different areas, especially the girls' hostels.

Mrs Sibanda realised that people have different backgrounds and considered herself fortunate to have had a living parent while at college. During our conversation, it became evident that she was also inspired by the other girls at college:

> For instance, one of my friends, Sarah (not real name), used to look after girls in one of the hostels where we were staying. I used to accompany her when she moved around with a big bunch of keys opening doors for the girls after allocating them rooms to stay. Also there was Elizabeth (not real name) in the Student Representative Council (SRC), who was one of the committee members. It was not easy for a woman to be in such a position, then. I remember her moving from hostel to hostel campaigning for presidency and everybody was like, 'how can you?' The fact that she was the only woman among men made her unique, and she was a very confident and vocal person and we considered her to be our heroine.

The quote seems to confirm the impression that women visibility in leadership posts has been an issue for a long time. Although Mrs Sibanda did not say it openly, she was clearly inspired by some of her colleagues at college who held leadership positions. Also, she added that:

> There were only two female lecturers at the college [who were] both in the H/E department. One of these lecturers used not to like female students at all. I remember some other time when my two friends and I were called to the principal's office and we found her seated. The moment we entered the room she just said '… yes these are the … , they need to go for pregnancy test at the clinic.' We didn't know where it was coming from. When we were found to be negative nothing was said, up to today I still have no reason why we were suspected of being pregnant (laughing).

What is not clear in this discussion with Mrs Sibanda here is the reason why the particular female lecturer did not like female students. After her theory training, she went for teaching practice (TP).

4.1.2.1.3 Life as a student teacher

Mrs Sibanda's teaching practice was not very exciting as indicated in her narrative, "… the time I did my teaching practice is the time when student teachers were deployed only in rural schools and not in urban areas. It was worse because most rural secondary schools were new after independence." Rural schools in Zimbabwe are very different in terms of resources (material and human), facilities, distance from town/city and in many

other ways, hence Mrs Sibanda's teaching practice (TP) life had no surprises as compared to her life at the college:

> I went to a very remote school for my teaching practice where there was nothing interesting because I was the only student teacher at that school. To make matters worse, I was the youngest. As a result, a lot of duties were assigned to me, such as going out with students for sports. Some older teachers would ask me to write charts [preparing teaching media] for them. Though that was not much of a problem, my life was a bit lonely and I had nothing much to do so I felt like I was being abused. I used to buy all my teaching materials except a few text books which were given to me, one text book per subject. So my TP year was just a boring year.

From this discussion, Mrs Sibanda did not seem to enjoy her teaching practice year. Although she did not specify what was remote about her school, the extract points to some challenges, such as inadequate resources; hence the school was not in a position to supply her with enough materials for TP. Furthermore, she added that:

> There is something that I realised while I was on teaching practice, male lecturer assessors were more lenient than females in terms of the awarding of marks, especially for female students. Female lecturers gave us very low marks that we used to compare when we were back at the college. I am not sure of the reasons why it was like that, but I suspect that it was because the female lecturers had a negative attitude towards female students.

This conversation seems to affirm what she said before, that female lecturers at her college were not in very good books with female students. She discussed her progress after completing teacher training as follows:

4.2 Career Progression

Mrs Sibanda has her own share of experiences and perceptions of how she moved from junior teacher to school head position. Like any other newly qualified teacher, she had her own expectations after obtaining her teaching certificate.

4.2.1 Experiences and opportunities

This section looks at the experiences and opportunities that Mrs Sibanda encountered as she progressed with her career after teacher training.

4.2.1.1 Life as a qualified junior teacher

Mrs Sibanda gave an account of her experiences soon after graduating at the teachers' college. She highlighted that,

> The excitement that I had when I finished college was shattered when I got deployed in 1991 to a very remote place, where there were no proper roads to access the school. The very first time I went there, I nearly gave up and worse off the place was very hot. When I got off the bus I was told by the villagers that the only transport available to the school was in the form of donkey drawn scotch carts if I were lucky to get one; otherwise the alternative was to walk fifteen kilometres.

From the description above, the particular school was a bit off from the main road and Mrs Sibanda, as a newly qualified young woman, saw it as the end of her dreams. To clarify the point, I inquired about the expectations she had and she just laughed and said, "… I wanted to start my teaching life in town."

A secondary school in a remote area in 1991, suggests that it might have been one of the new secondary schools that were established soon after independence to provide education to all - which was one of the goals of the first government after the country's independence in 1980. Upon further probing, Mrs Sibanda continued with her story:

> I nearly fainted when I got to the school after more than three hours of travelling. There was literally no school at all (giggling). The first day experience was quite bad. The source of water, which was a village borehole, was very far and it was already dark. There was only one five roomed house that was being shared by eight teachers and classrooms were in form of grass thatched shades. I had to share a room with one of the woman teachers and we were the only females at that school. To worsen the matter, only the school head had a teaching certificate; … life at that school was not easy but, surprisingly, that is the school where I stayed the longest in my life of teaching.

Mrs Sibanda points to the issue of unqualified personnel as another important challenge at her new school. Soon thereafter, she got promoted to senior woman position at the same school. This meant that she was to assist the deputy head with some administrative jobs, something she welcomed when she said, "…Because this was my first promotion as a qualified employee, I was very excited and knew that at least I was going to be noticed by my colleagues who were not qualified." Asking for clarification on

what that meant, she stressed, "… it seems these other teachers were just taking me as part of them and yet we were different in terms of qualifications … I was promoted even before my probation period was over because of qualifications."

In respect of the conversation above, it is apparent that Mrs Sibanda was not comfortable with her position as an ordinary classroom teacher at her new school. Interestingly, it appears as if she was looking forward to her promotion even before it happened when she stressed that she was ''qualified'' hence was different from the rest. It is, thus, noteworthy that she rose up the ladder long before qualifying to be in the grade of a senior teacher.

4.2.1.1.1 The rise to leadership

A senior teacher is a position that may be held by teachers who have finished their two-year probation period. On the school hierarchy, a senior teacher is the deputy head's right-hand person. About her new promotion to senior teacher, Mrs Sibanda had this to say:

> I had to prove a point to the rest of the teachers, that I deserved the post but inwardly I was heading for the deputy head's post because he was not qualified also (laughing). Although things did not work the way that I wanted, I was happy with the post. My deputy head was just as nice as the school head. They were easy to work with and had respect for me regardless of my age. I am sure it was because of them that everybody ended up respecting each other. The school was backward but the staff relationship was super until the time when a few individuals who were qualified joined the school.

Mrs Sibanda was in the school administration team and helped with clerical duties for a long period and she claimed that:

> I gained a lot of experience through attending workshops on behalf of the school head or deputy head. Also I was taught how to make some assessments [supervision of lesson deliveries and book inspections], something that I now do without problems. A new deputy head joined the school and still we worked together well.

Mrs Sibanda reflected on how she was groomed into leadership by those who were her seniors. She said at one time she acted as deputy head for the whole term when the substantive deputy went on vacation leave and she hinted that:

It was not easy, although I did not feel threatened in any way because all the qualified teachers came to that school after me. Some of the teachers had all the respect for me but others wanted to test my powers always, especially males. They would tell me that their issues could only be attended to by the head or the 'actual' deputy head. Looking at it now I feel the problem was with the head who would attend to them instead of telling them to follow the protocol. I think to him I was just a place holder with no authority at all.

Mrs Sibanda blamed the school head for the other teachers' behaviour as she felt that she was not given the full powers of a deputy head. She sounded disturbed as she narrated as follows:

> Women do not receive the respect they deserve at times because some men tend to look down upon us as incompetent beings. I used to notice it while I was a senior woman, if I asked for some documents, a simple thing like a scheme book, some would only send them after several follow ups.

In support of the issues raised by Mrs Sibanda, Kiamba (2008) suggests that women leaders sometimes need to be aggressive and use male leadership styles for them to be recognised as leaders. However, Mrs Sibanda indicated that "… it is not easy to adopt someone's character and last. Women should be firm in their positions as women leaders using their own female leadership styles."

Mrs Sibanda's argument goes against Kiamba's (2008) suggestions that women cannot survive if they depend on their own leadership styles. In a way, it looks like she is saying one cannot use someone else's style forever; women need to be who they are. What is not clear in her statement is how women can do that. Clearly, Mrs Sibanda has her own perception of leadership.

4.2.1.2 Perceptions of leadership

School leaders perceive leadership style in different ways. Mrs Sibanda's perception is reflected in the section that follows:

4.2.1.2.1 Limited distributive leadership

Interpretation of minutes for staff and administration meetings and information displayed in the school head's office walls supports the observations that most of the activities

were monitored and led by the school head. The administration chart below (reproduced from the actual sample in the office, bears testimony):

Table 4.9: Duties for administrators

	ACTIVITY	RESPONSIBLE PERSONS
1.	Schemes of work and other record books	H/DH/HOD
2.	Students' exercise books	H/DH/HOD
3.	Lesson observations	H/DH/HOD/Snr tr
4.	Meeting chairing	H/DH
5.	Punishment supervision	Snr trs
6.	Assembly	H/DH
7.	Staff development programmes	H/DH
8.	Supervision of sports	DH/Snr trs

Key: H-Head; DH-Deputy head; HOD-Head of department; Snr tr-Senior teacher

Table 4.9 shows that the school head is responsible for almost all areas. Although according to the information on the chart, she did not feature on punishment and sports issues, the conversation below shows that she was still in sports administration as well. This confirms her claim that, "… my office is very busy with office work and visitors both internally and externally and even the staff members and students." I also observed that during the time that I was in her office, a number of people came with different issues. For instance, three students entered the office:

> **Student**: Morning ma'am
> **Head**: Morning boys, how best can I help you?
> **Student**: Ma'am we received an invitation for a friendly hockey tournament at Y high school (name of school was mentioned) on Wednesday in the afternoon and we are asking for your permission to go.
> **Head**: That's ok, go and put your request in writing and attach the invite then submit it to me first thing in the morning tomorrow so that we can process your provisions.
> **Student**: Thank you ma'am.

This conversation clearly shows that Mrs Sibanda was an overseer of almost everything. There are people who are responsible for sports according to the chart above, so I expected her to refer the students to the sports directors. There were

people, such as senior master, senior woman and deputy head who could have handled such issues.

At the time of my visit, some teachers were handing in their record books and signing to show that they had submitted. Mrs Sibanda apologised when she took long to attend to me, "Mrs Dzimiri, you came on a wrong day and your interviews are going to be disturbed. Today is Monday and teachers need to submit their schemes of work." I just told her that we were going to start once she was settled and that was when she closed and locked the door from inside for our interview.

From my observation, there was very limited distributive leadership practised in the school. Even in the opening staff meeting I attended, Mrs Sibanda was the one who chaired. The administration minute book indicated that six meetings out of eight were chaired by the head. As for the other two meetings, which were chaired by the deputy head, she was indicated as absent on one and the other one she was there. Also, for the two meetings that were recorded in the staff minute book, she was the one who chaired both of them. However, besides using her own way of administration, she encountered a number of problems during the execution of her leadership duties.

4.3 Challenges and opportunities

Mrs Sibanda's narrative reveals that there are challenges and opportunities in women leadership. She took me back to the very first time she was promoted to be a school head.

4.3.1 Leadership challenges

The section discusses the challenges that Mrs Sibanda experienced when she got promoted to school head position.

4.3.1.1 Position held as a school leader

Mrs Sibanda explained that:

I took over as acting deputy head after the holder of the post was appointed acting head at another school. After just a term, the school head was also transferred to a bigger school and I was elevated to acting school head position. My journey to school leadership was not very smooth, though fast.

Mrs Sibanda moved very fast from the position of deputy head to school head. From her expression, she met some challenges as she climbed up her career ladder.

4.3.1.1.1 An agonised school head

By the time Mrs Sibanda got the post of school head, she said a lot had changed at the school, "We had three classroom blocks and three quarters of the staff were qualified. Also there were a handful of female teachers who had joined us." Although she was promoted while at the same school, she indicated that:

> I was officially introduced by the EO the very day I started acting as school head. During my first year as an acting school head, I faced several challenges including the transferring of some male teachers from the school. For instance, two Science and one Mathematics teachers joined the former school head at his new school.

She expressed concern on the staff turnover which happened. Expanding on the response above, Mrs Sibanda explained that:

> Although I had to put on a brave face publicly, that development really disturbed me a lot. Things became really bad. The school pass rate went down drastically, especially in science subjects. As if that was not enough, a new private secondary school was opened just a few kilometres away from my school and some parents transferred their children to the new school.

Drawing on the extracts, the responses suggest that she faced a lot of varied problems and also the competition became stiff for her. She went on to say:

> My school was only saved by the high fees that the private school was charging of which most of the community could not afford. I went to the district offices to request for teachers and after a few weeks a female area EO, who was newly appointed, sent me three teachers to replace the ones who had transferred and she became my salvation. Those teachers were God sent. The young men really worked hard and they produced the second best results in the area that year. At that time, my life became easier and I started enjoying my job as a head (laughing).

Gleaning from the views above, the addition of three Science teachers appeared to have made her life easier. What Mrs Sibanda's story highlights is that there are some women (e.g. EO) who just do their jobs without any discrimination in terms of gender. Elaborating on her challenges, she pointed out that:

> Leadership was not easy for me during that period of difficulty. At times the pressure was so unbearable that I ended up locking my door and cry. Fortunately, I wear dark glasses as you can see, so no one would see my red eyes after crying. I want to admit, that is the weakness with most of us women. Maybe that is our way of dealing with stress, I don't know but really it soothes to cry, only that you must not do it publicly (laughing).

While Mrs Sibanda seems to have enjoyed her middle leadership journey, it was typically clear from the conversation that school leadership posts had varied challenges for her. However, she added that, "I worked at that particular school as a school head for nine years before transferring to this big urban day secondary school in the Midlands Province [Gweru]," where she currently heads. On her transfer to the new school, she had this to say:

> My transfer to this province was not an easy flow. When I first came here, most of the people did not like me; both the teachers and the community were comparing me with the former head who was also a woman. Even in meetings you would hear teachers saying, '… during Mrs X's (name was provided) leadership we were doing it like this and the results were good'. Also in SDA meetings, parents would tell you what they had agreed on with Mrs X on certain issues and it would be very difficult to move them from there. I am someone who is a bit soft and most stakeholders might have taken it as a weakness. In addition, I had disciplinary problems with teachers, students and even non-academic staff.

The data suggests that there may have been disciplinary problems at her school because people did not like her as the new school head and she also attributed it to her own personality of being soft. In the section below, she gives an account of how teachers misbehaved at the new school.

4.3.1.1.2 Misconduct of staff members

According to the school's disciplinary records and the staff log book, it was evident that teachers absent themselves from work quite frequently. For instance, there were

reasons stated in the log book such as, ''attending to my bank account issues''; ''securing my child's form one place''; ''gone to town to buy my drugs''; ''gone to check on my mother who has flu'' [sic]. In their responses to the head's letters which were also pinned in the disciplinary record book, some teachers would write statements such as, ''I told the HOD and it was unfortunate that the school head was not informed''. The recordings in the discipline book also show that some teachers did not take afternoons as teaching-learning times and would simply abscond.

Also, in the same disciplinary book there were some recordings about corrupt teachers which I noted. For instance, on 20 March 2017, the following was recorded:

> …some teachers were charged for receiving money from parents as payments for securing Form 1 places for their children'; and another recording, '… one of the accountants was dismissed from service by the Ministry after under-banking school funds on several occasions.

The information recorded also shows that warnings were given to the particular accountant before dismissal. In support of the above recordings, Mrs Sibanda told me that:

> Just within the first five months of my appointment here, I discovered that the school funds were being abused. Although I did not get actual training in leadership, especially on financial management, I managed to pick up the shortages of school funds each time because of my accounts knowledge gained from secondary school education. The drastic measures which were taken against all perpetrators helped to reduce misbehaviour among both staff and students. At times it's necessary to take such action as a school head.

As part of the measures she explains, "… I had to move the female deputy head to a senior woman position and appointed a male deputy head for the sake of discipline especially among male students."

While the conversations with Mrs Sibanda show that she can run the school, she still seemed to need the help of a male figure in her leadership team. Her decision to appoint a male deputy for discipline purposes was supported by the Provincial Education Director's Circular No.2 of 2017 which states that the discipline area in schools is for deputy heads.

At the time of this study, Mrs Sibanda was two years old at her school, and she claims that, "… the situation at this school now has changed greatly in that most teachers and parents are cooperative in the organisation and execution of school activities, such as trips and sports and the school is very good at different sport disciplines." However, the evidence displayed on the walls show achievements in sports for 2005 and 2006 only, and that was before she had even joined the school. Nothing else was displayed. Mrs Sibanda went on to explain the challenges that she experienced with students.

4.3.1.1.3 Influence of school locality

Although Mrs Sibanda indicated in our conversations that she is comfortable with her job as school head, she also highlighted that, "… the students are so many that at times they tend to take advantage of numbers to be mischievous. I always tell teachers to be on high alert when it comes to students' discipline." She further narrated an incident which happened at her school:

> At one time, a teacher found some condoms in a student's pocket while searching for exam related materials before getting into the exam room. When the teacher asked the student about it he denied and even cried saying he knew nothing about it. Even his classmates defended him and said it should be someone who put the condoms in his pocket while he was unaware. Since the boy was known for being quiet, it was very difficult to pin it on him and the culprit was never caught. My staff members are very helpful on discipline issues.

The extract shows the extent to which students can be naughty and crafty. Mrs Sibanda explained that sexual engagement by students was taken as a serious and punishable offense in her community. However, she revealed the appreciation for the assistance she receives from her staff members on discipline issues.

She indicated a lot of concern when she added that, "At times they bring drugs and dangerous weapons to school, such as small knives and razor blades. The staff members try hard to control them, though it is not easy with these many students from high density neighbourhoods." Mrs Sibanda admitted that it was not easy for her to control the students everyday as they go in and out of the school premises. Her point on school location and indiscipline among learners is raised by Giddens and Sutton (2013)

who argue that schools that are located in high density neighbourhoods are likely to face more discipline problems than those in the low density neighbourhoods.

The disciplinary log book showed only the deputy head's signatures after administering some corporal punishments on misbehaved students. The implication may be that, for the female school head, a male deputy head comes in handy on student discipline.

4.3.1.2 Work and family clash

Mrs Sibanda recalled the challenges of balancing work and family that she faced especially during her early years of promotion when her family was still young.

4.3.1.2.1 Lack of husband support

At the time of her first promotion, Mrs Sibanda was already married and had children as reflected:

> My promotion to school head position came when I was married and my family was staying in Harare. I would come back home during weekends. On one hand, my husband did not like it right from the word go because it meant him being responsible for the children for the whole week. On the other hand, my in-laws were very supportive and would encourage me whenever I go home to visit, and that is what kept me going all the time. I would do all the home chores during weekends. I had a good and mature baby minder, hence did not face complex challenges as far as children were concerned.

The quote shows that Mrs Sibanda was mostly supported by her in-laws while her husband was against her move and promotion. It also reveals that she did not give up though it took long for her husband to understand and support her new career path as she recounted:

> At first my husband was bitter about this post, worse off when I came here it really took him long to support the decision. He has now changed but still wants to see me home in Harare every weekend. Travelling is very uncomfortable for me maybe because of age (laughing). Sometimes if I am feeling tired I would lie to him that I have weekend commitments, such as workshops so that I get enough rest. But my children are very supportive; they are proud of me. Now that I have won my husband's support I feel there is nothing that is impossible.

The evidence points to the possibility of family commitments becoming impediments where a wife aspires to take up a school head position. Husband support seems to be the pillar of strength that Mrs Sibanda needed as highlighted by Bass (1990) who observes that, supportive partners may be especially essential to women in leadership. In addition to that, she indicated that the support she gets from her family helps her to have confidence and courage in her work.

Overall, it sounds as if Mrs Sibanda became a teacher by default, not necessarily by free will, although she does not express any regret for her choice: "… now that I am a school head I am not even disappointed with my career choice. I can't imagine myself anywhere else except in schools. I would rather aim for a higher educational post than leave the field." Mrs Sibanda is one person who has faith in her job and sees opportunities of even occupying higher posts.

4.3.2 Leadership opportunities

Mrs Sibanda explained the opportunities that are in their secondary school heads association for her as a female leader.

4.3.2.1 Advantages of being in social communities of practice

There are such communities as National Association for Secondary Heads (NASH) in the Zimbabwean education system to which all secondary school heads are affiliated. As a member of the association, Mrs Sibanda disclosed her experiences and perceptions of the practices in these communities. Responding to a question on the function of the association, Mrs Sibanda explained that:

> This is an association for all secondary school heads in this country. Even primary [school] heads have theirs called National Association for Primary Heads (NAPH). Such practices give us an opportunity, as leaders, to share information and also to work together for the common goal. Different duties are assigned to us, such as leading the sports discipline.

Mrs Sibanda pointed out that, communities such as NASH give them opportunities as female heads to lead in different areas. Such opportunities appear to give the female

school heads platforms to be heard and also prove their worth. Below is some evidence of Mrs Sibanda's achievements as per our discussion.

4.3.2.2 School success

During her administration, Mrs Sibanda has shown some achievements in academics as indicated below:

4.3.2.2.1 Academic accomplishment

Table 4.10 shows how the school performed in the 'O' Level national examinations from 2013 to 2016.

Table 4.10: Results for O' Level students

YEAR	PASS RATE (%)	POSITION IN THE DISTRICT
2013	78%	10 out of 18
2014	79%	12 out of 18
2015	76%	11 out of 18
2016	77%	13 out of 18

For the four years that are shown in Table 4.10 above, Mrs Sibanda's school attained between 76 and 78 percent pass rate. Their district position has never been below ten. The A' Level results are also shown in Table 4.11 below:

Table 4.11: Results for A' Level students

YEAR	PASS RATE (%)	POSITION IN THE DISTRICT
2013	68%	13 out of 18
2014	68%	12 out of 18
2015	70%	11 out of 18
2016	71%	10 out of 18

The results indicate that Mrs Sibanda's school has never performed between 68% and 71% pass rate since 2013. Also, out of eighteen schools, her school's position in the district remained between ten and thirteen. Comparison with other schools on performance is reflected in chapter five. Other successes within the school were also analysed as follows:

4.3.2.2.2 Success and effectiveness of a woman leader

Evidence from the School Development Association project record book shows that there was a junior laboratory construction, which was going on as well as installation of a second borehole. This was confirmed by the observations I made during a tour of the school premises. Mrs Sibanda attaches great importance to these projects:

> You can only win the community's trust if you are making developments in the school, and women are known for that (laughing). There are a number of projects that are under way at this school which I wish to have completed by the end of next year [2018]. These include completion of the junior laboratory and the second borehole because water is a problem in this part of Mkoba [a high density suburb in Gweru]. Once we manage to have a second borehole, we can put up some water taps by the gate there so that the community can get water as well.

Mrs Sibanda revealed her hard work through school projects, which seem to be something that the parents appreciated. One of the parents was recorded in the SDA minute book as having commented that, '… this school is really changing and *vana mai vanoshanda uye vane moyo munyoro* [women/mothers are hard workers and have got soft hearts]'. Such comments show the extent to which some parents appreciate Mrs Sibanda's effort in developing the school. In turn, Mrs Sibanda also showed appreciation and an element of togetherness to both the staff and SDA members: "During meetings with SDA members or administrators [HODs included], I would make sure I provide teas in order to raise morale and show appreciation."

The above sentiments are in line with the Provincial Education Director's Circular No.2 of 2017:6 which states that "… Payment of sitting allowance is illegal …however, there is need to appreciate their sacrifice and commitment to duty by offering teas during meetings". Of note, the circular emphasises that the teas should not be converted into

monetary terms. She realised that, "… such treatments helped to draw the members closer to me so that we work together for a common goal." From the comments that were given by the parents, it seems Mrs Sibanda works well with the other stakeholders. However, besides keeping her school together, Mrs Sibanda explained how she encourages female teachers and students to take up leadership positions within the school organisation.

4.3.2.3 Empowering other females

Mrs Sibanda gives some advice to both female teachers and female students so as to empower them for senior posts.

4.3.2.3.1 Preparing women for leadership

Mrs Sibanda shows concern with both female teachers and students at her school. She explained that:

> I always tell women and girls at this school that women are just as good as men in terms of duty performance. At times you find that women can do certain tasks much better than men, it's only that women need to be encouraged right from childhood. On one hand, at school the girl child must be given responsibilities so as to build confidence and courage in them. On the other hand, female teachers also need to be given leadership duties within the organisation.

This excerpt suggests that females at Mrs Sibanda's school are given space to lead through being involved in leadership roles. She encourages them and builds their confidence by saying women are equally competent compared to men. After probing how she empowers her female teachers, she elaborated as follows:

> Most of the female teachers need to be encouraged. I am sure they feel they are not competent enough to occupy high positions. As a result, I make sure I assign leadership roles to them, such as HOD and leaders of social clubs and these include clubs, such as Girl Child Network, Youth Alive and many others. These are national organisations, so the leaders go for workshops a lot where they mix with different people from different places.

Mrs Sibanda emphasised that her female teachers acquire leadership skills through workshop attendance. Furthermore, she explained girls' positions at her school:

At secondary schools, girls are called names by boys but I tell them to stand their ground by showing the boys that they do not like it. I sometimes discuss with the girls and I always tell them that there are no jobs for men only these days. As a result, I advise girls to be confident and venture into those areas, which were known to be men's territories before so that they could even be recognised in society. Once girls get confidence at an early stage, they do not hesitate to take up posts in their lives, they can even inspire others.

In the segment above, Mrs Sibanda appears to encourage girls to be competent in their school work so that they can get high paying jobs, which may lead them to occupying senior positions at work places and even in society. Overall, she involves women at her school in different roles so as to empower them for their future career posts.

In brief, the data presented in this second case suggest that Mrs Sibanda was influenced by different people in different ways to take up leadership positions. Most of the influences seem to have developed from the time she started primary school. Her school teachers and fellow students appear to have influenced her one way or the other as she progressed with her education. Also, other leaders within the schools where she was employed, seem to have played a crucial role through empowerment, to prepare her for future school leadership roles. Mrs Sibanda, however, outlined a number of challenges she had to confront on her way to leadership, such as community and staff resistance and student disciplinary challenges. Throughout all these challenges she was able, however, to see opportunities for success and growth as a female school head. The themes that were drawn from Mrs Toga's narratives are summarised in Table 4.12.

Case 3: Mrs Toga's account

Table 4.12: Summary of themes for Mrs Toga

THEMES (FROM SUB-QUESTIONS)	SUB-THEMES	CATEGORIES	SUB-CATEGOERIES
4.1 Influence of socialisation on career choices **(Theme 1)**	4.1.1 Induction in leadership through primary socialisation	4.1.1.1 Early socialisation	4.1.1.1.1 Influence of family position
			4.1.1.1.2 Parental influence
	4.1.2 Induction into leadership through education	4.1.2.1 Influence of schooling	4,1.2.1.1 Secondary school life
			4.1.2.1.2 Life in a tertiary institution
			4.1.2.1.3 Teaching practice experiences
4.2 Career progression **(Theme 2)**	4.2.1 Experiences and Perceptions	4.2.1.1 Experiences: Transitioning to promotion post	4.2.1.1.1 Doubting one's capabilities
			4.2.1.1.2 Pillar of strength
			4.2.1.1.3 Saved by the bell
			4.2.1.1.4 Coping strategies
			4.2.1.1.5 Swim or sink
			4.2.1.1.6 Witch hunting
		4.2.1.2.Perceptions	4.2.1.2.1 The New Curriculum
			4.2.1.2.2 Handicaps in women promotion
			4.2.1.2.3 Open door policy
4.3 Challenges and opportunities **(Theme 3)**	4.3.1 Challenges	4.3.1.1 Position held as a school head	43111 Challenges of a teaching head: a) Teaching load b) Effects of school location
		4.3.1.2 Family responsibilities: Life of a widow	4.3.1.2.1 Children's needs
			4.3.1.2.2 Parents' needs
	4.3.2 Opportunities	4.3.2.1 Social networking	4.3.2.1.1 Fewer opportunities for necessary experience and contacts
		4.3.2.2 Preparing females for leadership	4.3.2.2.1 Training a girl child
			4.3.2.2.2 Imparting leadership skills to female teachers

All the summarised themes above are discussed in detail in the sections that follow, according to the order presented in the table.

4.1 Impact of early socialisation on career choices (Theme 1)

Mrs Toga explained how her early socialisation affected decision-making in her career as a school leader and how she adopted the character that has since become part of her own identity.

4.1.1 Induction into leadership through primary socialisation

This section covers the time from birth into her family until her early years of schooling.

4.1.1.1 Early socialisation

Early socialisation refers to the influence that Mrs Toga received from her family and also from the parents.

4.1.1.1.1 Influence of family position

Mrs Toga described herself as the second born in a family of five children, three girls and two boys as explained below:

> My other two sisters and I were the ones who used to do most of the work in the home especially during the holidays. Being the first three children in the family meant that the boys were too small to do some of the chores. Both our parents expected a lot from us as the eldest children. We would plough all the fields by ourselves. During the term we used to stay with our father at the school where he was teaching and my young brothers would remain at our rural home with my mother.

Mrs Toga was already in school when she and her sisters took up many of the duties she described in the quote. More evidence is revealed when she added that:

> I grew up herding cattle with the village boys and fighting was the order of the day (giggling). We used to fight a lot and there was nothing like running away or surrendering, you were supposed to fight to the end or until the big boys stopped the fight. It was not an easy game but I used to enjoy it, especially when I fought and won. A bottle of fresh milk was given to the fighter of the day (laughing loudly).

The passage suggests that Mrs Toga grew up in a rural set up. Although she is a female, she engaged in boys' games where rewards were given for a good fight. She

took me through her life in the home and how she used to manage her duties while she was staying with her father:

> Even during the school term after my elder sister went to boarding school, my father expected me to plan the meals, cook for the family and making sure everybody's clothes were clean including his. During the weekends, especially Saturday, I would take all the dirty clothes to the nearest stream to wash. I liked it because that was the time I would meet other staff members' children. We would play all sorts of games while the clothes were drying.

Evidently, Mrs Toga did not seem to have much free time even during weekends because of all the household chores she had to do. She further explained that:

> On Sundays, we were forced to go to Sunday school by my father, although he did not go to church himself. So, every day, I would make sure everyone bathed with warm water in the morning before going to school or to church. Remember, we were in rural schools where there was no electricity. At times I would run late for my lessons because I would be the last one to bath.

I got a sense that Mrs Toga was a hard working girl who had to look after the whole family without the help of a mother or older sisters. Her father seems to be someone who wanted his children to grow up with some moral values even though he did not seem to be a Christian himself. Our next discussion looked at how she may have been influenced by her parents in general.

4.1.1.1.2 Parental influence

The narrative so far suggests that Mrs Toga's mother stayed at their rural home while the father was a rural primary school teacher. While she was doing all the household chores, as a child of a teacher, she says, "…my father expected the best academic results from me," which she explained was a big challenge for her:

> Although I was good at my school work, I feel I was capable of doing much better if only I had enough time for my studies. Soon after dismissal time, my father would always send someone to tell me to go home and cook. During general cleaning I was expected to be home cleaning, so I did not have enough time with my friends. Anyway, it helped me to learn a lot and it was my wish to be a teacher like my father. Even here, some teachers think I am very strict because I want things done to perfection, but maybe it is because of this background I had while growing up.

Mrs Toga did not seem to have time to socialise with other children of her own age at school. While on the one hand, she thought her father was too strict, on the other hand, she appreciated the way she was brought up. During our conversation, Mrs Toga made it clear that:

> The early life I lived during primary education built a strong foundation for my present life as a school head. I even passed that training to my children, although my husband used to complain and call it child abuse. I feel I did the right thing because both of my children are now grownups and independent. In fact, because of the hard work I instilled in them, they are now supporting me well, even financially. I admit that my parents helped me to be an all-rounder and I can stand up for any type of job.

Mrs Toga appreciates the training she got from her parents and seems to have passed it on to her own children. She views herself as an all-rounder, who is capable of doing different jobs because of her upbringing.

Mrs Toga's story highlights the important role of early socialisation on her decision to be a school head. Kiamba (2008) notes that, young people always aspire for certain jobs during their early socialisation. In her case, the data show that she became a teacher through the influence of her father. She went on to narrate her life as a secondary school student as follows:

4.1.2 Induction into leadership through education

Mrs Toga gave an account of how she sailed through her education from secondary school at one of the boarding schools in Zimbabwe to tertiary level.

4.1.2.1 Influence of schooling

She clarified how secondary school education did not enhance her inspiration of being a school head. However, it is a crucial area to be discussed because of her negative attitude towards those who were leaders.

4.1.2.1.1 Secondary school life

Our discussions uncovered how Mrs Toga's secondary education did not help to contribute positively to her career choice. She explained that:

> Although I was the child of a teacher, I never held any leadership position both at primary and secondary school and even at college (laughing). I am even blaming the system, which was there then, which stipulated subjects for girls, that is, all girls were to choose either Fashion and Fabrics or Foods and Nutrition while boys chose Agriculture or Woodwork, Building or Metal work. I also wanted to study Agriculture as my practical subject because I have a passion for farming but I was never given the chance.

The response chronicles the pre-independence situation in Zimbabwe, where students did not have many subject choices mainly due to race and gender discrimination. As a result, Mrs Toga was denied the opportunity to specialise in the area of Agriculture as she would have wished. In addition, she revealed that she was never appointed to any leadership role in primary and/or secondary school because she was, in her view, a staff member's child. She admitted that:

> Although there were quite a number of girls who were prefects both at primary and secondary schools, I admired none of them. What I knew then was that I was capable of doing any duty. Instead, I could note a lot of flaws in those girls who were prefects, such as favouritism. I observed that girls tended to favour those from better families in order to be given food, and those who were bright in class so as to copy corrections from them (laughing). Those behaviours just put me off and I never aspired to be a perfect or a group leader during my schooling years.

Seemingly, Mrs Toga had no interest in leadership in her secondary school days. She in fact, had a negative attitude towards those who held leadership positions. She disclosed that:

> When I completed my 'Ordinary Level' (O' Level), I went to a teachers' college, a career chosen by my father. I also wanted to be a teacher because during that time, only teachers had nice homes in the communities, so teaching was considered a very smart profession. I used to admire the respect that was given to teachers by both pupils and the community. For instance, even though we were in rural areas, we never went to fetch water or firewood. There were parents who supplied these things every weekend.

Mrs Toga admitted that it was her father's choice, for her to take up teaching. However, she also seems to have joined the teaching field because of the attraction to the lives of teachers back in the days. From secondary school life, Mrs Toga took me through her college life:

4.1.2.1.2 Life in a tertiary institution

When she completed secondary school education, getting enrolled in a college was not even an issue as she narrates, "I just went to one of the local teachers' colleges and applied. After exactly a week, I received a positive response … by then communication through letter writing was very efficient. When I went there, life was very different." When I probed further, Mrs Toga clarified as follows:

> At college there was a lot of mixing and mingling and we did not have strict boundaries, such as the ones that were at secondary school or even at home. No one kept an eye on anyone. I liked sporting days very much while I was at college. It was relaxing time and there were a number of games which were being offered. I was a volleyball player. It was even more exciting when we went out for competitions with other students from different teachers' colleges.

Mrs Toga lightened up with excitement when she talked about sports at college. What is not clear in the extract is whether she continued to pursue her favourite sport after qualifying as a teacher. In addition, she described the structures that were in their college student representative council (SRC) in the following way:

> Our SRC had no females, there were just men. In fact, only men used to campaign for SRC posts. I am not very sure why it was like that, but maybe it was because women were not eager to campaign for the positions. Also one other reason could be that women were socialised not to compete with men who were always believed to be good leaders. Most likely is because *takanga tichakapusa, takavharwa pfungwa ne*culture [we were not yet clever and not using our brains because of culture].

After Mrs Toga brought up the issue of culture, which she did not explain in detail, I probed further for clarity:

> During our time, a lot of things were not explained … we were just told that it was supposed to be like that without any reasons. Do you know that most of our children are knowledgeable in many things that we are not literate in and

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they are connected to the world as a whole? I am sure they make more informed decisions than most of us who were brought up in a traditional way. One of my children once labelled me as a 'BBC', when I asked him what it meant he said 'born before computers' (laughing). I did not get angry; instead I laughed.

Mrs Toga cited culture as one of the contributing factors to her decision-making, often its negative influence on her decisions. She compared herself with the present generation in terms of knowledge and emphasised that there was no open communication before, where people would explain meanings freely. To further explore her experiences at college, Mrs Toga talked more about her teaching practice experiences:

4.1.2.1.3 Teaching practice (TP) experiences

Before talking about her teaching practice experiences, Mrs Toga clarified that, "… the time that I went to college, all student teachers were deployed in rural areas for their teaching practice. Those with complicated conditions were to secure some places at the local primary school, where they would continue to use college facilities including accommodation." Mrs Toga went on to explain her experiences as follows:

> I was deployed at a good rural school where I was the only female student teacher and the qualified female teachers who were there were much older than me. As a result, my male colleagues happened to be my friends. I used to enjoy the company of males more than females while I was on TP. During co-curricular activities, I would avoid the company of women by joining the volleyball discipline, which was being led by males. I requested to be given my own volleyball team to train because I believed I was a better trainer than the males who were there.

Mrs Toga's views show how much she believed in her capabilities. This is shown by the way she explained her success in sports. She expressed that she could do what men failed to do when she revealed that:

> At college, I was in the senior female volleyball team then, so while on TP, I challenged the other trainers by beating their teams, and went with my team all the way to the district level competitions to represent the school. My team came out third position out of eight schools and we received $60 as reward for our victory. Although we did not proceed to regional level, it was a great

achievement for me because the volleyball school team never played at district level; it was always beaten at cluster level.

Mrs Toga shows the value she puts on the achievements through her explanations. She also reflected that, "… at that school, we would normally cook our food together with the other male students as well as sharing quite a number of things, such as materials that enhanced our teaching practice." This view reveals the extent of the friendship with her male colleagues. She also commented on the long distances that they used to travel with the male teachers when going for sport competitions:

> It was then, while I was still young and very energetic that we used to walk very long distances going for sports competitions. Now, because of lack of exercise and always driving, I can't walk even the shortest distance. The boys used to laugh at me saying 'none of us can marry you because we are afraid you will beat us since you were used to fight with boys'. Fortunately, or unfortunately, I got married to someone who was very soft and quiet so I did not get any chance to revive my fighting skills (laughing lightly).

This extract seems to emphasise on Mrs Toga's good relationship with the other male students who were at her school. Although she did not say it openly, from the facial expression, she seemed to be affected by the mere mention of her late husband. Recorded below are her experiences after completing the teacher training course.

4.2 Career progression (Theme 2)

This relates to the time Mrs Toga qualified as a secondary school teacher up to the time she was appointed as a school head.

4.2.1 Mrs Toga's experiences and perceptions of school leadership

Below are her experiences and perceptions after promotion to senior teacher and deputy head positions. Mrs Toga gave an account of the experiences she encountered when she got into leadership:

> I was deployed to one of the rural secondary schools, which were called Upper Tops (new secondary schools that were built in rural areas soon after independence) then. Although the school was not very remote, I was not happy with my first deployment because I wanted to be in town like other young women of my age, considering that I grew up and learned all my primary education in rural areas. My secondary school was in a farm and I

would spend all holidays at home. Don't ask me why but those people who worked in urban areas were seen as more intelligent than those in rural areas (laughing).

Mrs Toga had specific reasons why she wanted to join those who were teaching in urban schools. She indicated that she had too much of rural exposure and she wanted to experience the other world, that is, urban life. She continued with her story:

> Every time I applied for a transfer into town, my applications were turned down, and at times were never replied. In 2001, I remember all the women at my school applied for urban posts and I was the only one who was denied access into town. I was so disappointed that I felt like resigning.

The response shows that Mrs Toga put effort to apply for transfer into town but to no avail. Although she did not get favourable replies when she applied for leadership, Mrs Toga did not give up. She further recounted that:

> I got the head's sympathy by appointing me senior woman at the school. He would involve me in some administrative work a lot. I knew it was a way of trying to cheer me up and groom me at the same time. Both the head and the deputy were nice gentlemen. I would attend workshops and when I came back I would report and also develop the rest of the teaching staff in form of school-based workshops. Although this kept me busy, to be honest, I was not very happy.

Mrs Toga emphasised her unhappiness in the above excerpt, although she showed appreciation of the efforts of other administrators in grooming her for leadership. However, she still felt that she was appointed to senior teacher position because of the sympathy of the head not because she was capable. It shows that Mrs Toga doubted herself on issues of leadership. Her movement to the deputy head's position was not a rosy one as she explained:

4.2.1.1.1 Doubting one's capabilities

After a couple of years as a senior teacher (see Table 4.1), Mrs Toga applied for a deputy head post. She narrated her experiences as follows:

> I applied and only to find out on the interview day that I was the only woman competing with men ... the other five were men including the acting deputy head from my school. One of the applicants for the post was a senior teacher from a very big boarding school, which was in my district. Those two

gentlemen made me lose hope. I thought that one of the two was likely to get the post. To my surprise, I made it. It became a tricky situation for me because it was not easy to displace someone from his office and remain good friends.

In the early extracts, Mrs Toga indicated that she was groomed by her parents to take up any kind of job. However, here she seemed intimidated by the male competitors for the post. She also seemed to admit that men were more capable than her on leadership issues when she got surprised by her success in the interview. This is further reflected when she expressed her concerns about the relationship between her and her former deputy when she was appointed deputy head and had this to say:

> The former acting deputy head never changed attitude towards me; instead he was very helpful when I took over. He even admitted that the game was fairly played. On my side, I was not sure whether I got the post genuinely or out of favour because I was the only female among the people who were interviewed. To make it worse, I used to receive anonymous calls from people scolding me and some even saying, 'we know you have used bottom power to get the post' [meaning she slept with the authorities in order to be promoted]. It really got into me because I was already a widow by then. I realised that people don't take it lightly if you are competing with men.

The evidence above shows that Mrs Toga lacked confidence to the extent of doubting her own capabilities. Again she repeated the issue of being favoured by the interviewers, meaning she believed that men were better leaders than women. She was also disturbed by the abusive language that was used against her by some people who perceived her promotion as reward for sexual favours. It seems this perception contributed further to her lack of confidence. However, her father supported her career choices as reflected below:

4.2.1.1.2 A pillar of strength

In the early discussions, Mrs Toga revealed that she was inspired by her father. In this section of the study, she described how she leaned on him for support during her leadership:

> When I was first appointed as a deputy head, I got the support of my family, especially my father who encouraged and assured me that I could do it. That was all I needed at the time when things were hard for me. I had so much

faith in my father because he was my pillar of strength. By that time, he had already retired from his teaching career. I remember his words saying, *'wakaona zvakawanda muupenyu hwako and I don't think zvinotaurwa nevanhu pamusoro pako zvingakukuhunisa'* [You have seen a lot in your life … you cannot be discouraged by what people say about you]. These words still give me strength even up today.

In the foregoing section, Mrs Toga explained how she anchored her practices on her father's words of advice. She emphasised that even currently, her confidence comes from his words. She continued to say that:

> Whenever I had problems, I would go to him for advice. Although my father never got promoted to a headship position during his teaching career, he had so much knowledge on leadership, maybe because he had worked under many school heads. I trusted his word very much. Although he is gone now I still have his advice within me. At times when things really hit on me I think of him because I now don't have anyone whom I can share my problems with (her eyes were watery at this stage).

Mrs Toga is encouraged by her father's words mostly and described him as her pillar of strength whenever things failed to work well for her. She sees her father as someone who was very knowledgeable in school administration issues because of his wide teaching experience. I could see sadness on her face when she narrated her father's role in her life. I further asked her to describe her ascendancy to leadership.

4.2.1.1.3 Saved by the bell

Mrs Toga became a school head at the time when the Zimbabwean economy was melting down. She related the story as follows:

> In 2005/2006, most school heads left their posts, maybe because of economic challenges. These included most of the young men who had been placed in new secondary schools which mushroomed, especially after the Land Reform Programme. That was the time I applied for headship and succeeded as an acting head at a certain rural secondary school, which was not very far from where I was as a deputy head. No training was given to new heads. Before, I did not mind because I was comfortably rallying behind the school head, now that I was on my own I felt I needed training.

Mrs Toga revealed that, the time she got her post as a school head was the time when there were a lot of leadership vacancies in schools. Again she seems not to emphasise

on her ability for the appointment but on chance. She points to lack of training on leadership skills as one of the crucial factors that hindered effectiveness in her leadership. The time she became a school head, she had to develop her own survival skills and seemed to have moved away from the dependency syndrome.

4.2.1.1.4 Coping strategies

When Mrs Toga found out that the situation was tough, she had to come up with some strategies for her school to survive as described:

> That was the most difficult time of my life. Things were really bad. I had to persevere through the hard times because even teachers had to leave the country in search of greener pastures and some took advantage of vacancies in urban areas and rushed into town. The challenge was with our rural schools.

From the discussions, it was clear that Mrs Toga experienced tough times when she started her leadership journey as a school head. On mitigating the challenges, Mrs Toga explained that:

> It was like every day when you woke up in the morning you would receive the news of teachers leaving. It was really tough. Three quarters of the teaching staff ended up being temporary or untrained. I used to organise workshops for them where I would train them on how to scheme and teach.

Upon realising that most of her trained teachers had left, Mrs Toga had to organise workshops to develop the remaining unqualified staff on teaching competencies. This reflected a good strategy she used to deal with a hard situation. She further explained that:

> During that period, I was not worried much about results because generally, the pass rate was very low country wide because of the disappearance of qualified teachers. I was only worried about the survival of the school which I managed to maintain until the economic and staffing situations improved. After assembly, we would talk about the economy and equip each other with surviving skills. It was a way of keeping them.

She had to use all sorts of skills for her school to carry on and evidently, the national pass rate for 'Ordinary Level' candidates, was affected by the movement of teachers. She, however, managed to keep her staff. I further probed her on the pathway to being

a substantive head. The increased movement of teachers, mentioned above, seemed to have created an opening for Mrs Toga:

> Since I had experience, I applied in 2011 for a substantive school head position with high hopes, but to my disappointment, I was never called for an interview. At that point I almost gave up because I felt that, if I persisted, I would end up being posted to very remote schools. By then I remember I was the only female secondary school head in the Gweru rural district, although I was acting.

Her initial attempts were rather unsuccessful; however, she seemed to have confidence in herself now that she is talking about her experience as a contributing factor to promotion. She persisted as explained below:

> Within the same year, I applied for the second time and I was called for an interview, which was very difficult. The nature of that interview affected me that I fell sick and took some off-days from work. I recall that there were only two interviewees, a certain gentleman and myself. I was the one who got the post as substantive head of a school in the same area and the economic situation had improved by that time.

The fact that Mrs Toga continued to apply for promotion seems to show the hope she had for the substantive leadership post. In addition, she seems not to be concerned anymore with the gentleman who competed with her for the post. She went on to say, "… was introduced by the Education Officer (EO) to the staff and community as the substantive school head. I did not face any resistance from the staff or local community since I was someone who was already known in the area." Also, she remembered that:

> Even the EO did not seem to trust me with the school am sure, regardless of the fact that I was an acting head for over a year. He started lecturing to me about things to do and not to do and did not give me room to initiate. I just followed his instructions for a short period before I started doing things my own way, which gave me progress.

Mrs Toga's views seem to suggest that even her superiors did not have full confidence in her leadership as a woman. She disclosed that she also did not take instructions from them in full because she wanted to be innovative. In fact, it shows that she wanted to be given chance to show her capabilities as a leader. Her story of surviving without leadership training is discussed below:

4.3.1.1.2 Swim or sink situation

Mrs Toga narrated that:

> …like before, after my appointment, I did not get any proper training, specifically for school leadership. Things seem to have changed a bit now because newly appointed school heads are now being inducted for a week before assuming their duties. However, I still feel that the training or induction is inadequate because there are so many issues in school leadership which call for full knowledge on different critical responsibility areas, such as management of school finances.

What is emphasised here is that the school heads in her district were not being given enough training before starting their work. Of interest is that Mrs Toga expected induction even as she had been in leadership (acting head) for quite some time. Basing on her experiences, she felt that the training needed to be intensified because of the issues that surround school leadership. She went on to complain that:

> No proper training was given to me. I only received staff development through workshops and conferences after the appointment. Also, whenever there was need, I would approach the more experienced school heads for assistance. Ours was either you swim or you sink kind of situation. I remember five to six weeks after my appointment as a substantive head the deputy head, who was equally new, discovered mismanagement of school funds. It was because of my lack of training in financial issues that the school funds were abused. It was only after finance management workshops that things became better; it really opened my eyes.

Nonetheless, Mrs Toga was appreciative of the finance management workshops that were organised for school heads. Also, she acknowledged the help that was given by her male colleagues, a surviving strategy she used since she was relatively new in leadership. An analysis of the disciplinary record book at the school confirmed the case referred to in the interview excerpt above, as well as the action taken. When I asked why they did not engage the police, Mrs Toga explained, "… such actions tend to jeopardise the relationship with the community, which I was trying by all means to maintain. Once you lose those people you are gone."

Mrs Toga was intent on keeping the community close to her for effective administration. It shows that she needed the support of the community. What is not reflected in the

discipline book were the warnings that were given to the bursar before dismissal. When I asked for clarity on the issue, Mrs Toga explained that, "...money issues have no warnings my dear; otherwise people will pull you down." Again, she disagreed on giving warnings to the people who deal with school money, arguing that if she allowed for that more money would disappear. Still on her school leadership experiences, she described the inspections that were carried out at her school as mostly acts of fault-finding.

4.3.1.1.6 Witch hunting

Mrs Toga highlighted that the first three years of her leadership were not easy. She further explained that, both work demands and authorities were sources of much stress for her:

> While I was still being stressed by the demands of this new job, just after a few months, a supervisor was sent to my school. The report I got was not bad, let me say it was fine, maybe because the supervisor was a woman. She was good and very helpful in a number of areas. I am widowed and because of that I found it not easy to seek advice from male authorities in case I would be misunderstood. So I felt very free to talk to this particular supervisor who advised me accordingly.

Mrs Toga explained that she got two more visits from the district office, which is reflected in the school visitors log book. She was clearly uncomfortable to communicate with male authorities because of her marital status, maybe because of the incident she narrated before. According to her, it was like:

> The authorities were after witch hunting because I got two more visits after the first one and those authorities were males. It was good that my teachers were very cooperative and supportive and that everything was found to be going smoothly. Although their reports were not as good as the first one, they were quite fair. I ended up asking the other school heads about the visits but to my surprise all my neighbouring schools were not inspected and yet two heads of the other schools were equally new.

Mrs Toga argued that the visits she got were not entirely genuine based on the fact that other schools were not visited as much. However, it might be because of the way she ran the school since she indicated that she did not fully follow the expectations of the authorities. However, she was grateful for the support she got from her staff members. Below, she gave an account of how she anchored leadership in the parents' support:

4.2.1.2 Perceptions on school leadership

This section considers the perceptions that Mrs Toga had on school leadership. She reflected that:

> …even the parents applauded the Ministry for appointing me as substantive head. I think it was because they believed that women leaders were there to develop schools (laughing) … even the other male school heads were very helpful and always encouraged me since we had worked together for over three years being the only female head.

The response seems to indicate that the community worked well with Mrs Toga, who associated women leadership with development. She appreciated the support and encouragement that she got from the other male school heads. She went on to highlight some of the areas that affected her school leadership most.

4.2.1.2.1 The Zimbabwe Competence Based (new) Curriculum

Mrs Toga explained how taxing the new curriculum is, but at the same time appreciating its introduction. Furthermore, regarding the new curriculum, Mrs Toga explained that:

> We used to enjoy school leadership prior to introduction of the Zimbabwe Competence Based (new) Curriculum of 2017. While learners gain a lot from it, the new curriculum is so involving, forcing school heads to be always away from their stations. At times, the whole school would be involved in sporting activities for a whole week without the actual academic teaching and learning. When the policy was first introduced, it was very difficult to convince parents that sports were part of learning, and some of the parents even saw it as the school head's weakness.

Mrs Toga found more challenges in school leadership now than seemed to be the case before due to extra work required to manage the introduction of the new curriculum. She seemed to be worried by the time school heads spend out of the organisations. As we went around the school, I observed a big playing field which was divided into many areas showing different sporting disciplines and other arenas to which she later admitted that, "… our students are involved in different sporting activities as you saw at the playing field there but they are not very competent because they don't excel in any game. Another reason could be that we do not have experts for some of the games".

Mrs Toga explained that although they had the necessary facilities for sports, her students were not doing well in the sport discipline. While the new curriculum seems to have brought opportunities for different learners, Mrs Toga was concerned about the availability of qualified personnel to train the learners in the different disciplines offered. Back to the issue of the new curriculum, she went on to explain that:

> This program is so demanding that people don't have time to rest, even weekends. A lot of money is pumped out of the school fund as heads, teachers and students go out to participate in those sporting activities. It is very costly, especially for us rural schools because in some cases parents come to work in the school as part of fees payment. I am sure this is going to contribute to the low visibility of females in school leadership. Those with young families and husbands may find it difficult to apply for leadership posts, it's only easy for us widows but at least it keeps us going and busy (laughing).

Mrs Toga appears to be saying that their social time with families is being taken away by work demands. Also she emphasised that her rural school did not have a strong financial base and as a result they were strained by activities that are to be sustained with money. On the issue of too much work without enough rest, she added that such duties may strain relationships. Mrs Toga continued to explain how she perceived women's representation in leadership positions.

4.2.1.2.2 Handicaps in women promotion

This section looked at some of the barriers that militate against women progression in their careers. During our discussion, Mrs Toga indicated that:

> I am the only substantive head in the Gweru Rural District, one other woman is a substantive deputy head and the other four are acting school heads, who are not even substantive deputy heads. What disappoints me is that all these four acting heads are not even willing to apply for substantive head posts. They told me that they did not want to be moved away from their families and their husbands were not even supporting their decisions of being acting heads.

The views reflect that there are some women who are in leadership but not willing to continue with their posts because of family commitments and lack of husband support. In actual fact it shows that there are some women who do not have the interest to develop in their career. Mrs Toga added that, "…one of the acting heads told me that

the teachers at her school were giving her a hard time because they were not supporting her and treated her like an outsider." Her statement also seems to point to the fact that lack of teacher support may also contribute to the invisibility of women in leadership.

Mrs Toga raised the fact that at times females were discouraged by the very little allowance that was being given to school heads as observed by Sperandio & Kagoda (2010). In the same vein, Mrs Toga quoted one acting female head who said, "I would rather remain an ordinary classroom teacher than being a hated school head. You breed enemies by being a school head and yet the salaries are almost the same with those of the ordinary teachers." With this type of attitude among the female leaders, Mrs Toga argued that:

> …it was very difficult to convince and encourage them to remain in or move up to substantive leadership positions because they would always tell you that they were place holders. I always tell them that an allowance is not all there is in leadership because people are supposed to consider other factors, such as the concept of self-actualisation and also socialising with different people.

Besides challenges that are in female leadership, Mrs Toga seems to appreciate the opportunities that come through it. I probed further on the issue of a place holder for clarity and she explained that:

> Some women think the posts are for men so they are just holding the posts for them. So they believe when time is up they will be replaced by men. What I realised is that most of these women came into leadership through the implementation of the gender policy where women were just appointed to high posts. They did not work for the post like what I did (laughing) so I cannot just let go.

Mrs Toga portrays that some women leaders really worked to be where they were while others just got the posts easily and as a result, the later did not seem to value the posts. Some of the women quoted in this excerpt seem to have an attitude that high posts are for men and not for them. However, it seems new female heads have the feeling that men are better leaders than them because this was also reflected in Mrs Toga's excerpts of her early years of leadership. On another note, she talked about visitors that came to her school.

4.2.1.2.3 An open door policy

Responding to the question on how busy her office was in terms of visitors, Mrs Toga commented that, "My office in general is not very busy because I rarely get visitors, especially from outside … but my office is open for anyone [open door policy], even parents who need my attention always get it whenever I am available." To this regard, I realised that for the days I visited her, I was the only visitor from outside. Even in the visitor's log book, there were very few entries or signatures of visitors. Most of visitors' entries were for lecturers from universities and colleges who visited their students on teaching practice. There were only two other signatures which showed that the visitors were from the Health department and their purpose of visiting was *AIDS awareness in schools.* Out of interest, I asked Mrs Toga what activities children were involved in on AIDS awareness and she started by laughing before she commented that:

> People have their own ways of claiming for allowances from their work places. These people came with pamphlets and left them in here for us to give to the learners. We thought they were going to address the learners but they said they did not have time because they wanted to reach many schools before dismissal time. We just gave them to the teachers and encouraged them to explain to the learners because we have some learners who cannot read and understand on their own.

Although we did not discuss it any further, the data seem to reveal that the pamphlets were not explained to the learners so the teachers just used their own knowledge and discretion when engaging with learners. On the issue of parents, about four of them came to her office while I was there. One of them talked about the payment of school fees:

> **Mrs Toga**: *Mangwanani baba* [Good morning, sir]
> **Parent**: *Mamuka sei? Ndaitawo chichemo mhai* [How is your morning? I have a problem ma'am] (removing his hat).
> **Mrs Toga**: *Ndecheiko baba?* [What is the problem sir?]
> **Parent**: *Inyaya dzeschool fees yevana* [It is the issue of my children's school fees].
> **Mrs Toga**: *Hoo ok, ndofunga mukaenda kuna deputy vanogona kukubatsirai. Vanozongondiudza zvamunenge mabvumirana.* [… I think if you go to the deputy he will assist you. He will update me on your agreements].
> **Parent**: *Tinotenda mai vedu* [Thank you, our mother] (clapping hands and leaving the office).

The conversation reflects the good relationship that seemed to be there between Mrs Toga and the parents. The parent also showed respect by removing his hat. However, none or late payment of school fees might have contributed to the slow development of the school. Furthermore, Mrs Toga explained her areas of concern:

4.3 Challenges and opportunities

Mrs Toga explained some of the challenges and opportunities she came across in the execution of her duties as a school head. She gave an account of how she was affected by being a teaching school head considering her other duties.

4.3.1 Challenges of a teaching head

Mrs Toga explained the challenges she encountered as a teaching school head: "I always find it difficult to execute all my planned duties". Upon asking her to clarify a teaching head, she had this to say: "… the enrolment of the school is the determinant factor for one to have teaching loads or not." She further explained that, "…my school is not very big so I am considered as one of the teaching members, although my load is a bit less than the full time classroom teachers." The data show that teaching heads seem to be overwhelmed by the duties that include classroom teaching.

a) Teaching load

Table 4.13 is part of the master time table which shows Mrs Toga's teaching load per week.

Table 4.13: School head's teaching timetable

Time	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
08-840					
840-920	Com-F 2 A	Geo-F1A			
920-1000			Com-F1 B	Geo-F3A	Com-F2A
10-1130	B	E	A	K	
1130-1210	Geo-F3 A		Geo-F1A	Com-1 B	

Key: Com-commerce; Geo-Geography

The timetable indicates that Mrs Toga is supposed to have at most two lessons a day for different classes and different subjects. When I asked how she copes with the demands, she commented that, "… to be honest there is no way I can teach every day with these other duties. The fact that I am supposed to teach different classes means I must have different scheme books for the classes, something I cannot do because of time and the nature of my duties." When I probed further on the issue of schemes of work, she openly admitted that, "… I use the schemes of work prepared by the other teachers who teach the same subjects and classes whenever I get time to teach and at times I don't even follow the time table because of my busy schedule."

Evidently, Mrs Toga had heavy teaching load considering the pressure of her other work responsibilities. While it might not be easy to use someone's schemes of work to teach, Mrs Toga admitted that she relied on others' schemes. She further explained that, "I have an activity schedule set everyday but at times by the end of the day most activities would not have been done." This was evidenced by the time table hung in her office which showed that she was supposed to teach the very day that I visited her. In response to what she does with her teaching load when she was busy, she clarified that:

> I would ask some of the teachers to teach the classes for me. What I don't do is just to ignore the time table without finding my replacement. I like my teachers because they are very helpful in times of crisis but at the same time feel for them because their loads are double now because of the new curriculum.

The extract shows a positive working spirit which prevailed at Mrs Toga's school. The evidence shows that cooperation of the teachers alleviates pressure from the school head. She further specified some of the duties that contributed to her busy schedule as a school head, "… First thing every Monday, I am supposed to check the accounts books and the surroundings." I spent the whole day on a Monday with her. We managed to go around the school before assembly which was led by the teacher on duty and then the deputy head concluded with some announcements. After assembly, Mrs Toga was phoned by the district events chief organiser and she had this to say:

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> …is exactly what I was saying, that there are too many duties for us as heads to the extent that we tend to neglect our core business of instructional leadership. Now the chief organiser for our district is asking me to prepare a list of the needed items for the upcoming function and the list is to be submitted tomorrow. This means I cannot even conduct my lessons … my deputy head and other administrators work very hard, they are the ones who do most of the lesson observations and book inspections.

The extract still emphasises on the issue of teamwork in Mrs Toga's school. It also shows that there was distributive leadership style at the school. Out of interest, I ended up asking her position in the particular district committee and she clarified that: "I am the district treasurer in that committee." So she ended up not checking school accounts books that very Monday and she added with concern that: "… this is the reason why some school bursars misuse funds, because school heads do not have time to check the books all the time."

The extract reflects clearly the busy schedule for Mrs Toga and her concern on school finance management. Furthermore, she explained that, "The instructional leadership is now missing in schools because of too many out of school commitments. For example, I have been away from my station for two full weeks." This was also evidenced by her signatures in the log book that reflected her in and out of school movements. She emphasised that, "… one needs to have a supportive staff that would always stand in the gap when the school head is away; especially the management team or else the learning standards will deteriorate."

Mrs Toga's explanations point to the fact that school heads were overwhelmed by out of school duties more than in school duties, especially for her as a teaching head. What also appeared to be significant was the point that school heads needed to work together with their subordinates in order to keep the standard of the schools high. Similarly, she expressed the same sentiments on student discipline as reflected below:

b) Influence of school location

Mrs Toga explained the problems of student discipline which she suspected were caused by the location of her school. She pointed out that, "… student discipline is a problem here, although it is an area handled by the deputy head; it needs the help of

everyone." This was confirmed by the records in the student discipline book where a number of students had been to the disciplinary committee with different offences. Some of the extracts from the book are presented below:

> Two Form 3 students, a male and a female [names were listed] were found behind the new classroom block in a compromising position during lessons and they were taken to the deputy head for discipline. After talking to other students the head found out that these two always dodge lessons to have time together. The disciplinary committee gave the students some pieces of land to clear as punishment...

The extract above shows that there were a number of cases which were handled by the disciplinary committee at the school. Since corporal punishment is not encouraged in schools, the extract shows that the school used other punishments to reduce mischief among learners. She further emphasised that:

> Although the deputy head is the one to handle that area, there are some serious cases which would be referred to the school head for final decisions. Anyway, I have never expelled any student for all the years I have been at this school except pregnancy cases, not because I am weak but because I feel for the poor parents. There were some cases which were brought to me which deserved expulsion but after discussing with parents, we just decided to warn and keep the students. Our parents here struggle to keep their children in schools because of their financial status.

Mrs Toga revealed that people may mistake her lenience for weakness. Culturally in Zimbabwe, pregnant girls are not expected to continue learning in the formal education system. Although Policy Circular Minute 35 (1999) allows pregnant girls to continue with their education, Runhare (in *The Chronicle,* 29 January, 2013) explains that socio-economic beliefs of the community on pregnancy are more influential to education access and participation than the official school or university policy, hence the expulsion of pregnant girls from Mrs Toga's school. However, further reading showed that the issue is still being debated.

Evidence in the disciplinary book confirmed that most indiscipline cases were administered by the deputy head or senior master. With unmistakable disappointment in her voice, Mrs Toga said, "… at times students, both boys and girls, abscond lessons. I think it is because today's children no longer take education seriously." Responding to

what could be the reason for such an attitude, she expounded that, "… maybe it is because they see their brothers and sisters who completed secondary school still loitering in the communities." She further elaborated that:

> The economic state of our country discourages our children also; as a result, they find education to be useless and a waste of time. That is the way I look at it. There are no jobs even for those with degrees. The other problem is that children these days are very idle; they are not innovative and they can't think of self-employment. It's difficult to convince them under such challenging circumstances. Quite often, I have conversations with senior students on life issues especially girls. I always tell them to work hard to improve their family life because most of them are from very poor backgrounds.

While Mrs Toga sees the importance of education, she also cites the economic state of the country, which is discouraging and not supportive. That might be some of the reasons why some of the girls prefer to be married than continuing with their education. This is also one area which the New Curriculum is trying to address by engaging learners in different disciplines so that after school, some may be self-employed. She further explained how the parents supported their children's education, when she said, "Most of the parents here survive on subsistence farming. They pay their children's school fees after selling their field/garden produce." For those who have problems with paying school fees, she indicated that, "… they would work in the school as fees payment." As a result, she encourages her students to work very hard so as to improve their livelihood. Data show that learners were drawn from a low class community, which could also be an explanation for the very few buildings at the school. If some of the parents pay fees in kind, then there might not be enough money to develop the school. However, besides dealing with student issues, as school head, Mrs Toga highlighted her challenges in balancing work and family issues.

4.3.1.2 Family responsibilities: Life of a widow

Mrs Toga explained her demanding duties as a family woman and a widow in the sections that follow.

4.3.1.2.1 Children's needs

Mrs Toga is a widow who got into leadership after the death of her husband. During our discussion she did not talk much about her married life, but cited some challenges she faced as a widow:

> It is not easy to be a single parent; I had to shoulder everything after my husband's death. I struggled with the general welfare of my children. Although they are just two, I really felt it. My husband died while my children were still at primary school level and you know our secondary school fees. I really worked hard because I had to join other women who were buying and selling during holidays. We would go to *makorokoza* [illegal gold miners] and you know how rough those people could be. They would call us names and at times they would take our staff without paying.

In the extract, Mrs Toga explained how she tried to make ends meet by supplementing her salary. It shows that she was a responsible parent, although the road appeared to be rough for her. However, she continued as follows:

> It was not possible for me to continue with the buying and selling business after taking up the leadership post because of work commitments. Still I had to come up with some strategies to back up my salary because the allowances for these posts are very minimal. I started rearing chickens intensively both at school and at home. It really worked for me and my children sailed well through their secondary school education.

The extract shows that Mrs Toga was very innovative because, while her job seemed to be demanding, she still managed to find ways of getting extra money for her children's education. This reflects back on her early discussion that she was groomed during her early socialisation to all sorts of jobs. She added that:

> I had to continue working for their college fees, especially for the one who went to the Poly-technical College. The other one went to a nursing school where she was paying school fees from her allowances. I would only supply her with other needs and rentals. Things got much easier for me because they got jobs without hassles. When I thought life was a bit relaxed my brother and his wife had an accident and passed on (saying with a very low voice). I had to take their three children and stayed with them. My brother had no formal job so I started from scratch in terms of school fees (sighing).

Mrs Toga expressed some sadness while she was narrating her brother's episode. Although college demands eased Mrs Toga's pressure, she had to take other

responsibilities. I tried to change the subject but she went on with her story (a bit relaxed):

> At first it was not easy because by the time I get home I will be dead tired and yet the children will need my attention. It is an advantage for me now to have them around because they do most of the household chores and look after the home … when I am away.

Although it was not easy for Mrs Toga to raise her brother's children, she expressed her appreciation for them. The data show that she was even sharing the responsibilities with the children, hence lessening pressure on her somehow. Mrs Toga also explained her other family tasks that were demanding as follows.

4.3.1.2.2 Parents' needs

Mrs Toga elaborated further on the responsibilities she had for her in-laws besides her own children when she said:

> In my husband's family there were four children; he was the first born and only boy. That situation made my life very complicated after he had gone (again a sad face). I had to take up the responsibility of the family single-handedly. My father-in-law was diabetic and my mother-in-law was a high blood pressure patient. They needed their medical supplies every month and regular check-ups. This is one factor that pushed me to go for driving lessons soon after my husband's death. I would drive home every month-end to make sure they get their needs on time.

In the above excerpt, Mrs Toga expressed the constraints that she had financially and even socially after the husband's death. She had to take more responsibilities which added to her already existing heavy load. The situation seemed to be difficult for her as both a school head and a parent. She went on to elaborate on how she carried out her duties:

> Come rain season, I would buy seed and fertiliser for them. They could not do much for themselves because of their health condition and also age so I had to hire a maid and a herd-boy to assist them and that was another expense. An African woman has no rest (laughing). During the holidays, I would ask my girls to go and help them as well. It is unfortunate that the time when my finances were stabilising, that is the year these two died and there was another gap in the family. These were like my own parents because mine had long passed on.

Although Mrs Toga gave a detailed account of her story, I could tell from her face that it was a very sensitive area for her. The extract portrays Mrs Toga as a hard-working and responsible someone, who even trained her children by engaging them in family issues. She got her promotion after her husband's death and never talked about the kind of support she got from her in-laws on her career choice. To lighten up the atmosphere, I changed the topic and asked how she felt about leadership and opportunities in their national association as secondary school heads.

4.3.2 Opportunities for school leaders

Mrs Toga explained some of the openings that are available for women in school leadership, although she perceived some of them as suppressed by their male counterparts.

4.3.2.1 Social networking

Mrs Toga described the platforms on which they mix and mingle as secondary school heads as follows:

> Towards the end of every year, we, as secondary heads, organise some trips to go out to some resort places for a short break from the pressures of work. Everyone seems to look forward to it, even myself. For some local functions, some give excuses, such as going to church or attending to family issues, but surprisingly no one seems to excuse himself/herself for our end of year function unless if one is seriously ill. We share a lot during this period.

Mrs Toga showed a lot of excitement when she talked about their short holiday. It is the time when school heads from different provinces meet. The evidence seems to reveal that most school heads looked forward for the break at the end of every year, which might be one of the factors that might encourage some heads to take up leadership positions including females. Again Mrs Toga seemed disturbed when she added that, "… it is unfortunate that we lost two of our colleagues in a car accident this year [2017] when they were driving from a function which was held in Kariba. One of them was my uncle." This scenario seemed to have brought back some bad memories for her. Nevertheless, we went on to talk about the achievements that she realised at her school.

4.3.2.1.1 Achievements through leadership

The Table 4.14 shows the academic pass rates which were produced at her school and its position in the district within a period of four years.

Table 4.14: O' Level academic outcome

YEAR	PASS RATE (%)	POSITION IN THE DISTRICT
2013	28%	16 out of 18
2014	31%	15 out of 18
2015	25%	16 out of 18
2016	27%	16 out of 18

The O' Level results in Table 4.14 indicate a low pass rate for the school. The position in the district also shows that the school is at the bottom of the performance graph. This is evidenced by her early discussions when she said that the school's performance was affected by poor facilities and resources. Furthermore, we discussed how she empowered women at her school. She explained some interesting and unique ways through which she groomed females within her organisation for future leadership posts.

4.3.2.2 Preparing females for leadership

In this section, Mrs Toga revealed how she encouraged women to be confident in order for them to be able to take high positions in schools. She started with the female students:

4.3.2.2.1 Training the girl child

From the conversations we had, Mrs Toga had not hidden her concerns with the girl child. Elaborating on her engagement with senior girls in the school, she had this to say:

> Our girl child needs to be empowered because she is very vulnerable. If we don't do that, they are likely to be abused. We talk about ways that they can use to raise money for their personal needs. Most of the girls in this school are not very talented academically, so they need to be equipped with life skills. At this school, we also observe the international girl child day on the 11th of every October. The girls will do some poems and drama activities

about a girl child, at the assembly. It's their day which they look forward to every year.

In the excerpt, Mrs Toga explained how she helped girls at her school to realise themselves and made sure they were heard through dramatization and poetry. The data show that she built confidence in girls and also empowered them for future roles, which include leadership. Evidence also shows that the school celebrated the child day with the rest of the world every year. She continued to explain with excitement:

> Normally, we get two or more guest speakers from outside the school for them. This year, it was full of joy because we managed to source some donations of sanitary pads, body lotions and stationery for them. At this school, the parents cook for our students; there is a Catholic organisation that supplies us with food. On such a particular day, special meals are prepared for everyone. We, as teachers, supplement the donations for the food to be special, though we don't earn much money (laughing).

This extract reflects on the amount of concern that the school, as a whole, had for the girl child. They try to make the day as interesting as possible. To widen the learners' perception about the girl child, they engaged various people including guest speakers and donors. This also adds value to the day. On a negative note, she then explained that:

> Some of the girls are quite mischievous here and we deal with pregnant cases every term, especially form threes and fours. As you have seen, our school is in a bushy area, so it is not easy to see them when they sneak out with the boys. I find it necessary to talk to them always about the dangers of early pregnancies. At one time, I asked the health personnel from our local clinic to come and teach them. Some of the parents, who are also concerned, came to school to thank me for the programme.

What seems to be recurring is the view that there were girls who got pregnant while still in the school system. In her discussion, she gave the location of the school as one of the main causes of the students' mischievous behaviour. Her concerns for the girl child, were further shown by involving people from other institutions. It could be of paramount importance to also talk to parents about the risk of early marriages since some of them encourage the practice as part of their culture. In addition, she talked about empowerment of female teachers.

4.3.2.2.2 Imparting leadership skills to female teachers

In this section, Mrs Toga explained how she engaged women in administration issues. She revealed that, "… I have females only as HODs here. In my administration, I have only two males, who are, the deputy head and the senior master; otherwise the rest are women. It also happened that men are few at this school." This is in line with Table 4.15 below:

Table 4.15: School management team

SCHOOL HEAD: MRS TOGA	
SCHOOL DEPUTY HEAD: MR X	
SENIOR WOMAN: MISS Y	SENIOR MASTER: MR Z
HEADS OF DEPARTMENT	
DEPARTMENT	NAME OF HOD
1.Sciences	Mrs-----
2. Languages	Mrs-------
3. Vocational and Technical (Voc-Tech)	Miss------
4. Humanities	Mrs------
5. Sports and Mass displays	Miss-----

Table 4.15 shows that all the HODs were women because of the titles given. Responding to the question on why she had females only as HODs, she defended herself by saying:

> Females are very easy to deal with and they are cooperative compared to male teachers. Most female teachers seek favours from the head as a result they try by all means not to disappoint her or him (laughing). I don't have any problem with female teachers here.

This is contrary to what she said before that there were no problems with all teachers because they were cooperative, but here she said only female teachers were cooperative. The data seems to reveal that women do not challenge authority unlike men. She went on and said that, "… I encourage female teachers to apply whenever posts are advertised, but most of them would always resist giving the same reason that the advertised schools were far from their family homes." In this extract, distance from home seems to be taken as one of the reasons why some women do not apply for

leadership posts. However, on the other hand, the excerpt also shows that some women were not confident to take up leadership posts. In the same view, Mrs Toga further argued that:

> …most women lack confidence and courage when it comes to leadership issues, even internally. Yet I feel women are better leaders than men because they are patient, sympathetic and they are not selfish. Most men look at the achievement of goals only – they are result oriented without considering the welfare of teachers and students, and even the school development.

Mrs Toga also observes that, "… few women apply for leadership positions, but they give up when they don't get positive replies after their first attempt; they are not patient. Yet women must know that there are many snares on the way to leadership." This is contrary to what she said in the previous excerpt that women were good leaders because they were patient and blamed men for being too goal focused. Nevertheless, she saw women as lacking patience and emphasised that the road to leadership is not an easy one for women because there are many obstacles on the way that can hinder them from manoeuvring. This should give confidence and hope to those women who aspire to be in leadership positions. Furthermore, Mrs Toga added the following:

> I encourage my female teachers by sending them to workshops and seminars where they would mix and mingle with others from different schools. When they come back they would report to the school, it helps them to build confidence. When I appoint women to attend workshops, they seem not to like it at first but when they come back after the workshop they would be thankful and talk a lot about it to others.

Mrs Toga emphasised that women need exposure where they interact with different people to build confidence in them. She applied the same strategy used to groom her for leadership. Still on the empowering of female teachers Mrs Toga reported that:

> At one time I was called to the district offices after appointing a female deputy to replace a male deputy who had proceeded on vacation leave. Although I won the argument, it was not easy for me to justify and defend the decision. I am happy now because the woman I groomed is now the only substantive female deputy head in the district (smiling). This makes us the only two women with substantive school leadership posts in our district at secondary school level. A handful of other women are just acting heads or deputy heads.

The extract shows Mrs Toga's excitement when she explained how she groomed one of the women into leadership. Also, it shows that she stood by her decisions when she won her case of appointing a female as her acting deputy head. She also portrays a lot of confidence in her work as a school head. In addition, Mrs Toga further talked about how some of the women administrators behaved when they closed school at the end of the day:

> It is important for the administrators to leave school last at dismissal time so as to make sure everything is in order and also teachers must not go away leaving students in the school premises. I don't have any problems with male teachers on that issue, unlike women in middle management, who give family demands as excuses to rush home always. Some even tell you that their husbands expect them home early. That is why I was saying leadership is good for the widows and singles (laughing).

The response suggests that women leaders' effectiveness could be disturbed by family demands. Again, she repeated the issue of leadership and marital status. This was supported by the log book where, quite often, most of the teachers sign out just a few minutes after dismissal time. However, things were different for the days I was there; I would leave most teachers there about thirty minutes after the learners had gone. She then added an interesting point:

> As women leaders in the district, these include female heads, deputy heads and senior women; we set aside women's international day as our day. Every year on the 8th of March, we celebrate the day at different schools. That is the day we will be eating our best food (laughing). We will be having powerful speakers from different walks of life. Through such gatherings, some of the teachers here are running small businesses. It is a day we all look forward to every year. One of the teachers even suggested, 'why don't we have it twice a year?' I always learn a lot from these functions and they are so refreshing.

The information reflects on how some of the female teachers at the school got informed and inspired. The discussion shows the different platforms used to groom or empower female teachers by Mrs Toga, as an innovative head. This section highlighted the opportunities that women leaders and those that aspire for leadership post had in the education system.

In summary, Mrs Toga grew up in a rural set up where she was groomed to do different types of jobs. During her primary education, she stayed with her father, a teacher who

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inspired her. Also, she admired her colleagues at college who held leadership positions. Her father was her pillar of strength in everything she did. On one hand, she became a widow before taking up a leadership post and as a result, her challenges were unique. On the other hand, she became an acting school head at a time when the country was experiencing economic meltdown and she had to put up with a lot of challenges. When the situation became stable, she became a substantive head. Her school is small and as a result, she is experiencing the problem of heavy teaching loads in addition to her demanding duties as a school head. To mitigate some of the mentioned problems, she highlighted a number of ways she used. Also she empowered females at her school by observing with them commemorations such as women or girl child days. Of interest here is the fact that her school is a poor rural one but she manages to empower the female teachers and girls in a unique way. A full summary of the whole chapter is outlined below.

4.4 Summary

This chapter reflected on the accounts that were given by the three female secondary school heads in this study. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observations and document analysis. The data showed that each participant had her own unique experiences and perceptions of female school leadership. However, although the involved female heads had some differences, they also had some commonalities in the way they were socialised and progressed to school leadership positions. Also, some of their challenges were similar. Chapter five is a cross case analysis of the participants' accounts and some conclusions were drawn from the summarised findings.

CHAPTER 5: Analysis, Discussions, Summary of the Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter presented data on *Female secondary school heads' experiences of leadership in the Gweru District of Zimbabwe*. The main objective of the study was to investigate the experiences of female secondary school heads in both urban and rural set ups. The analysis and discussions of the findings, conclusions and recommendations are discussed in sections that follow under the themes that emerged from the participants' narratives and the related literature. The themes were guided by the following sub questions:

1. What are female secondary school heads' experiences of their career progression from senior teacher to school headship?

2. How does socialisation impact on women educators' decisions to take up leadership roles in schools?

3. What are the challenges and opportunities of female secondary school heads in the daily execution of their duties?

4. How can female secondary school heads' experiences about leadership be explained?

5. What recommendations can be made to improve women's visibility in educational leadership?

Before discussing this interesting phenomenon, the relevance of the theoretical framework is presented first.

5.2 Feminism as a theoretical lens for the present study

Feminism challenged the most basic assumptions of conventional political thought which kept the role of women off the political agenda on the basis of their sexual

''disability'' or ''disadvantage'' (Heywood, 2002). As a political movement, feminism is mostly motivated by a concern for co-equal social role and position and rights of women vis-à-vis male members in a society (Ibid). This theory bears relevance for this study where gender equality in leadership is under scrutiny. The theory is not seen as a coherent ideology but as a combination of some major traditions developed within feminism that believe in human equality (Vukoicic, 2017) hence the engagement with different ideas from different scholars of feminism in this study. Feminists generally seek to uncover the influence of patriarchy not only in politics, public life and economy but also in all aspects of social, personal and sexual existence (Heywood, 2002).

The analysis of the data in this study shows the relevance of the chosen theoretical framework in different ways. The fact that the participants in this study were not men speaks to the fact that power is not a privilege of a particular group or individual, but is universal and dynamic as believed by the post structuralist feminists (Wooldridge, 2015: St Pierre, 2000). There are no fixed rules for leadership, hence it is not static as demonstrated in the different leadership styles adopted by the three women leaders in the study. For instance, while Mrs Toga and Mrs Moyo used a lot of delegation in the execution of their duties, Mrs Sibanda believed in doing most of the duties herself. This study sought to provide a platform for individual women to voice their problems and not to consider them as collective problems (Wooldridge, 2015; Smith, 2015). Through this study, women heads' concerns may be known to the world and thereby lead to formulation of useful and responsive policies to enable their work.

Data were collected from three married women, to find out the extent to which marriage affected their career choices as school leaders, if at all. This is in line with the radical feminists' belief that women's individuality is often compromised by marriage, leading them to depend too much on man emotionally (Perkins, 2011). The three women participants expressed their unique opinions and beliefs about leadership through interviews. This in line with the theory's position that women's unique experiences can only be measured subjectively (Crotty, 1998). The interviews allowed for that subjectivity. For women to break the 'glass- ceiling' there was need for them to work harder than their male counterparts. The participants described the ways they used to

survive under difficult situations in order for them to stay in leadership. They talked about how they often had to prove a point to the staff and community that they were just as good as their male counterparts. The analysis demonstrated how the participants needed space to compete in their leadership and also to express their own knowledge as advocated by the post-structuralist feminists (Grogan, 2010; Smith, 2018). In addition, the narratives of the female secondary school leaders show that they go through what Van Eck et al. (1996) call career path model stages-that is, the preparation, acquisition and performance. The women articulated their unique experiences and perceptions during the three stages as reflected in the cross case analysis presented below.

5.3 Cross-case analysis and discussions

The section below presents the cross-case analysis, to bring out the similarities and differences between the three cases studied. Literature from chapter two is used to inform the discussion and analysis. The first part of the section looks at the biographical data and characteristics of the qualitative sample chosen for this research in relation to how it shaped their leadership experiences.

5.3.1 Biographical data (Table 4.1)

The findings on biographical data show that all the three females in the study came through middle leadership before their appointment as heads of their respective schools. This underscores the importance of such middle-level leadership exposure or experience including tacit knowledge before assuming the headship of their school. Makura (2009) observes that in most countries, new leaders depend on the skills they acquired during middle leadership and the ones they will acquire during their leadership practice. This also is in line with stage one (anticipation) of Van Eck et al.'s (1996) career path model, which draws the attention to the importance of the anticipation stage. This is the stage where the school head is often expected to acquire the necessary skills and knowledge for leadership. The next section looks at the characteristics of the three participants.

5.3.2 Characteristics of qualitative sample (Table 4.2)

Mrs Moyo is a substantive head at an urban day and boarding school in the city of Gweru and her school comprised of 14 male and 40 female teachers, making a total of 54, 1 875 students and 12 non-academic staff. She is married and has 4 children. In comparison, the second participant, Mrs Sibanda, is also a substantive head at an urban day secondary school with a teaching establishment of 10 male and 21 female teachers totalling 31, 1305 and 5 non-teaching staff. Mrs Sibanda is also married and has 3 children.

On the other hand, the third participant, Mrs Toga, like the other two participants is a substantive head of a rural secondary school. Information displayed in her office shows that there are 7 female and 3 male teachers at her school and only one non-academic staff who is working as a school clerk. The total number of students for the whole school, as shown on an enrolment list displayed in the office, is 370. Mrs Toga revealed that she is a widow with two children.

Evidently, female teachers outnumbered male teachers by far in all the three schools studied. This is an observation that is consistent with the findings by several other scholars who have studied women's issues across many countries, such as Coleman (2001, 2007) in the UK; Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) in Uganda, Coleman 2003b and Greyling & Steyn (2015) in South Africa; Choge (2015); Barmao and Mukhwana (2013) in Kenya, and Makura (2009); Chabaya, Rembe and Wadesango (2009); and Mapolisa and Madziyire (2012) in Zimbabwe. All these scholars concur on the increasing feminisation of the teaching profession, where there are fewer and fewer men in the classrooms than women. While this appears to be the trend in the present study, it is important to note however that the sample for this study is rather too small to generalise such findings.

Also of interest is the fact that all the three participants got married before they became school heads. The marital status of the participants somewhat negates the point made by Makura (2009) and Msila (2013) that most female heads were not married because

of conflicting roles. The present findings show that two of the three participants are still married while one is a widow. One may also draw from the above analysis that marriage may not always be contradictory to career advancement because the three women got married first before taking up leadership posts. The constant struggles to balance family life, marriage and career opportunities are however vivid in the narratives of these women and should be acknowledged.

5.3.3 Social training from childhood

Tracing the three women's stories in this study, it is evident that girls are able to aspire for high posts even at a very early stage of life. Kiamba (2008) argues that children do aspire for certain careers during early socialisation. The three participants all seem to have been influenced by their parents in the early stages of their lives. Dorsey's (1996) view that from an early age, girls are prepared for their marriage duties of wife, mother and food provider and that they are conditioned, while they are still young, to believe that a woman was lower than a man and that her place was in the home, is not entirely supported by the analysis in this study even as the girls grew up doing all the traditional household chores. It is not clear from the data that any of those roles created what could be seen as the psychosis of inferiority among the women in this study.

In contrast, all the three participants talked about growing up with their fathers who appeared to be their role models and the ones who socialised them into being who they eventually became. The data support the claim by Hatty (2000) that there is no individual who is born a man or a woman, but people imitate gender roles. This is what largely accounts for the differences. In support of this view, Hofstede et al. (2010) argue that most of the gender roles are instead socialised into individuals (and not the vice-versa). It seems like Mrs Toga's strictness, even at work, follows from her father who socialised her into that kind of outlook. Therefore, from such findings, one might be persuaded to believe that early socialisation and particular role models play significant roles in one's future career choices.

Mrs Moyo and Mrs Sibanda disclosed that their fathers had positions at their workplaces; as a result, they tended also to be results-oriented. That might have

inspired their children to aspire for high positions in their careers as well. Again, this challenges the view by among others, Shaffer (1996), Amadiume (1998) and Moore (2003) that girls are socialised towards the expressive role, that is, to be nurturing, kind, supportive and compassionate in preparation for motherhood and to be good wives. Findings in this study show that not all forms of early socialisation for girls are meant for domestic roles. None of the participants even aspired to be a house wife. They all seem to have been inspired to aim for high societal positions by their parents, especially the fathers.

Shafer and Malhotra (2011) argue that men often appear to be less supportive in the teaching of their girl children in comparison with their sons. However, the present analysis reveals that the fathers of the three female participants socialised them to aspire for top jobs, and were very supportive when they took up leadership posts. Therefore, it may not be very correct to conclude that women socialise girls into feminine gender roles while men socialise boys into masculine roles, a belief generally held by society.

Among the three women it seems Mrs Toga is the one who received a lot of training from her parents, especially the father. She did a lot of household chores and other male duties during her childhood, which may have shaped and strengthened her confidence and courage to venture into uncertain situations and challenges. This is supported by Powell and Graves (2003) and Hofstede et al. (2010) who believe that parents' mind-set and conviction about their children and gender roles influence the children's intentions and competences, and that goes a long way in establishing the future profession of the children. From these findings, it is that Mrs Toga's choice of leadership, as a career, was influenced by the mind-set of the father. In any case, not all the socialisation came from their families; the way the participants were educated also had its own contributions on the three women's career choices.

5.3.4 Career development opportunities

The three women talked about the different ways through which they were inspired by various people at the different stages or level throughout their education. Regardless of

the many aspects which add to the socialisation of children into their imagined gender roles, *education* is categorised as one of the major agents of socialisation (Powell & Graves, 2003; Leaper & Friedman, 2007). The present analysis shows that Mrs Sibanda was appointed prefect and later as an assistant head girl at primary school level. She was given a lot of responsibilities when she joined her rural primary school after the death of her father. She admits that this is partly what shaped and strengthened her confidence when she got appointed, in form four, as one of the prefects for form two classes. Similarly, Mrs Moyo revealed that she was chosen to be a group leader at form three level. She was inspired by her Home Economics (H/E) teacher who was full of confidence and appeared to be in control. Although evidence shows that most of the students did not like that particular H/E teacher, she was Mrs Moyo's role model. She got inspired by her character.

Mrs Toga, on the other hand described how she was never allowed to hold any leadership positions both at primary and secondary school level but she took confidence in seeing her friends and associates taking charge during her teacher education training. Mrs Sibanda indicated that she was inspired by a friend at college who used to man the whole hostel, and by another woman who was the only female on the Student Representative Council (SRC). The foregoing analysis seems to underscore the point that children draw different inspiration from different events and experiences as they grow up.

Interestingly though, it appears that the 3 women did not draw much inspiration from their female college lecturers. Could this be in line with cultural expectations as highlighted by Gaidzanwa (1993) who notes that women are not supposed to desire for equal high professional and occupational positions with men in society? This could be part of the explanation for why there were few college lecturers during the time when the 3 participants were at college. The 3 women clearly had different experiences and their perceptions of leadership varied somewhat as they progressed from qualified junior teachers to school heads as shown in the discussion below.

5.3.5 Female school leaders' career path

This section analysed female secondary school heads' career experiences within their respective school organisations in terms of their perceptions and experiences of school leadership as they progressed from junior teacher level to school headship. After qualifying as junior teachers, Mrs Sibanda and Mrs Toga were eager to be deployed in urban areas but were posted to rural schools. Mrs Moyo got deployed in town, maybe because she was married already when she completed her training. There was a time when the Zimbabwean government encouraged working married people to stay together and I believe that was the time when these participants completed their teacher training. Furthermore, their experiences, as middle leaders, are analysed as follows.

5.3.5.1 Anticipation for leadership

Although all the three female secondary school heads, in this study, went through middle-level leadership at one point or the other in their careers, their experiences vary. The results show that Mrs Sibanda spent 14 years in the middle leadership position while Mrs Toga follows with 4 and Mrs Moyo with only two. Surprisingly, Mrs Moyo is the most seasoned head among the three with 20 years' experience as a school head. As mentioned before, Mrs Moyo started heading schools at the age of 30 while both Mrs Sibanda and Mrs Toga had 11 years' experience as secondary school heads as shown on Table 4.1. Clearly, the evidence suggests that there is no appropriate age range for leadership as each one of women got into leadership at different stages.

Mrs Sibanda has the widest experience at middle leadership because she was appointed and served as senior woman for twelve years as shown on Table 4.2. She also mentioned that during that long period, she was engaged in most administrative duties, and at one time she was appointed acting deputy head for a term while the substantive deputy head was on leave. At middle leadership stage, aspiring leaders acquire necessary skills for leadership as indicated in the career path model (Van Eck et al., 1996). That is the time Mrs Sibanda recalls as the worst during her middle leadership period. She said male teachers gave her a tough time, maybe because they did not accept her as a leader; hence, they wanted their issues to be solved by the head

all the time. Crotty (1998) observes that, even if women and men may have the same qualifications, practically women will continue to struggle to receive equal rights as men regarding leadership positions. Hence women need to voice themselves (Crotty, 1998) through their stories as argued by the post-structuralist feminist theory (Smith, 2018). Therefore, the way Mrs Sibanda was treated by male teachers may mean that even though she had the same qualifications as the deputy head, she did not receive the same respect that would have been accorded her male counterparts in the same leadership position.

Mrs Sibanda further pointed out that even though the school head supported her as part of management, he would insist that she should allow those with problems to see him. This may suggest that even the head was not as confident with her leadership skills. The findings, therefore, show that women need to work hard in order to be seen as competent leaders by their subordinates.

On the other hand, Mrs Toga indicated that she had a very supportive school head during her middle management period. She recounted that after a period of three years as a senior teacher, she was appointed deputy head, although she was not confident with herself. She said she was not sure whether she got the post genuinely or just because she was the only woman who competed with men in the interview. Dorsey (1989) and Gordon (1996) allege that women remain in subordinate positions without progressing in their careers because of lack of self-esteem. Also, the NGP (2013-2017) encourages the promotion of women to high positions in Zimbabwe, which also may have contributed to Mrs Toga's appointment.

When she got elevated to the position of substantive deputy head, Mrs Toga received anonymous calls telling her that she got the post through promiscuous behaviours. Such an attitude showed that female heads were not as respected as men (Greyling & Steyn, 2015). Similarly, Dorsey (1989) also echoes the same sentiment, arguing that some teachers verbally abuse women leaders in schools. The findings highlight the point that sometimes people do not believe that women are promoted on the basis of competence but on reasons, such as the ministration of sexual favours, and as a result, they lack the respect they deserve just because they are women.

As for Mrs Moyo, she did not meet a lot of resistance from both staff and community during her middle management period. Instead, she got a lot of encouragement from her colleagues when she was appointed HOD. Just like the other two , Mrs Moyo worked as a deputy head (for only a year) before being appointed as a school head as shown in Table 4.2.

All the participants agree that it was not easy at their first appointment because there was no proper training given to them for school leadership. In their research, Zikhali and Perumal (2014) note that in some areas of Zimbabwe, those who were already school leaders received some refresher courses. In agreement with this, the three women leaders concur that although they did not receive any formal training during their time, the new heads who got appointed after them were trained for a week on management skills. Mrs Toga argues that the week-long training period given was still inadequate compared to the areas to be covered by the school heads in the execution of their duties. She highlighted financial management of school funds as one area which is crucial for school leaders.

Regarding training for leadership skills, Makura (2009) notes that there is insufficient training for new school heads in Zimbabwe before the execution of their duties; they are just appointed from the classroom, often based on good teaching. In the same vein, the 3 participants were appointed to middle leadership posts right from the classroom. Their middle leadership positions were the ones that were used to elevate them to school headship. This is emphasised by Irvine and Brundrett (2016) who also claim that school leaders need special leadership skills, which are different from those of an ordinary classroom teacher, hence the need for thorough training for school leaders. Van Eck et al.'s (1996) model supports the observation that the middle leadership skills and knowledge are necessary as preparation for leadership positions.

The analysis shows that all the three women participants faced a variety of challenges which they felt could have been avoided, had they been afforded enough leadership training to gain the skills and requisite knowledge. This is consistent with the view by Perkins's (2011) study of women administrators when she points out that, the problems that women leaders face are school-based, and no longer collective but individual

issues. The narratives of the 3 women suggest that each one had varied challenges, hence further justifying my selection of female heads from different schools because they all have different stories to tell.

Within about five weeks after her appointment, Mrs Toga discovered the misuse of school funds. This is the same thing experienced by Mrs Sibanda, the difference being that Mrs Sibanda discovered it herself using her accounting background while Mrs Toga found out from her deputy. These experiences still reflect on lack of training in financial issues. The next section analyses and discusses the experiences of the 3 participants when they finally got the school headship positions identified as the performance stage by Van Eck et al. (1996).

5.3.5.2 Performance stage

This stage is described by Van Eck et al. (1996) as loaded with gender discrimination and other challenges for leaders. After her appointment, Mrs Moyo highlighted that she was introduced by the deputy head to the staff and SDA members, who appeared not to be very happy with her appointment to that school. The EO of the area was said to have only visited her school for introductions two weeks after her appointment. Unlike Mrs Moyo, Mrs Toga and Mrs Sibanda said they were introduced by the EOs the very day they assumed duties as school heads. Mrs Moyo further disclosed that she was told to follow the deputy head's advice since he had experience in leadership and also was used to the community which may be the reason why the EO delayed in getting to her school. Although Mrs Moyo did not like the arrangement, it seemed to be a good opportunity for her to develop under the mentorship of the deputy head. It was not going to be easy for her to get into the system without being shadowed by someone. Also, the supporting system was necessary since she did not get enough training to acquire leadership skills.

In the same spirit, the EOs, according to Mrs Toga and Mrs Sibanda, told them the *dos* and *don'ts* of school administration. Unlike Mrs Sibanda who confirmed that she tried her best to follow what was advised by the EO, Mrs Toga did it for a very short time and started 'using her own brains'. She got most of her help from seasoned male school

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heads, although she knew that she could be misconstrued by some people because of her marital status. The same sentiments are echoed by Makura (2009) who indicates that when single women seek help from men, they tend to be misunderstood especially by their male colleagues and the community.

On the one hand, Mrs Toga seemed to reveal that she received all the help she needed whenever she asked for it, without any uneasiness because she showed appreciation for the help she got from her male colleagues. On the other hand, Mrs Sibanda and Mrs Moyo revealed that in their case, their male counterparts were not very supportive when they were first appointed. Similarly, Msila (2013) and Makhasane et al. (2018) emphasise that for many years, good and effective leadership was associated more with masculinity than femininity. As a result, all the three female school heads' first years of leadership were full of inspections and monitoring by the higher authorities as indicated in their interactions during the interview. The findings show that, although these women were in leadership positions, the power and authority remained with males in senior ranks as observed by Coleman (2003b). In other words, although the participants were appointed to run the schools, it looks like the actual control of the schools rested with the higher officers who were often males. Besides the experiences discussed, the participants had challenges in their work as school leaders, which were school and community based as discussed below.

5.3.5.2.1 School and community based challenges

Mrs Toga indicated that she was visited by different EOs several times within the year she assumed the post of school head and it really frustrated her. By then, she was the only female secondary school head in the Gweru Rural District. I want to believe that the frustration may also have been caused by her lack of confidence as indicated by Sperandio and Kagada (2010) and Zikhali and Perumal (2014) who agree that women lack confidence when it comes to leadership responsibilities. I do not think the problem of lack of confidence emanates from men, even though they may have to take the blame for some of the women's failures. In fact, the analysis shows that women sometimes do not have confidence in themselves without even being scared by men.

Similarly, Mrs Sibanda reiterated that she received a lot of resistance, especially from teachers after her first appointment, to the extent that some transferred from her school following the former head. She told me with pride that a newly appointed female EO for the area rescued her situation by sending new teachers to replace the ones who had transferred. This shows that there are some women who support other women in positions. Mrs Toga said her first report was good and was written by a female EO, although she was frustrated by the many inspections, which were carried out at her school. Mrs Moyo concurred that she also got many inspections when she started. However, to her it was like there was no issue because she did not complain about it as compared to the other two.

Mrs Moyo further explained that her problems were not caused by the officials but by the community and the deputy head, when she got her first promotion as a school head. She complained that it was difficult for her to know the kind of staff she was dealing with because the male deputy head, who was supposed to support her, did not seem to like her at all. As for the community's attitude, Sherman (2000) highlights that some communities seem to support their own people only; those from outside have to work very hard to gain their favour, which I think was the problem Mrs Moyo faced. The analysis shows that it took some time for her to be accepted by the locals because she was originally from a different province. She got a lot of support from her family; especially her father and that seemed to have encouraged her greatly. Besides school and community based challenges, the three women participants expressed their frustrations during their early years of leadership.

5.3.5.2.2 Inexperienced school heads

Mrs Toga's appointment came during the time when Zimbabwe was going through a lot of negative economic challenges. A lot of teachers left the job, including her deputy head and she had to go for a long time without a substantive deputy head. Also, she had to train unqualified teachers (who comprised three quarters of the teaching staff) through staff development workshops on teaching and learning processes. She admitted that it was a very tough situation for her but she managed. In the same spirit,

Mrs Moyo also admitted that when she first became a school head, she used to cry behind closed doors both at work and at home when things went bad at school. This confirms what Sam, Amartei, Osei-Owusu and Osei-Owusu (2013) observe that most women are too emotional instead of being decisive, aggressive and risk-taking as expected by society. This was also taken by Kiamba (2008) as a sign of being weak on the part of women leaders although one of the participants commends it as a good therapy for her when under pressure.

Arguably, Sachs and Blackmore (1998), Lumby (2015) and Lumby, Azaola, de Wet, Skervin, Walsh, and Williamson (2010) agree that there is a lot of audacity needed in management because it carries with it pain, frustration, disappointment and depression, which all need to be hidden from the public. The female participants concurred that female school leadership is not an easy road, especially during the first years of appointment. They also add that a lot of support is needed for female leaders to stay in their leadership positions. The participants also concurred that, if only they had not received support from their families, they could have resigned from their posts. Lack of family support is one of the barriers indicated by most of the feminists as a hindrance for women's progression to success (Perkins, 2011; Greyling & Steyn, 2015). The participants also indicated the introduction of the Zimbabwe 2017 New Curriculum as another challenge.

5.3.5.2.3 Lack of instructional leadership focus in schools

All the three women school leaders concurred that present day leadership is no longer centred on instruction because their out-of-school activities are more demanding of their time and energy than their core school business of being instructional leaders. Generally, they believed that the 2017 New Curriculum is taking most of their resources in terms of money and time.

It seems those in urban areas are more involved than those in rural areas because I even failed to secure full days with the two urban female secondary school leaders. I only managed to spend half a day with each of them every time I went there, that is, from 7.30 in the morning up to lunch hour. It was easy for me to spend full days with

Mrs Toga in the rural areas. I even attended two of her staff meetings, which were, the finance and the general staff meetings. I also noted the heads' absence from their schools in their log books where they signed when they went out and when they came back. Although Mrs Toga's movements from her school were also significant, it seemed more like she was affected only at certain times of the year (for example, sports periods, second term) as reflected in her recordings in the log book.

From the conversations we had, Mrs Moyo has a post in the provincial sports committee which kept her very busy. During the opening meeting, Mrs Moyo applauded her staff for the good results across all departments. She emphasised that they were looking forward to better 'O' and 'A' Level results (the national examination results were not yet out at the time of my attendance of the opening meeting). To get good results, all the three women participants concurred that the presence of the school head at the station as often as possible is very crucial, and this was a challenge in their schools as highlighted in their narratives.

They also emphasised the fact that the school management team is supposed to be the first at school and the last ones to leave the premises (Coleman, 2003b). This is evidenced by the log-in/log-out records that I perused at the schools. I also observed that at all the three schools, the school heads come to their schools early in the morning and Mrs Toga and her deputy head were the last people to leave the school after dismissal time. Mrs Toga indicated that it was the tradition of the school that the administrators should make sure that everything is in place before they go home. I could not observe dismissal time for the other two urban school heads because they claimed to be too committed to spend full days at school.

The 3 women emphasised that women need to work extra hard in order to be acknowledged as leaders by both the community and the subordinates. Kiamba (2008) believes that women's extra effort is still common in the world of work today. From the discussions, I also drew that, in order for women to break through in their leadership, they need to be committed, endure challenges and should be well connected socially. The three female heads agree that commitment is called for but express concern that their social life suffered because of the nature of their work and the need to put extra

effort. They complained that they could not spend quality time with their families as noted by Perkins (2011) that often women leaders do not have good social life because of the nature of their jobs. It shows, from the results, that the three women leaders really needed family support in order for them to be effective.

5.3.5.2.4 Importance of family support in leadership

The findings of this study show that family support was necessary for these three women leaders. They all agreed that family and work demands are always a barrier for most women, especially when one is working away from home. The radical feminists, according to Crotty (1998), blame marriage for the oppression of women. Although Mrs Moyo and Mrs Sibanda did not see it as oppression, they said that they used to do all the household chores when they visited their families during weekends at the time of their first appointments.

Coleman (2001) highlights that those women leaders with children take most of the family responsibilities compared to their husbands and this puts a lot of pressure on women. Mrs Moyo and Mrs Sibanda agree that they felt the pressure when their husbands complained about them being separated from their families. This type of pressure was less for Mrs Toga who was widowed before being a school head. She says her type of pressure is different in that she is in charge of everything that is to do with her family, such as children and parents' needs. She also highlighted that she did not have enough time with her children because of work responsibilities. In the same spirit, Msila (2013) observes that most of the women who occupy high posts are likely to be single and unmarried, although this was not the case with the participants in this study.

The three participants postulated that most women they interact with do not want to take up management posts because of family commitments and also lack of support from their husbands. In the same spirit, Moreau, Osgood and Halsall (2007) concur that women do not go for promotions for a variety of reasons. It was difficult for both Mrs Sibanda and Mrs Moyo at first when their husbands did not show interest in their decisions to be school leaders. In support of the above views, Moorosi (2010) believes

that lack of family support, especially from the husband, hinders women from pursuing their careers. Mrs Sibanda indicated that she almost gave up until the time that the husband started supporting her. Besides family support, the three women leaders indicated other factors that tend to hinder women from developing in their career.

5.3.5.3 Barriers for women development

When I asked why some female teachers were not applying for promotions, Mrs Moyo pointed out the issue of HIV and AIDS. Chabaya et al. (2009) note that some women do not want to separate with their husbands because they believe the husbands will become promiscuous. As a result, most women defer promotion and tend to concentrate on the welfare of the family, especially the children until they are grown up (Coleman, 2007; Msila, 2013). On the contrary, Mrs Moyo had four little children when she was promoted and she said, although it was very tough for her in the first few years, it was worth taking. She even advises women to take up leadership positions regardless of the challenges they will face because she believes challenges are there to strengthen leaders and they will always go away. Also, Mrs Toga's children were not in a position to fend for themselves when she got promoted but she still took up the post. However, it was easier for her than the other two leaders because she was staying with her children.

Mrs Moyo indicated that she met with resistance from her father-in-law when she got promoted. Nevertheless, she stated with pride that she fought for her post as a leader regardless of labels and stigmatisation that women leaders normally encounter (Musandu, 2009; Kiamba, 2008). In the same manner, Mrs Sibanda also had to stand firm on her decision to take up the post when her husband showed disapproval, and at work she acted as if all was well. Evidence from the three women participants agrees with Hall et al. (1999) who argue that managers need to put up a brave face in public even when things are not working out well for them.

Mrs Toga and Mrs Sibanda also noted that even after taking up leadership, it is difficult for some women to remain there. For instance, during one interview, Mrs Sibanda revealed that there were three female HODs who came to her the previous day to give

up the posts complaining that the pressure from colleagues was too much. Also, Mrs Toga talked about how a number of female acting heads gave up their posts because they failed to stand the heat, especially from teachers who did not respect them as school heads. For them to remain in the position, women leaders need to be very aggressive and competitive, characteristics associated with men (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012). The findings from this research show that women who are not very 'strong' are not likely to last in leadership positions.

Mrs Toga also observed that some female teachers do not want to take up posts because leadership positions are stressful, overloaded with duties and yet the allowance given was very little. In the same light, Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) indicate that some women would not apply for leadership because of the low benefits offered which are ''not worth the time and effort'' spent on the duties. The three women participants agreed that while the issue of remuneration is true, it also showed that most women lack confidence and have fear of the unknown when it comes to taking up leadership posts. In her discussions with me, Mrs Toga emphasised that there were a lot of things to be considered in leadership besides allowances. She mentioned aspects, such as self-development and meeting people of different calibres in one's career circles as some of the crucial opportunities of being a leader.

As Mrs Toga pointed out, one of the women teachers even remarked to her that she would rather remain a classroom teacher than being stressed with leadership duties. This aligns with what Fitzgerald (2006) noted that it appears that leadership of bureaucracies was for men while teaching in the classroom was for women. From the findings, it seems some women prefer to remain classroom teachers rather than be school leaders. Arguably, Powell and Graves (2003) believe that women themselves do not have confidence to regard themselves as leaders because of the way they are socialised. A number of researchers argue that lack of confidence in women is caused in part by lack of women role models and mentors in the educational leadership leading to invisibility of women in leadership (Sperandio & Kagada, 2010; Zikhali & Perumal, 2014; Chabaya et al., 2009; Perkins, 2011; Coleman, 2007). This is confirmed by this research where the female secondary school heads were in general very few within the

district under study. The next section analyses how the participants were socialised by their mentors.

5.3.5.4 Mentors as source of encouragement

The results indicate that all the three women participants were mostly encouraged by their school heads who were males. Daresh (2004) emphasises that mentorship is a crucial approach for developing people professionally. The women admitted that their male school heads sent them for workshops and seminars, and they would return and present to the other staff members what they had learnt. Empowering leaders through workshops and trainings is described by Vah Eck et al. (1996) as anticipation stage in the career path model. They explain this stage as the time that aspiring leaders acquire necessary skills for future leadership positions. Moorosi (2010) agrees that leadership skills and knowledge are developed by attending leadership workshops. Of interest here is that some males support, expose and groom women for promotions, regardless of traditional cultural expectations that high leadership positions in society are only favoured for men.

However, Kruger (1996) proposes that lack of confidence in women does not mean they do not believe in themselves as indicated by Powell and Graves (2003). It also does not mean that they lack mentorship. Kruger (1996) further argues that it is because women are treading on new ground which was previously meant for men only, a terrain they did not create. This is the reason why feminist researchers argue that there is need for leadership research to be done from women perspectives too (Woodridge, 2015; Smith, 2018). Similarly, the three participants argued that leadership challenges come to women because culturally, leadership is considered a men's territory and they admit that it is not a smooth road to travel. However, they pointed to commitment and hard work as the main strategies to face the challenges.

5.3.5.5 Occupation and family divergence

Mrs Moyo and Mrs Sibanda had a lot to say on how their work and family roles conflicted while Mrs Toga was a bit reserved on some of the issues, especially about

her husband. I later discovered that her husband passed on years back before she was even promoted to school leadership.

Issues around balancing work and family permeate discourse on women and leadership. All the three participants agreed that it was not easy for them when they first took up the leadership posts and emphasised that it is even worse for those with young families. The findings reflect that Mrs Sibanda was supported by her in-laws while Mrs Toga and Mrs Moyo got support from their own families. Lack of family support is considered to be a serious limitation for women who want to advance in their occupations (Moorosi, 2010). The three women participants reiterated that by saying most women do not want to apply for leadership because of lack of family support and also because they fear to be moved away from their families. This is also echoed by Chabaya et al. (2009) who say that women are not willing to take up posts because of family commitments, especially if they are to be posted far from their homes. Makura (2009) also argues that such movement is likely to affect the person's administrative job. For example, Mrs Moyo noticed that her area EO visited her quite frequently when she got promoted. The visits could have been an indication that the EO had doubts about her effectiveness as a school leader because of her frequent visits to her family.

The three women had to work hard to sustain their family relations while working extra hard in their careers in order to demonstrate competence. Mrs Sibanda and Mrs Moyo said that at first, their husbands were not very supportive, and the reason was the same: '*Who would look after the children*?' This may show that some men are not prepared to be responsible for the family while the wives are away. Morris (1999) and Debebe (2011) believe that those women who rise to the top have challenges of balancing cultural expectations and their careers. The three participants in this study explained their challenges but they all emphasised that challenges were part of being a woman leader, especially the fact that leadership is perceived as male territory. In a way, they appeared to say that women should continue to voice their experiences and perceptions to the world, which is one of the feminist tenets as propounded by Smit (2013). They should not give up.

Moorosi (2010) and Clark, Caffarella and Ingram (1999) believe that women need husband support to be able to balance work and family demands. Mrs Moyo disclosed that although her husband did not say anything about her promotion at the time of her appointment, his father told her openly that he would not support such an uncultured decision. She mentioned that her father-in-law would say a lot of ''irritating'' statements about her career as a school head. It was evident from the findings, that if women lack support from those close to them, they tend to overwork to compensate. The three women indicated that there was need for female heads to work very hard to prove their worthiness to all stakeholders. Mrs Toga added that some women are deterred by the amount of work and commitment that is required, which tended to paint a discouraging picture for other women (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010; Choge,2015; Greyling & Steyn, 2015). The analysis shows that the amount of allowance given to school heads tends also to discourage aspiring school heads. Another challenge regards the issue of discipline.

5.3.5.6 Disciplinary problems in schools

The three women participants concurred that there is a lot of indiscipline in schools in part because teachers are no longer allowed to administer corporal punishment to school children according to Policy P35. All three women indicated that some of the male students engage in drug peddling and also take alcohol. Mrs Moyo admitted that at her school, day scholars would bring drugs and alcohol to sell to those in boarding. In some cases, the heads would call parents or expel the students if they seem not to take heed of the initial warnings. During our interactions, Mrs Moyo indicated that at one time, a parent told her that she was a weak head who needed to surrender the school to the authorities for a man to take over. Mrs Moyo was so disturbed when that particular parent told her that women were promoted on the basis of gender and not competence.

On one hand, the parent's allegation supported the view by Moutlana (2001) that most women are promoted because of equity policies which demand the empowerment of women leading to the existence of doubt by some concerning women's capabilities in leadership. On the other hand, Cubillo and Brown et al. (2003) note that women are only accepted in leadership basing on female roles and with very little power given to

them on issues considered crucial by the society. All the three participants agreed that most men find it difficult to accept them as equals in leadership because some men still look down upon women. Nevertheless, the three emphasised the need for both men and women to work together, especially if they are heads and deputy heads. Each of them seemed to have an area of specialisation as discussed below.

The Public Service Commission Vacancy Announcement number 20 of 2017 clearly states that discipline matters are supposed to be handled by the deputy heads. According to Mrs Sibanda, it is the reason why she had to appoint a male deputy head the moment she was appointed school head. She openly admitted that boys need a firm hand, implying, this cannot be provided by a female school leader. Mrs Toga explained that the main mischievous behaviour learners engage in at her school, besides drugs and alcohol, was absconding of lessons. This, she said, involved both girls and boys and, as a result, she mentioned a high rate of early pregnancies among young girls within the school. She admitted that it is a very difficult problem to solve because the community itself is not worried much about it and the impregnated girls will just leave school and join the community.

Just like Mrs Moyo, as a mother and head, Mrs Toga said she found it very disturbing for girls to leave school because of pregnancy. On this issue, Kanjeere (2011) observes that if women are empowered, they can change the mind-set of the community through the concept of *ubuntu*. The three female heads showed that it is necessary to involve the community in school activities in order to change the way they view women leadership and life in general. While the government policy on pregnant students allows them to continue with their education (Policy P35), the cultural beliefs within the area do not allow the pregnant girls to continue with their schooling. Mrs Toga indicated that the parents themselves agree that all girls who fall pregnant should leave school because they set a bad example for those behind them. The same policy talks about the administration of corporal punishment in schools as a way of dealing with misbehaving students.

5.3.5.6.1 Dealing with indiscipline in schools

Conversely, liberal feminists argue that female leadership should be different from male leadership in that women have a nurturing character, which is essential for the growth of both learners and staff (Smit, 2013). Mrs Moyo indicated that she took time to counsel teachers and students who have social problems and even those who portray bad behaviour. She claimed that her counselling helped a number of those who received it. Among the three female leaders, Mrs Sibanda showed that she took disciplinary action against staff members who sell school placement to parents. Also, Mrs Toga together with Mrs Sibanda facilitated the dismissal of their school bursars after they misused school funds. This seems to suggest that there are times when the school heads needed to take some serious decisions which even affected their relationships with both the community and staff members. Of interest is that the two indicated that there were times when heads needed to put the issue of relations aside and do what they are expected to do in order to save the image of the schools.

Interestingly, prayer was also identified by the participants as a virtue of a good leader. The female school leaders in this study, believed that God is the source of all inspiration. Women are often seen to be more religious and empathetic than men (Naidoo and Perumal, 2014). Grogan (2010) concurs by saying women leaders use their religiosity and personal strengths to understand more the world of their significant others than men. Although she seemed to be a religious person, Mrs Moyo indicated that at times she has to take drastic measures, such as administering punishment to naughty students during assembly. She does it according to the prescriptions given in the Policy P35 which does not allow teachers to administer corporal punishment to students. Administrators are allowed by the policy to do it but within a set of given guidelines.

Mrs Toga as well indicated that she only expels pregnant girls from school, not because there were no other bad behaviours done by students but because she felt for the poor parents who struggled to send their children to school. She also highlighted that she engaged parents when it came to serious issues. The two urban school leaders showed that although at times the circumstances force them to take such measures as

expulsion, it is against their own wish to expel any student from school. Being in urban areas, one would believe that the students are too many and the mischief is gross, hence the need for such firm actions by schools A and B heads. Mrs Sibanda also indicated a number of instances when students showed mischievous behaviour at her school. Although there are challenges in the execution of their duties, the three women expressed different opportunities that are in their career. The discussion shows that there are a number of opportunities that the participants experience which are discussed below.

5.3.5.7 Social networking within communities of school heads

Besides the challenges in the National Association of Secondary School Heads (NASH), all the participants in this study expressed their joy during conferences saying the events were quite refreshing. They meet with other women from different provinces and share their experiences as female heads. Also, they reported that they enjoy just mixing and mingling with people of different classes and positions, for example, the highest people in the education system and other institutions.

In their research on female school heads, Perkins (2011) and Moreno and McLean (2016) also found out that some women enjoy their careers as school leaders because they can make their own decisions as female leaders and advise other females as well. Perkins (2011) argues that besides seeing places through travelling and meeting important people, women enjoy being heard and recognised. The participants expressed their joy during their professional outings as national secondary school heads. Furthermore, the three participants also reflected on the academic achievement of their schools.

5.3.5.8 School accomplishments

The findings seem to suggest that the school heads have more out of school activities than in-school ones. Although all three women agreed that there is no longer enough time for instructional leadership, during the interviews, two of them claimed to have good academic results (Tables 4.4, 4.5, 4.10 & 4.11). Although I did not compare

female and male leadership in this study, I am mindful of Kiamba's (2008) claims that women heads tend to produce better results than men. Mrs Moyo and Mrs Sibanda published their academic achievements by displaying the results for several years on the office notice boards. In addition, Mrs Moyo has sports achievement chart (Table 4.6) displayed on the notice board, which indicated the awards they received for different disciplines both at district and regional levels. Also, there were a number of different trophies which were on display.

Mrs Toga openly admitted that both the academic and sports results of her school were not very good (Table 4.13). Related to that, during the staff meeting, Mrs Toga's deputy head complained to teachers about the generally poor academic performance of learners. A number of teachers responded by saying that it is due to poor resources in the school and also distance from work. However, even though the results seem to be different, all the participants alleged to have very hard working teachers. In other words, the women heads appeared to associate hard work with good results. Furthermore, the participants highlighted the different ways they use to encourage other women within their organisations to have confidence.

5.3.5.9 Empowering women within the organisation

The results show that the three women participants were more concerned with the development of women than men in terms of leadership. Girls in their schools are assigned different tasks so as to equip them with leadership skills. Female teachers are also empowered through attending workshops and placed in middle management posts, such as senior teacher and HOD. The strategy is supported by Vah Eck et al.'s (1996) career path model, which regards it as the anticipation stage. The scholars emphasise that it is necessary for aspiring leaders to acquire leadership skills and knowledge through attending leadership seminars and other activities related to leadership.

Mrs Moyo also added that she leaves the female teachers in charge of the school when the administrators are all out. Mrs Toga as well showed that some of the females she groomed are now school heads. Also, another unique way through which she involved women at her school was through celebrating women and girl child international days.

This is interesting because those in towns are often too busy to notice that such days are important and can be used to empower women. It also reflects from the results that all the three female school leaders in this study went through middle management, which indicates the importance of acquiring such skills before taking up the actual leadership position.

Mrs Sibanda highlighted that, although she faced resistance from some female teachers at times (for instance, when three female HODs gave up because of pressure from colleagues), she found it important to keep on encouraging them. All the three women agreed that women lack self-confidence when it comes to leadership issues. This is highlighted by Cubillo and Brown et al. (2003) who argue that women's under-representation is mostly affected by lack of confidence, competitiveness and also their fear of failure. The participants took it upon themselves as school heads, to involve females in their schools as much as possible in order to cultivate confidence in them. It also shows that some female teachers do not like to be in the middle leadership positions.

5.4 Summary of the findings

Feminist knowledge can come from examining the unique experiences of women, especially where they experience a different social life from men, hence the aim of placing women at the centre of this study. Findings from this study bring out the insightful stories of female school heads that chronicle their socialisation in childhood and primary school years, their journey from attaining professional qualification, early teaching experiences and early leadership exposure as teacher leaders in posts of responsibility. Each stage of their journey to school headship provides lessons on how life experiences prepared them for leadership, and the support mechanisms and significant others. Important also are the challenges they have met, and continue to meet along the journey, and attendant sources of support. After an analysis of the stories of the female secondary school heads, it becomes necessary to summarise the findings and draw conclusions from this study:

Findings from this study suggest that good leaders do not only evolve out of context but grow with and from engagement with others. While culturally hard work and commitment are identified as virtues of a good leader, the present study has established the important role of ''significant others'' in shaping the leaders within the 3 women school heads. That is, the influence of "others" in the lives and development of women school leaders came through very vividly in the narratives of the participants. The present study points to the importance of human interactions and influence (Haralambos & Holborn, 2013), be it through upbringing, mentoring, support, etcetera in the development of women school leaders in Zimbabwe specifically. The extent to which this finding may apply to women school leaders in other contexts, and whether or not it applies at all to men school leaders, is yet to be established and tested.

The second key finding, as revealed by the narratives of women leaders in Zimbabwean high schools, is that in women leadership there is pain, frustration, disappointment and even depression (Sachs and Blackmore, 1998; Lumby, 2015; Lumby, Azaola, de Wet, Skervin, Walsh, and Williamson, 2010), all of which, arguably, are often (as would be expected) concealed or hidden from the public. Some even experienced stigmatisation from family members as highlighted by Manwa (2002) and Schein (1994). Greyling and Steyn (2015) also observe that some women were deterred from leadership because the psychological and emotional load that the school head has to bear. In spite of the pain and suffering, time and time again women have emerged as leaders, and in particular as school leaders in the context of this study. The 3 women leaders evidenced resilience and ability to find solace and support from ''others'', especially from communities within and outside the school.

The third key finding indicates that the 3 women's leadership styles depended on their situation (Mestry & Schmidt, 2012). Mrs Moyo indicated that she prays for her staff as a way of solving social problems. Mrs Toga said she consulted other seasoned school heads when problems arose. Evidence from all the three female school heads concurs that community involvement is very crucial for the school head's effectiveness. Similarly, in prayer came their strength from assurance of intervention by the supernatural being (God) when problems arose.

The role of exposure and experience in middle leadership together with deliberate mentoring by those already in leadership positions were identified as key ingredients for success for all beginning women heads of schools. Such exposure and experience are necessary to develop, in the incumbents, the skills necessary for successful leadership (Makura, 2009). The women participants revealed that special skills were desirable for one to be an effective leader (Irvine & Brundrett, 2016). During their middle leadership, the 3 women received support and encouragement from their male school heads, which shows that there are some men who care about women's career progress and leadership development.

Another finding of significance was that school leaders lacked time for instructional leadership because of other overwhelming duties that kept them outside the school campus most of the time, thus leaving them with no/little time to lead instruction. Greyling and Steyn (2015) argue that some women do not take up leadership posts because of the demands and expectations attached to leadership. The participants concurred that it is important for school heads to work cooperatively with their subordinates so as to maintain school standards even when they are away.

Balancing family and work demands emerged also as a challenge for the 3 women, especially during their first years of appointment. However, they remained in the leadership posts and did not defer their promotion, thus refuting Coleman's (2007), and Msila's (2013) observations that most women postpone their advancement because of family commitments. This shows that women need not be left out of leadership appointment on the pretext that family commitments bar them from assuming leadership positions, lest this assumption be used to push out women or leave them out completely from the school leadership landscape.

Discipline problem of staff and students in the women's schools is another finding which surfaced in the narratives. All 3 women studied often needed and/or appreciated their partnerships with males in their school leadership as data indicate that men tended to take particular interest in student disciplinary matters. Mrs Sibanda had to appoint a male deputy to manage student disciplinary issues. The participants concurred that although discipline in schools was the charge of deputy heads as revealed in The Public

Service Commission Vacancy Announcement number 20 of 2017, there were cases that would call for their decisions as school heads. This shows that even though the deputy heads may be given authority to take charge of certain areas in the school, the school heads have the final say irrespective of gender.

Overall, the findings show that female school leaders have varying, and not obvious, challenges (Perkins, 2011) some of which are school, community and family based. However, the female leaders in this study seemed to enjoy their work as school heads regardless of all the stated challenges. Inevitably, they disclosed that, their social lives suffered in the process partly because they lacked quality time with their families – an observation also made by Perkins (2011). They spent most of their time doing office work even during weekends, the time they could have spent with their families. There seems to be a sacrifice for the greater good of society. In the next section, I draw some conclusions from the key findings as discussed here.

5.5 Conclusions

Drawing from the findings, it is evident that no school head can work alone. For school heads to be effective in their role they need the support of their families, the organisation (including colleagues) and the community. Mrs Moyo drew on the support of her parents, and later of her husband, while Mrs Sibanda was supported by her in-laws even more than by her husband. Although Mrs Toga was a widow by the time of her promotion, she relied more on the support she got from her own family. Mrs Moyo and Mrs Sibanda had to work hard to enlist community support while Mrs Toga did not face any such problems with the community. This reflects the fact that women school leaders need supportive structures and people around them to be effective in their duties.

Since the introduction of the Zimbabwe Competence Based (new) Curriculum of 2017, evidence shows that school heads are now involved in many activities that leave them with very little/no time for instructional leadership in their schools. Mrs Moyo and Mrs Sibanda were so involved and committed to district sports activities that it was even very difficult to shadow them in their schools for a whole day. Mrs Toga was also a

district secretary for sports, and she complained of not having enough time in the school. Their movements in and out of the school were notable in the school log books where each employee signs in and out. As indicated by the female school heads studied, it takes a supportive team for school heads to survive under such situations. This is where the call for distributed leadership (Spillane, Diamond & Jita, 2003) begins to acquire more relevance.

Another conclusion drawn is that it is not easy for women to get into leadership positions and remain there because of the nature of the job and all that surrounds it, such as pain and frustration. For those who succeed, they have to endure diverse challenges. The three participants all argued that women needed additional support in order to remain school heads. They need that support even during middle leadership. Mrs Sibanda openly said three of her female HODs resigned before the end of their first school term in office because of the problems caused by other staff members. Mrs Toga also revealed that some female acting school heads told her that they were just place holders for they were not intending to continue being school leaders because of challenges caused by teachers, and lack of support. Such sentiments as expressed by the female acting school heads show that some women often perceived themselves the same way the world perceives them. In other words, they did not seem to see themselves (as women) as the right candidates for leadership.

 I also conclude from the findings that there is no prescribed leadership style for school heads; instead women leaders tend to mix the styles depending on the demands of the situations. Evidence from the three female school heads suggests that female school heads faced different challenges and, as a result, they used different methods to solve different problems with different people. Mrs Moyo for example emphasised dialogue between school heads and those with problems, including students, and also believed that prayer had the power to solve some problems.

An additional conclusion drawn from the findings is that for anyone to be an effective school head, one has to pass through middle leadership because the skills needed for leadership are more than those of an ordinary classroom teacher especially in contexts where there is no specific training for leadership. All the three female school heads

studied were once senior teachers, then deputy heads, before their appointment as school heads. From their stories, the skills they acquired during middle leadership helped to ease their transition to school leadership against the observation that they did not receive any formal training on appointment as school heads. Therefore, it is the duty of the practising heads to empower their subordinates with leadership skills and experience as a form of leadership preparation.

Balancing family and work demands was also noted as a challenge to women in leadership positions especially those with young families. The participants concurred that most female teachers were not willing to apply for leadership posts because of overwhelming workloads and fear of being posted away from their families. From the participants' stories, given that most of the family work is done by women, the result is that most men find it difficult to support their wives when they want to develop themselves professionally or career-wise.

It is hoped that this study may help policy makers to think carefully about women's experiences in their decision-making and enable men in general to understand women issues better and be supportive. I feel that policy makers and all the other relevant stakeholders are not as aware of what women go through when they take up leadership posts. Some of them are given schools which are far from their families which may compromise their relationships with families and friends, the health problems they sometimes endure because of the nature of the job and being wholly responsible for family demands, are some of the challenges that need to be considered when appointing women to school headship posts. This study may also help to improve women visibility in school leadership.

Although women leaders will continue to enjoy their careers as shown in the narratives of the 3 leaders, they do so at great cost to themselves and their families. The three female schools heads studied disclosed that leadership demands a lot in terms of time, hence leaving very little time for social life or family. Furthermore, they pointed out that school heads tend to work longer hours than the rest of the school because they are supposed to be the first to arrive at the school, and the last to leave. This was observed during the shadowing of Mrs Toga, who also emphasised that by the time she got

home, she would too be tired to attend to any family responsibilities. The limitations of this study are presented in the following section.

5.6 Limitations of the study

It is possible that more could have been said about women in school leadership had more participants been involved. While the limited number of participants in this study might have compromised the volume of the findings, however, the legitimacy of the 3 women's lived experience does not lie in whether there is a large number of people who share similar experiences, but more in whether the experiences as described could be triangulated and whether or not the data appear to be trustworthy. Given the measures taken in the conduct of this study to ensure trustworthiness and reliability of the data, I am confident that narratives of women leaders on their experiences with headship in Zimbabwean secondary schools have a lot to contribute to scholarship on school leadership in general.

Although the period during which the study was carried out seemed short, I feel that no better results would have been obtained even if I had to shadow the participants for a whole school term, which is three months long. The rich data I generated from the participants represented their daily experiences hence there was enough data of value to arrive at credible findings for the present study.

5.7 Recommendations

The following recommendations are made on the basis of the findings and conclusions drawn from the study.

It is recommended that female school leaders need to begin to organise themselves and come up with a forum for women school leaders, where they can share the pain, successes and challenges women face in school leadership. Such a structure may also assist in the identification of new leaders and the needs of women school leaders resulting in enlistment of capacity building workshops, training, and sharing of success stories from experienced, successful female colleagues who may have made it. This can go a long way in supporting newly appointed female school leaders.

In cases where formerly disadvantaged members of society are appointed into leadership positions, the study recommends that the authorities to put up supporting structures to develop the new appointee until they find their feet. Local (cluster) structures of school heads can come in handy in providing such support to new appointees where collaboration, consultation, mentoring and sharing of challenges and reflective solutions can be explored.

Women should remain in leadership positions and should understand that the challenges are there to strengthen them. However, for women to remain in leadership positions, they need support from their families, community and colleagues since female leadership seems to be a lonely journey because women school leaders seem to lose their social thread as a result of the nature of their jobs.

School heads need to mentor and groom both male and female teachers for leadership posts by appointing them to middle level leadership positions. The findings of this study show that both male and female school heads seem to be more concerned with development of women to leadership than men. All the three participants were promoted to middle leadership by their male school heads. Furthermore, the participants emphasise the need to promote women to high positions. Two of the three schools have most of their female teachers as HODs while Mrs Moyo also promised to fill in any vacant HOD posts with females. While women empowerment is being encouraged, I could see a situation where we would have more women in leadership than men in the near future which might perpetuate gender inequality. Hence the need for school leaders to seek a balance by availing opportunities to both males and females when it comes to leadership development.

It is important for women to apply for leadership positions so as to have a stronger voice on women issues affecting the profession. Evidence in this study show that there were many women in the schools studied but very few of them were willing to apply for leadership posts, often citing family responsibilities as the major barrier. Those already in leadership posts should empower and encourage others who are aspiring to be leaders using a variety of ways that expose them to leadership experiences.

Female leaders should understand themselves, that is, their potentials and weaknesses so that they can appreciate other people's efforts in supporting them. In other words, women should not always see men as enemies but as colleagues who may also assist them in the execution of their duties. This could be done through interacting with different people at different levels. Social networking with significant people is of paramount importance to the leaders because they would share a lot of constructive ideas and relevant issues about their careers. This could be done through spending quality time with other women leaders, for instance, during weekends and other social gatherings. The findings show that the women leaders in this study lack quality social life which is an important aspect for all human beings. Therefore, since their work is so demanding there is need for them to create structures and deliberately planned breaks.

A transitioning mechanism such as twinning of a seasoned, effective school head with a newly appointed female school head might provide a support structure that provides mentoring, collaboration, guidance and sharing of experiences and challenges in school leadership. That way, newly appointed female school heads may find support and gain confidence from other school heads. Consulting with other school heads, especially experienced ones, is of great importance to newly appointed female school heads given evidence that Mrs Moyo got a lot of support from consulting other school heads. The study also may activate debate on women issues that may initiate further research. Already, part of the study was presented at an international conference - Education Association of South Africa (EASA) in South Africa as a way of disseminating information about women in school leadership

5.7.1 Recommendations for other researchers

Female secondary school leaders were sampled from one district which may make the results of the study difficult to generalise to other districts and provinces. The researcher recommends that future research be carried out in other provinces on the experiences and perceptions of female school heads. Such future endeavour should assist in building a body of literature that is indispensable in enhancing scholarship on, and understanding of women and leadership in the education sector. Arguably, such future

research should incorporate also experiences of female primary school heads in order to generate comparative literature.

Some researchers may look at the effectiveness of instructional leadership in Zimbabwean schools since the introduction of the Zimbabwe Competence Based (New) Curriculum of 2017. This may help to inform policy makers on issues that concern school heads as instructional leaders. Importantly, it may help to confirm or refute the claims made in this study on weaknesses of instructional leadership by school heads.

5.8 Summary of the chapter

Chapter five highlighted a number of findings from the study. Of interest in the results is that all the participants were mostly socialised by their fathers and the mothers were not professionals. It showed that children could be influenced by their parents on their career choices. Furthermore, teachers also have some roles to play in the students' future career choices. They agreed that middle leadership provides training in preparation for full leadership duties. Also, they concluded that the school heads need to work together with both the staff and the community in order for them to be effective in the execution of their duties. In addition, they noted that female leaders need to work extra hard for them to be appreciated as leaders and also agreed that there are no fixed styles in leadership.

Moreover, the female leaders had the same opinion that women have to balance family and work demands. They showed a lot of joy when they talked about their outings as school heads, though they indicated that they were not fairly represented in their social associations. Another interesting finding is that schools' academic performances seem to be determined by location. Rural schools seem to have the worst results as compared to those in urban settings, maybe it is because of poor facilities and limited resources. Overly, the participants indicated various ways through which they worked to empower girls and female teachers in their schools.

The chapter also brought to light the recommendations extracted by the researcher from the study. New school heads need to be trained soon after being appointed. Also, female leaders need family, staff and community support in order for them to realise

their potentials and overcome their weaknesses. In addition, women should have their social networks, just like men, where they meet other women of significance to share their experiences and other women issues. Also, there is a call for women leaders to have quality time with families. The researcher again recommended other researchers to carry out similar studies in different provinces and also to look at the challenges caused by the Zimbabwean Competence Based (new) Curriculum of 2017.

5.9 My personal journey as a researcher

This journey was not a rosy one. It has been a mammoth task to head a private school in Botswana. Being in authority in a foreign land, I personally encountered various challenges. The stumbling block was among others the language barrier. The fact that I was not conversant in the local language created some inconveniences between the head and some subordinates. After these personal experiences of leadership, this prompted me to find out about the experiences of Zimbabwean women school heads and their perceptions of leadership. I thought the study would be easy for me since I had some first-hand experience with women leadership but I was dead wrong. It was not a very smooth road for me. I, like the women I studied, had to shelve my social life and commit myself to the PhD study. However, I do not regret the time I spent on this study because I learnt a lot about myself as well through interaction with the female school leaders who participated in this present study.

I have realised that female school leaders have common challenges in the execution of their duties. Most of the problems highlighted by the women participants in their narratives were similar to the ones I experienced in Botswana as a female head. The challenges included student disciplinary problems, lack of strong support from the community etcetera. However, I did not experience any resistance from the teaching staff maybe because most of them were also foreigners and they were getting their own shares of conflict from the community.

After carrying out this study I am now convinced that female leaders need a lot of courage and commitment to remain in school leadership positions. Women need to work hard to break the 'glass ceiling' that seems to separate men and women in terms

of leadership opportunities. Policies may change to accommodate women but importantly, societal attitude needs to change also for people to appreciate women's effort and give them equal opportunities to occupy societal positions such as school leadership posts.

I was really humbled by the women participants who were eager in share their experiences openly in an effort to make their issues known as female school leaders. At a personal level, this research provided me an opportunity to learn from women's voices, resulting in my development of new perspectives on women's issues. Importantly, I have learnt not to take women leadership for granted, but to appreciate that the roles came with frustrations, joys, challenges, and even tears. I also have learnt that leadership is not just a post to be occupied but a result of good relationship with all the stakeholders.

I also appreciate the importance of middle leadership, something I never valued before carrying out this study. I got appointed to deputy head from the classroom and remained in the post for only two months before I occupied the school head's post. I admit my leadership skills were really lacking because I never got the chance to be trained for the post. I lacked confidence to interact with other school heads who were local and mostly men and felt very lonely. However, I learnt from the women participants that there are some men who support women's career progression and through interaction with counterparts one can learn a lot of skills that can be applied in leadership hence refuting the belief that women leadership is a lonely journey.

This study means a lot to me and I would like to extract some articles from the study for publication. I feel that the articles might assist women who aspire for school leadership by forewarning them so that they forearm themselves for the 'masculine game'. They would be able to meet the challenges with courage and hope and not to quit. It is my hope and prayer that more women become leaders so that they can voice their issues out and loud. Also as a new researcher I hope I will get a chance to compare experiences of female school heads in other developing countries to add more feminist knowledge to existing literature. Arguably, this study adds to the global body of literature and academic conversations around women in leadership generally, and women in

school headship in particular. Admittedly, the study adds literature that is Zimbabwe-specific as well as providing an added value of looking at women and leadership issues through a feminist lens in a developing country context.

5.10 Summary of the study

Chapter one explained the background and context of the study. Also the main question and over view of the other chapters were outlined in the chapter. Chapter two went on to review literature related to the study including feminism as the theoretical framework of the study. Career path model was also used to explain the position of the female school leaders in their career. Chapter three described the methods that were used to collect the data and these include the interpretivism philosophical orientation used together with the qualitative and narrative approaches. Case study was selected as the design to study the purposively selected participants. Semi structured interviews, observation and document analysis were used to collect the data. Chapter four presented the collected data on tables and as narratives. Some interpretations of the presented data were also made. Chapter five cross analysed what was presented in chapter four. A summary of the findings and the conclusions drawn from them were given as well. I also made some recommendations about women leadership before giving the references for this study.

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APPENDIX 1: Permanent Secretary's letter of request to conduct the research in schools

Great Zimbabwe University

P. O. Box 1235

Masvingo

Zimbabwe

16 May 2017

The Permanent Secretary for

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education

P. O. Box CY 211

Causeway

Harare

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT AN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH IN MIDLANDS PROVINCE

Dear Sir/Madam

I hereby request permission to conduct research in selected secondary schools within your district. My name is Cynthia Dzimiri and I am presently studying for a PhD degree with the University of Free State. As part of my PhD programme, I am required to conduct research on an aspect of interest with a view to making a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the issues under study. The title of my research project is:

Female secondary school heads' experiences of leadership in the Gweru district of Zimbabwe.

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of female secondary school heads in their day to day activities as school heads. Women school heads will be given the chance to narrate their career stories. This study has the potential to benefit The study has the potential to benefit women, girls and policy makers in their decision making and also the feminist knowledge base will be strengthened by pointing out challenges, the successes female school leaders go through in their daily life as heads. The research findings will be shared with the schools and also hope the policy makers will also benefit as the findings will be shared with the authorities for possible policy amendments.

.
The study will involve: 1) Observations of interactions and behaviours of both the head and the subordinates during staff meeting.

2) four to five interviews of about forty-five to sixty minutes each, at the time convenient to the head and the researcher with their permission, a recording device will be used to record the interviews.

3) shadowing of the school head for a day, again with her permission.

A total of three female secondary schools will be used from the list below, the other schools (fall-backs) will be used in case participants withdraw or any challenge is encountered.

List of schools purposively selected

a. Chaplin high school (urban boarding)

b. Matinunura high school (urban day)

c. Mkoba 3 high school (urban day)

d. Gunde high school   (rural day)

a. Regina Mundi high school (boarding)

I undertake to observe confidentiality and to protect participants from physical and/or psychological harm. No actual names of the schools and/or persons shall be used in any reports of the research. All participants will be asked to participate voluntarily in the study and may withdraw at any time should they so wish as indicated in the attached letters.

Upon the completion of the study (2018), I undertake to provide the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education with a copy of the research report and to share my findings through publications and conference presentations. If you need any further information and/or have suggestions, please contact me on (0776694244 or cynthiadzimiri@gmail.com and/or my research Supervisor Professor Jita L. C. on (+27-514017522 or jitalc@ufs.ac.za).

I hope my request will reach your favourable consideration.

Yours sincerely

Cynthia Dzimiri (Student number 2016141406: ID 03-058145V66).

APPENDIX 2: Regional Director's letter for request to conduct the research in schools

Dear Sir/Madam

I hereby request permission to conduct research in selected secondary schools within your district. My name is Cynthia Dzimiri and I am presently studying for a PhD degree with the University of Free State. As part of my PhD programme, I am required to conduct research on an aspect of interest with a view to making a contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the issues under study. The title of my research project is:

Female secondary school heads' experiences of leadership in the Gweru district of Zimbabwe.

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of female secondary school heads in their day to day activities as school heads. Women school heads will be given the chance to narrate their career stories. This study has the potential to benefit The study has the potential to benefit women, girls and policy makers in their decision making and also the feminist knowledge base will be strengthened by pointing out challenges, the successes female school leaders go through in their daily life as heads. The research findings will be shared with the schools and also hope the policy makers will also benefit as the findings will be shared with the authorities for possible policy amendments.

.The study will involve:
1) observations of interactions and behaviours of both the head and the subordinates during staff meeting, morning briefings and devotions at assembly.
2) four to five interviews of about forty-five to sixty minutes each, at the time that is convenient to the head and the researcher and with their permission a recording device will be used to audio record the interviews.
3) shadowing of the school head for a day, again with her permission.

A total of three female secondary schools (urban boarding, urban day and rural day) will be used from the list below, the other schools (fall-backs) will be used in case participants withdraw or any challenge is encountered.
List of schools purposively selected
a. Chaplin high school (urban boarding)
b. Matinunura high school (urban day)
c. Mkoba 3 high school (urban day)
d. Gunde high school (rural day)
e. Regina Mundi high school (boarding)

I undertake to observe confidentiality and to protect participants from physical and/or psychological harm. No actual names of the schools and/or persons shall be used in

any reports of the research. All participants will be asked to participate voluntarily in the study and may withdraw at any time should they so wish.

Upon the completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education with a copy of the research report and to share my findings through publications and conference presentations. If you need any further information and/or have suggestions, please contact me on (0776694244 or cynthiadzimiri@gmail.com and/or my research Supervisor Professor Jita on (+27-514017522 or jitalc@ufs.ac.za).

I hope my request will reach your favourable consideration.

Yours sincerely

Cynthia Dzimiri

APPENDIX 3 :Approval from the Ministry of Education

All communications should be
addressed to "The Provincial
Education Director"
Telephone:054- 222460

Fax: 054- 226482

Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
P.O Box 737
GWERU

13 JULY 2017

Mr/Mrs/Miss: DZIMIRI CYNTHIA
GREAT ZIMBABWE UNIVERSITY
P. O BOX 1235
MASVINGO

Dear Sir/Madam

**APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION TO CARRY OUT AN EDUCATIONAL
RESEARCH IN SELECTED SCHOOLS IN MIDLANDS PROVINCE**

Permission to carry out a Research on:-

" FEMALE SECONDARY SCHOOL HEADS' PERCEPTIONS
AND EXPERIENCES OF LEADERSHIP IN THE
GWERU DISTRICT OF ZIMBABWE "

In the Midlands Province has been granted on these conditions.

1. That in carrying out this you do not disturb the learning and teaching programmes in schools.
2. That you avail the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education with a copy of your research findings.
3. That this permission can be withdrawn at anytime by the Provincial Education Director or by any higher officer.

The Education Director wishes you success in your research work and in your University College studies.

MATSVERU   V.
**HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICER - (DISCIPLINE)
FOR: PROVINCIAL EDUCATION DIRECTOR: MIDLANDS**
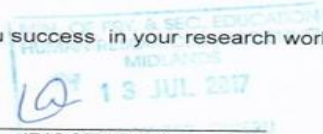
APPENDIX 4: Invitation letter to school heads

Dear Madam

I am presently studying for a PhD degree with the University of the Free State. As part of my programme, I am conducting a research study entitled:**Female secondary school heads' experiences of leadership in the Gweru district of Zimbabwe.**

The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of female secondary school heads in their day to day activities as school heads. You have been identified as one of the female school heads who should tell their stories from early socialisation to leadership socialisation which might help us to understand women issues better and come up with strategies for improvement. The study has the potential to benefit women, girls and policy makers in their decision making and also the feminist knowledge base will be strengthened by pointing out challenges, the successes female school leaders go through in their daily life as heads.

The study will involve:
1) observations of interactions and behaviours of both the head and the subordinates during staff meeting morning briefings and devotions during assembly.
2) four to five interviews of about forty-five to sixty minutes each, at the time convenient to the head and the researcher and with their permission a recording device will be used to audio record the interviews.
3) shadowing of the school head for a day, again with her permission. I will be observing the head's activities of the day, that is, her interactions with the different people who come to her and how she handles issues.
4) analysing documents such as public and school based communications and policies. In the documents such as minute book I will look for people's voices that is who said what and the reactions of other staff members. All issues in different documents related to the study will be analysed.

I undertake to observe confidentiality and to protect all participants from physical and/or psychological harm. No actual names of the schools and/or persons shall be used in any report of the research. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time should you wish to do so.

Upon the completion of the study, I undertake to provide the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education with a copy of the research report and to share my findings through publications and conference presentations. If you need any further information and/or have suggestions, please contact me on (0776694244 or cynthiadzimiri@gmail.com and/or my research supervisor Professor Jita L.C. on (+27-514017522 or jitalc@ufs.ac.za).
I hope my request will reach your favourable consideration.

Yours sincerely

Cynthia Dzimiri

APPENDIX 5: Informed Consent Agreement Form

Topic: **Female secondary school heads' experiences of leadership in the Gweru district of Zimbabwe.**

I understand that this is a PhD study and I was chosen to participate in it because of the study's demands of female secondary school heads. I also appreciate that the results from this study are intended to boost the feminist knowledge that is there and also furnish women, girls included, with information that concerns their future decision making. Again I agree that the information gathered will be for academic purposes only and will be treated with confidentiality. I therefore participate in this study freely and I am also free to withdraw from this study any time I feel uncomfortable to continue without any penalties coming my way. I also agree to the audio recording of my participation in this study. Should I encounter any problems during this research I am free to contact the researcher or the supervisor whose details are listed below. Furthermore, if at all its possible feedback will be given to me in form of a published article. Therefore, I hereby consent to participate in this study.

Researcher's number......... 0776694244   email......cynthiadzimiri@gmail.com

Supervisor's number..........0027514017522...email: jitalc@ufs.ac.za

Signature of participant................................... Date......................

APPENDIX 6: Interview protocol for female secondary school heads

Female secondary school heads' experiences of leadership in the Gweru District of Zimbabwe.

<u>**INSTRUCTIONS**</u>

1. You are requested to respond to the following questions to the best of your ability.
2. The conversations will be audio-taped with your permission and the record will be destroyed once the research is completed.
3. You are asked to read and sign the consent form before the commencement of the interviews.

SECTION A: SOCIALISATION
Question design adapted from illustrations in Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte (1999).*Essential Ethnographic Methods: Observation, Interviews, and questionnaires.* Walnut Creek: ALTAMIRA.

Research Questions
1. How does socialisation influence women educators' decisions to take up leadership roles in schools?
2. What are female secondary school heads' experiences of their career progression from senior teacher to school headship?

Protocol

1. **Tell me about your family.** (**Probes**: How was it like growing up in your family? What key roles did you play in your family? What were your parents' views on your roles as a girl child? Do you recall any leadership role(s) you played growing up in the family? How did your male siblings, in any, view your role in the family? Growing up in your family, what experiences do you think prepared you for leadership outside the family circle?)
2. **Tell me about your school education experiences?** (**Probes**: What, if any, leadership roles did you play or were you assigned in the school or in class? Do you recall any female students who held leadership positions in your school or class? What future dreams did you have as a school girl? Can you tell me of any experiences you will never forget as a leader in your school or class?)
3. **Tell me about your teacher training experience.** (**Probes:** What were your memorable experiences in college? Were there any women on the Student Representative council during your time? What leadership responsibilities did you hold in college? Describe to me some of the leadership experiences you had as a college student. In what ways do you think your college experiences prepared you for a career leadership?)

4. **What leadership lessons do you draw from the teachers and lecturers who taught you?** (**Probes**: What experiences with any of your teachers/lecturers shaped your life and view of leadership? Are there any in the education profession who positively impacted on your career as models or mentors –briefly in what ways?).

5. **As a qualified teacher, what were your career aspirations?** (**Probes**: What did you need to do to realise your aspirations? What experiences as a school teacher do you think prepared you for school headship?)

6. **What inspired you to become school head?**

7. **Can you describe the procedure you went through to becoming school head?** (**Probes:** How was the post advertised? How did you apply? Describe the selection procedure you went through? What sources of support did you have? What challenges did you encounter? How many times had you applied unsuccessfully before eventually getting appointed as school head?)

8. **Tell me about your transition to school head position?** (**Probes:** Was there provision for you to understudy a serving school head? Did you have any serving female school head(s) that served as your mentor(s)? Did you attend any training prior to assuming duty as school head? Do you hold any qualification in school leadership/management? Can you say you were adequately prepared for your position as school head? What could have been done better to prepare you for school headship?)

9. **Upon appointment, how were you introduced into the new school setting?** (**Probes:** Who introduced you? How were you introduced? To whom were you introduced?)

SECTION B: EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS

Research Question

1. What are the challenges and opportunities of female secondary school heads in the daily execution of their duties

Protocol

1. **Tell me about your first year as school head. (Probes:** What opportunities did you see in the school? How did you perceive the reception by stakeholders such as teachers and parents, in your view as a female school head? What challenges did you meet in your first years as school head? How did you address these challenges?)

2. **Can you describe to me your full day as a school head?** (**Probes**: Do you start your day with a schedule of activities/tasks to be done? Do you always complete your day's schedule of tasks/commitments? What takes up most of your time in a day as school head? What is your major focus or area of major concern?)

3. **What major challenges do you experience in executing your role as a female school head?** (**Probes**: What is your perception of stakeholders' (teachers, pupils, parents, ancillary staff) response to your leadership as female school head? Any views or experiences with how male and female teachers respond? What problems do you encounter and how do you address these, if any?)

4. **What challenges do you experience in terms of the demands of the job against other obligations?** (**Probes:** How do you balance family and work role demands? In what ways does your family support your role as school head, or otherwise? Can you recall any major conflicts between your role as a female school head and any family role(s)? How do you balance your school leadership role and your social life? What is your view on the belief that other women 'pull you down' as a female head?)

5. **Given that we have very few female school heads in the district, how have you perceived your interaction with male counterparts?** (Do you feel as a female school head your voice is heard say at District school heads' meetings? Do you feel accepted as an equal by male counterparts? What is your view of how male superiors and subordinates respond to your leadership as a female school head? How active are female school heads in National Association of Secondary Heads [NASH] leadership?)

6. **Do you have any forum for female school heads/leaders that you belong to? (Probes:** If any, what support programs have you engaged in? If not, do you think having one would assist you as a female school head? What areas would you love to see addressed in such a forum.

7. **How do you prepare women senior teachers in your school for school leadership? (Probes:** Are women senior teachers in your school willing to take up school level leadership positions? Which leadership positions in your school are held by female teachers? What is your perception of women teachers' willingness to take up leadership roles in your school? Have you experienced any hurdles that bar women teachers from taking up school level leadership positions?)

8. **What do you do to encourage senior women educators in your school to apply for promotion posts?** (**Probes**: How do you inform senior teachers of any advert of promotion posts? How keen are your female senior teachers on applying for promotion posts? Have any applied and succeeded? Do you approach eligible individuals?)

9. **In what ways would you say your leadership as a woman is different from that of a man?**
(**Probes:** What is it that you do as a leader that men rarely do? Given your experiences with male school heads, what is it that you do differently and why? How do you enforce/enlist compliance from subordinates in your school?)

10. **In your own view, why do you think there are so few female school heads in your district? (Probes:** What do you see as major barriers to promotion of

women to leadership positions? What do you propose to be done to increase the visibility of women in leadership positions?)

OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

-I will attend staff meetings to interactions and other behaviours of interest.

-I will shadow each of the heads for a day to observe some challenges that might be missed by interview sessions and document analysis.

 -I will observe interactions with subordinates and any incidental call-ins by clients or school personnel and students at different times of the day.

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

-Minutes from staff meetings **and** school log books

-Public and internal communications, policies, circulars and other legal frames relevant to the study.