

**EXPLORING GENDER LEGISLATION IN CLOSING THE GENDER GAP IN
PRIMARY SCHOOLS' LEADERSHIP AT EKURHULENI DISTRICT**

By

JOY MAPULE MOTLOUNG

(STUDENT NUMBER: 2012061855)

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SUPERVISOR: DR BJ MTHANTI

DECLARATION

I, Joy Mapule Motlounng declare that this dissertation, Exploring Gender Legislation in Closing the gender gap in Primary Schools' Leadership at Ekurhuleni District, is my independent work.

The sources of information used are acknowledged by referencing the authors.

The following dissertation has never been used by any faculty, university or Department. However, this original work will be submitted for the qualification of a Master's Degree in Education, in fulfilment requirements of the University of the Free State

Signed by:



Date: 08/01/2024

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DBE:	Department of Basic Education
GDE:	Gauteng Department Education
SGB:	School Governing Body
SMT:	School Management Team
SASA:	South African School Act
StatsSA:	Statistics South Africa
EEA:	Employment of Equity Act
EMGD:	Education Management and Governance
SACE:	South African Council of Educators
ATP:	Annual Teaching Plan
CAPS:	Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement
CGE:	Commission for Gender Equality

ABSTRACT

Gender equality in Gauteng School's leadership remains a challenge. It is documented and encouraged for women to apply in yearly promotional circulars for school managerial positions vacancies. It shows that the gender gap, which the Ekurhuleni district aims to close, remains stagnant with gender legislation in place. Various studies have sought to understand the reasons behind the gender gap in terms of women becoming leaders, which involved socio-cultural factors. However, there has been minimum research on the effectiveness of the current gender legislation as the mechanism of ensuring gender equality is achieved in schools' leadership. Therefore, the study explores gender legislation and their roles in achieving gender equality among school leadership. The emancipatory paradigm underpins the survey because it was concerned with transformation in terms of equality and challenging the status quo. The theoretical framework employed in this transformational leadership theory fits well with the study as it aims to transform primary school leadership to achieve gender equality in the employment of school principals. The study was qualitative to gather an in-depth understanding of the research phenomenon. Employing the narrative inquiry, the participants were able to narrate their experiences aimed at implementing gender legislation in schools' leadership. Therefore, the study's sampling comprises of two schools and the Department of Education district. The survey participants were School Governing Bodies (SGB), two union representatives, and two district officials. The selected participants were regarded as crucial parties who must apply and observe gender legislation when appointing the school leaders to meet the gender equality set target. Therefore, semi-structured interviews and document reviews were implemented during data collection. The data was analysed using themes that emerged from the data collected from the participants. The study revealed that gender legislation relies highly on the implementors, who often overlook it. Moreover, women are associated with weaknesses regarding school disciplinary measures, which is currently a crucial focus when hiring principals, resulting in males dominating the middle and top management roles and prioritising union members' affiliates for top management roles. The study recommends that all stakeholders in the Education Department should implement gender legislation in contrast to merely the selection panels, who often overlook it by imposing prejudice and self-interest agendas in leadership roles.

Keywords: Gender legislation, School leadership, Gender gap, Equality, Transformation

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CHAPTER ONE

EXPLORING GENDER LEGISLATION IN CLOSING THE GENDER GAP IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS' LEADERSHIP AT EKURHULENI DISTRICT

1.1 Introduction and Background of the Study

Inequality based on work dynamics between males and females often results in the phenomenon of the gender gap. Harris (2017) described the gender gap as the differences between men and women in social, political, and economic spheres. This is normally reflected in health, education, or politics. In education, the gender gap can refer to the number of women misrepresented in high decision-making positions in principalship roles. Elbers and Grigore (2018) stated that the cause of the gender gap is the unequal relationship between men and women often found in workspaces.

The World Health Organisation (2020) defined gender as characteristics that make up a woman or a girl constructed by society. Socio-cultural factors are some of the concerns which describe how women should behave. Preliminary in a microenvironment such as households bring broader insight into the macro environment. According to Andrews (2020), cultural practices in a family have the biggest influence on gender beliefs. This underlying oppression becomes restrictive to women by obstructing a woman's view on life, including embarking on certain roles in their careers when society has already defined how certain genders should behave. This becomes a subject concerning gender equality, where one gender becomes more privileged than the other, resulting in discrimination or marginalisation.

Sarieddine (2018) argued that equality in the workplace, in connection to how women are treated, has not been demolished in human existence. The marginalisation of women was not limited to basic career situations; however, it was within leadership roles. This has led to women forming associations that lead to women's liberation and fights for women's rights. Juhasz and Pap (2018) stated that there has been a backlash against women's rights regarding gender inequality across different nations over the past few years. For example, locally in South African schools' women in leadership positions is still a concern. Davids (2018) argued that females are not effectively represented in leadership roles in schools, despite the transformations that have been occurring in the past years regarding gender equality. Lawson, Martin, Huda and Matz (2022) stated that the underrepresentation of women in leadership

positions is at times driven by stereotypes relating to gender, where women are not associated with agentic terms such as being self-assured and conclusive. Such stereotypical views negatively impact the recognition of women in leadership roles, such as the fact that one's abilities may be overlooked due to perceptions of how stereotype's view women. Therefore, gender legislation was formed to redress past discriminatory acts. The United Nations (2017) described gender legislation as laws aimed at equal gender treatment for both genders to exercise their human rights without discriminatory acts.

Various gender-related laws are in place in workplaces, with the Department of Education aligning itself with the Employment Equity Act and Affirmative Action of 1998 to address historical inequalities based on factors like race, gender, and disabilities. This study focuses specifically on the gender aspect of these laws, ensuring that qualified women receive priority in employment, including for promotional positions. The Commission for Gender Equality (1996) was established to further the cause of gender equality in South Africa. Additionally, the Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill (2013) has been instrumental in enhancing power and opportunities for women. Lastly, the Department of Education has implemented policies like the Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy (2014), aimed at tackling past issues of gender discrimination and advancing women's empowerment within schools.

Observing this at the school where the researcher is employed, a primary school since 1942, there was only one female principal before democracy in our country. There have been other principals appointed since then, which are all males. As the transformation occurs with different principles being established under the employment equity and affirmative action legislation as it promotes designated groups such as females being recognised, the momentum of promoting women into leadership roles has yet to be effective.

1.2 Problem Statement

The gender legislation aimed at addressing gender inequality has not effectively closed the gender gap, which is still visible in the lack of women in leadership in schools. The Department of Basic Education Circular 09 of 2020 in South Africa is concerned with implementing an Employment Equity Plan, emphasising that, when analysing school levels, it is still evident that male principals dominate over female principals. Therefore, the implementation and role of the Gender legislation in place remain questionable regarding its effectiveness.

The problem that warrants the investigation is exploring the gender legislation, which has not been adequately effective in transforming the gender inequality in women's leadership in schools due to the gender gap that is still visible. It is discernible in the advertisement of the school managerial role applications, where, for example, the Gauteng Department of Education Vacancy Circular 02 of 2022 educator promotion post-level 2-4, which is about management posts in schools such as Head of Department, Deputy Principal and principal position. It emphasises that women and people with disabilities are encouraged to apply, and preference will be given to the underrepresented groups (Gauteng Department of Education, 2022). This explains the lack of female representatives within school managerial roles. Based on these circulars, this shows that women are being represented but not adequately.

The gender imbalance favours male figures. It contradicts the legislative frameworks, such as the Employment Equity Act number 55 of 1998, which still exists and encourages employers to take necessary steps to promote workplace equality, including gender equality. Another legislation that guides fairness is affirmative action. The WageIndicator (2022) describes affirmative action in South Africa as ensuring that qualified designated groups, including women, need equal opportunities, including the top levels of management.

The inadequate representation of women in leadership can be a concern because women's voices in leadership decisions must be more efficacious. Tarbuton (2019) mentioned that the number of female teachers in schools is high; however, there is a need for more leadership positions. The current post-level one educators are teachers who have yet to be promoted and need to be knowledgeable about barriers that hinder women from reaching managerial roles. This knowledge may be effective in understanding how to combat such when preparing for school leadership roles.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The purpose is to examine and explore educational leadership in the Ekurhuleni district and gender legislation applicable to gender equality in the workplace. There is visible professional growth in women gradually developing in educational leadership roles. Fuller, Moorosi, Showunmi and Sha (2021) stated that there has been a growing number of female leaders in schools since post-apartheid in South Africa.

However, concerns may be viewed as challenges to reaching aspired levels and difficulties of being viewed differently as a female leader, which may be the underlying basis of gender

inequality in managerial roles. Hence, we must examine and explore gender legislation in the Ekurhuleni district and gender legislation applicable to gender equality in the workplace.

1.4 Study Objectives

The main study objective was:

To investigate the efficacy of gender legislation in promoting female leadership roles within primary school settings

The sub-objectives of the study were two-fold:

- a) To determine whether the selection panel observe and apply gender legislation in the employment of school principals.
- b) To determine the factors responsible for the low numbers of females in leadership positions in primary schools.

1.5 Research Questions

The main research question was:

How effective is the current gender legislation in promoting women into leadership roles in primary schools?

The sub-research questions were two-fold:

- a) Does the selection panel observe and apply gender legislation in the employment of school principals?
- b) What factors are responsible for the low number of female principals in primary schools?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

In the following section, the researcher engaged in a theory that transforms the educational leadership sector through gender equality. The theory used for this study is the transformational leadership theory. This theory is relevant because it provides a relationship regarding changes and adaptation where leadership is concerned. Money (2017) described transformational leadership theory as leadership concerned with change and knowing how to lead people by inspiring followers to change how they view dynamics while motivating them to achieve

desired goals. The relevance of this theory is that the research study is concerned with changes and transformation of what is deemed the norm, such as the dominance of male leadership in managerial positions in schools. Leaders in the education sector need to acknowledge gender equality and diminish negative perceptions that were previously attached to women as leaders. Sirin, Aydin and Bilir (2018) stated that transformational leadership has important effects on teachers' emotions, beliefs, and commitment to changes that take place in schools. Transformational leaders must emphasise motivational aspects to ease educators' uncertainties, such as introducing female leaders in schools or promoting more feminine attributes into schools' leadership roles. To close gender gaps in the education system like in other sectors, it is significant that transformational leaders exist to change people's perspectives, such as how women in leadership are viewed concerning stereotypes attached to them. In addition to the above description of transformational leadership theory concerning change, this theory centres around motivational and inspirational factors. Brown, Brown, and Nandedkor (2019) asserted that the basis of transformational leadership is to motivate and inspire their followers to excel in achieving desired outcomes while developing their potential. This defines transformational leadership as leaders concerned with inspiring change. Both definitions interlink in terms of aiming to achieve goals while having approaches to conduct that Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee and Lin (2020) argued that even though the transformational theory is concerned with changing a component, there needs to be adequate strategies on how leaders can motivate their members; motivating as an important feature should address the how-to factor. Furthermore, in a continuously changing environment, Mokot, Sendouw, Mantiri and Rantung (2022) stated that development and changes can be complex, but that does not mean leaders should avoid them; leaders must have abilities to influence the people they work with into adaptations. This can be attainable through transformational leadership, allowing leaders to be influential and adaptive.

Drawing from the above challenge, the answer for motivating and inspiring followers regarding changes in educational leadership requires awareness and consistency. This can be done through programmes that equip women to take on school leadership roles while motivating individuals to perceive leaders as school managers and not as gender-related. Avoiding developmental and learning may invite gender perceptions, stereotypes, or unconscious bias. For example, according to Mthethwa, Kutame and Buthelezi (2019), when women are in principal positions in schools, some educators still view them as incompetent and doubt their abilities to resolve conflict management in schools.

Transitioning individuals' mindsets towards transformation is necessary to have tactics that will enable people to take part in changes. This is the basic reason this theory was chosen as suitable for this study. The education sector requires leaders to acknowledge gender equality and diminish negative perceptions of women as leaders. Bunaiyan and McWilliams (2018) argued that transformational leadership theory is an impactful influence that motivates followers to succeed more than expected. Therefore, any transformation requires a shift from comfort, with leaders working collectively to bring positive change in schools.

In education, Asbari (2020) emphasised that transformational leadership is associated with team innovation and individual members. This theory makes it effective in this study; human behaviour plays a critical role as the education sector transitions into the 21st century. For example, different teams such as the School Management Team (SMT) and educators as individual members must be part of any transformation that occurs by contributing ideas. Sirin, Aydin and Bilir (2018) stated that transformational leadership has important effects on teachers' emotions, beliefs, and commitment to changes that take place in schools. This makes it significant for transformational leaders to draw into the motivational aspects to ease any uncertainties educators may have, for example, introducing female leaders in schools or aiming to bring adequate femininity into schools' leadership roles to close any gender gaps. This needs to be conducted by employing effective communication.

According to Rehmat, Butt, Faroqi and Asim (2020), transformational leadership consists of giving inspirational motivation utilising communication and shared vision. An example mentioned earlier was communicating with staff members to close gender gaps in a school. This also answers the argument discussed regarding inadequate strategies that transformational theory holds. Communication can be used as a tool for motivation to change. In the next section, the researcher will look at the literature reviewed and applied to the study concerned.

1.7 Literature Review

This literature reviewed in this section include conceptualising leadership and analysing the concept of the gender gap. Subsequently, the study explored gender legislation that applies to the education sector and understanding of women's leadership in schools. Furthermore, it contrasts different barriers faced by exploring women-hood and its barriers. Lastly, the disadvantages of the gender gap in schools were discussed.

1.7.1 Conceptualising Leadership

Various definitions describe leadership as not restricted to an objective view where all departments analyse leadership as a standard term. Raffo and Clark (2018) stated that the words we use to define leadership determine how we view leaders and what we consider leaders. For example, a female may value a nurturing or compassionate leader based on their feminine traits and what they deem an important aspect that qualifies them to be a leader. “Women are much more likely than men to say that being compassionate is essential in a leader” (University of Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership, 2017:7). Gandolfi and Stone (2018) furthermore stated that a leader is someone who trains and influences people who are the followers and prioritise the organisation’s missions and goals.

1.7.2 Analysing the term Gender Gap

Before an overview of the gender gap is given, the study will briefly describe the concept of gender. The World Health Organisation (2020) defined gender as characteristics that are involved which describe a woman or man. Socio-cultural factors are some of the concerns which define how women should behave. Preliminary in a microenvironment such as households to a broader insight into the macro environment. The gender gap will, therefore, be uncapped as applicable to the study. Harris (2017) revealed that the gender gap is the differences we find between men and women in different sectors, such as economic, political, educational, or cultural differences. This can also include salaries and leadership positions in workplaces. The education sector encompasses various leadership roles; within the microenvironment, such as the school environment, there are SMT members, which consist of the head of departments, deputy principal(s), and principals. A gender gap can be visible regarding which gender occupies which managerial positions. Elbers and Grigore (2018) conceptualised the gender gap by emphasising that gender inequality as a contributing factor to the gender gap is not a new concept. Women’s movements in the 19th century have increased global attention to diminish this inequality between men and women as a serious concern.

1.7.3 Gender Legislation

Various legislations on gender aim to address gender inequality in workplaces, including the education sector. The Women’s Empowerment and gender equality bill (2013), as proposed in the National Assembly section 75, aims to recognise, and empower women in the decision-making process structures. The continuous strive for women to be recognised in school leadership and managerial positions questions the effectiveness of implementing this Act.

Department of Education Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy (2014) consists of objectives on empowering women by achieving equality for women as decision-makers through women empowerment initiatives. That will work on obstacles that hinder gender equality in schools, district levels, or head offices.

Lastly, legislation that guides fairness is affirmative action. The WageIndicator (2022) describes affirmative action in South Africa as ensuring that qualified designated groups, including women, need equal opportunities at the top management level. The effectiveness of this implementation has also left gaps in the basic education sector regarding women being recognised. The study aimed to explore the efficacy of these gender legislation in promoting women into leadership roles in primary schools. The constitutional body aimed at gender equality in South Africa is the CGE Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), established in Chapter Nine of the constitution, 108 of 1996, which monitors and evaluates quality in policies, legislation, and education. With the education sector part of this body, gender equality in leadership would be expected to be in transformational visions.

1.7.4 Women's Leadership in Schools and Barriers Faced

Dauids (2018) mentioned that women are not adequately represented in leadership positions within South African schools, regardless of the gender equality shifts that have been put in place during recent decades. The study understands that stereotypes, gender roles, and societal norms of the past may have contributed to the lack of female leaders. According to Macupe (2021), the culture of patriarchy has been an obstacle for women who aim to ascend to leadership positions. Moreover, the misconceptions faced by women also play a role. Abdallah and Jibai (2020) stated that women are considered more emotional and less combative than men, who are less involved or lack initiative. Gender norms may lead to stereotypes and pre-judgement of womanhood, especially when they take on leadership roles before being allowed to prove their capabilities.

1.7.5 Disadvantages of the Gender Gap in Schools

Reid (2023) asserted that having few women in leadership means their decisions could be more effectively advocated for. In a democratic society, this means fewer female representatives during decision-making processes. For example, unequal representation means one gender will dominate the other when taking school classes. Dauids (2018) furthermore mentioned that the discrimination found in schools would result in female principals needing to do their jobs more

effectively or withdrawing from the post. These factors impact young women hoping for leadership positions, such as school principals, by not applying for managerial posts, hence remaining underrepresented.

1.8 Research Paradigms

Kelly (2018) defined paradigms as a way of thinking about the world that includes morals, values, attitudes, and beliefs and as a set of standards that address how best to find solutions to research problems. The research paradigms to be discussed are positivism, post-positivism, constructivism and emancipatory. The emancipatory theory underpins this study because it seeks to apply social justice regarding gender equality by embracing transformation within the basic education sector, where women are equally represented as the previously disadvantaged. Furthermore, to combat the stereotypes attached to women's leadership and the barriers they face when leading schools. Therefore, the emancipatory paradigm applies to challenging the status quo of associating leadership with women in society.

1.8.1 Positivism

E-international Relations (2021) described positivism as studying facts scientifically. The theorists who follow positivism view the world as it is, meaning it is more of an objective approach. Furthermore, Park, Konge and Artino (2020) remarked that positivism is mainly associated with the hypothetical-deductive model concerning science, which builds on selecting prior hypotheses with experience by looking at variables and measures. For example, in terms of gender legislation in this study, this paradigm would understand that to uncover factors of gender legislation, reasoning and research would be required in contrast to having people have their understanding and interpretation subjectively.

1.8.2 Constructivism

Constructivism paradigm Lohman (2021) described this paradigm as based on a belief that knowledge is not objective. However, it is based on creating sense through lived experiences. This means that knowledge derives from both the interactions and social factors that occur. In contrast, Lohman (2021) described this paradigm based on a belief that knowledge is not objective. However, what may be deemed correct? For example, in terms of gender legislation, participants can interpret the effectiveness of legislation based on their lived experiences, make a judgement, and build their representation on it.

1.8.3 Emancipatory/Critical Theory

Makombe (2017) described the emancipatory paradigm as a participatory inquiry into feminism, which is subjective and, importantly, self-reflective, which can be verbally articulated. Importantly, it addresses the issues of inequality, empowerment, and alienation. According to Bluhdorn, Butzlaff, and Haderer (2021), social justice and equality concepts are crucial and involve political, cultural, or economic factors in achieving an effective emancipatory theory. Therefore, this study is based on the social phenomenon of gender equality and legislation in both societal and educational contexts. Where people's narratives are subjective and associated with their experiences. This paradigm challenges the status quo of what is deemed as a norm. Making it an effective application to this study. This theory also shows relevance regarding social injustices of the past that affected women as a marginalised group and different cultural beliefs that hindered women from being in managerial positions. Within the research paradigms are research philosophies. Hürlimann and Hürlimann (2019) describe philosophies as examining the nature of knowledge. This also looks at the nature and reality of the researchers' societies. Therefore, ontology, epistemology and methodology is discussed hereunder.

Ontology: According to Trivedi (2020), ontology holds different assumptions regarding reality and its existence, aiming to understand what people deem as real. Therefore, it is based on people who may believe that a single reality can be viewed as objectivity or a multiple understanding of reality that opens for subjectivity. However, about the emancipatory researcher, this is aimed at understanding that reality is not based on a single truth. However, there are various realities. These aspects can constantly be challenged as well. Moon and Blackman (2017) stated that ontology understands and describes how reality is constructed. In this study, for example, the researcher understands that gender is socially constructed through subjectivity. Based on the social and cultural factors that define gender. Each construction stems from what an individual believes in their interpretation of the reality of gender.

Epistemology: Ejnavarzala (2019) stated that this philosophy is based on knowledge, the theories involved in knowledge and what constitutes knowledge. Therefore, this is how a person understands knowledge. The knowledge needed to know the reality one believes in. Subsequently, Abahneh (2020) described epistemology in critical theory as the meanings that come from human engagement, such as a particular social phenomenon. In this study, the involvement of the participants regarding the knowledge and understanding of gender equality,

leadership and gender legislation will be communicated. Moreover, during the selection processes, the union representatives must present the applicants so that no one is discriminated against.

Methodology: In understanding methodology, Al-Ababneh (2020) asserted that critical theorists use methodology as a plan of action regarding the techniques used to obtain the required data by ensuring that they involve participants in the phenomenon. To understand the phenomenon of gender in leadership, the researcher is required to employ various methods that involve the participants. Such has had interactions through semi-structured interviews and engagements about gender legislation by analysing document reviews. In the below section, the researcher will discuss the research approach employed in this study.

1.9 Qualitative Research Approach

The nature of the study will be qualitative. According to Hammarberg, Kirkman, and De Lacey (2016), the qualitative research approach is the theoretical or non-numerical approach that uses questions to study a social phenomenon. Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2018) mentioned that the qualitative approach is the interaction between the researcher and participants to understand the problem under exploration. This research approach strives to comprehend a phenomenon from the viewpoint of the research participants and understand the meanings they assign to their experiences.

1.10 Research Approaches: Inductive Reasoning and Narrative Inquiry

Inductive reasoning will be employed. This allows the researcher to let the participants talk about their experiences and then analyse the data (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). Furthermore, Gemma (2018) described inductive reasoning by stating that the researcher begins with observing and going through experiments repetitively until they are confident that the results represent the situation they aim to solve. In this way, the researcher will go through the narrative experiences of participants by also piloting the study through various participants before making a judgement that validates the researchers.

Roller (2017) asserted that qualitative inquiry enables the researchers to gain meaningful insight into the participants' lived experiences. Subsequently, according to Harappu (2021), the narrative research approach consists of the researcher focusing on a particular topic and obtaining understanding using narrative discussions. This mode of inquiry is applicable because the study will examine how the participants tell the stories and how they make sense

of their experiences. The researcher aims to seek the gender gap in leadership roles within primary schools and the reasons behind it. This is achieved by considering the participant's lived experiences. Sampling methods and participants is discussed hereunder.

1.11 Research Design and Methodology

Mishra and Alok (2017) described research methods as all the applicable techniques used to conduct research. Meanwhile, research methodology is defined as the approach to solving research thoroughly. Additionally, McCombes (2022) identified key concepts to be considered in the research methodology section. The following are the key elements the researcher will be taking into cognisance:

- What type of research will be conducted? i.e., qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods?
- How will the researcher gather data? And ways of analysing it?
- The tools and instruments to be used.
- Reasons behind choosing various methods.

1.12 Research Methods and Instruments

Mishra and Alok (2017) described research methods and techniques used to conduct research. Research instruments are tools that the researcher uses when collecting data. Importantly, each research design uses applicable instruments (Collins, 2021). Bhandari (2022) stated that qualitative research consists of observations, interviews, focus groups, and surveys such as questionnaires, thus offering a variety of methods applicable to obtaining data. The researcher will use semi-structured interviews and document review instruments to collect data in this study. Therefore, the study utilises various methods and instruments as applicable to qualitative research to collect data. This study employed semi-structured interviews and document analysis for triangulation purposes.

1.13 Sampling Plan and its Participants

Turner (2020) defined sampling as selecting a subset within a population which brings interest and knowledge to the research study. This means that in a large population, the researcher selects participants relevant to the study based on their characteristics or job roles needed to answer the research question. According to McCombes (2022), it is challenging to collect data from everyone, so instead, the researcher selected a sample of people from the chosen sample to participate. A purposive sampling strategy was employed in this study. Crossman (2020)

described purposive sampling as non-probability sampling, meaning selecting participants from the population according to their characteristics. This strategy is commonly used in qualitative research. Purposive sampling was applied to the study because the researcher selected participants who had specific characteristics for this study. The participants had characteristics needed to provide knowledgeable information about the underrepresentation of women leaders in schools. Because they are the people required in the appointment panels of the schools' management processes, they could provide data on the selection processes regarding gender gaps in the schools' management team. The union representative, school governing body, and district officials are involved in the shortlisting and interview process of appointing school principals. They are also required to follow legislation in appointment processes. They will be able to provide rich data as crucial members who can assist in closing gender gaps in the Ekurhuleni district.

1.14. A Population Sample of the Study

The population of the study is selected based on the participants who hold an understanding of gender legislation that is aimed at promoting gender equality. As mandatory parties who should apply gender legislation during the selection and interview processes of leadership in schools. Therefore, two primary schools in the Ekurhuleni district were sampled. The researcher interviewed a School Governing Body (SGB) and a union representative in each school. The researcher also interviewed two district officials from the Department of Basic Education district. This totals to six participants. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied when selecting the participants of this study. According to Patino and Ferreira (2018), the inclusion criteria involve the required characteristics of participants that enable them to answer the set research questions. Exclusion criteria include factors that would make participants give inaccurate data and be biased or inconsistent with scheduled interviews. According to the target population of this study, no SGB member, district official, or union representative will be participating. However, the ones with experience as panel members of Schools' Management Team recruitment processes. Because they are giving contextual factors based on the gender gap when they shortlist and interview principals. Also, how they apply gender legislation during recruitment processes as mandatory by the Department of Education in Gauteng.

The participants were from the focus area of the study in Ekurhuleni district; they are knowledgeable about gender legislation because they must apply it in their portfolios and recruitment processes within the Department of Basic Education, primary schools. Connelly

(2020) emphasised that the exclusion criteria are not necessarily the opposite of inclusion criteria but instead, characteristics that may hinder individuals from being part of the study. In this study, the excluded participants were those who are illiterate, minors, and district officials in the curriculum department because they spend vast amounts of time outside their offices, but conducting school visits and their availability will be a challenge. Furthermore, individuals not from the district, because each province and district has gender in terms of participants, was not a criterion because the study is not about male or female experiences, which is not part of the study objectives and research questions. However, the focal point is on legislation, leadership, and the causes of the gender gap, and the people responsible for closing the gender gap will be the study participants, knowing the district and its gender dynamics in terms of legislation employed.

1.15 Data Collection

Glamazdina (2022) defined data collection as a process in which the researcher collects data; it consists of assessing and analysing applicable data to answer research questions. Data collection methods that will be used apply to qualitative study as a research design used in the study. This process must be conducted effectively for meaningful results and analysis. Therefore, Taheerdoost (2021) emphasised that a good design and sufficient time in collecting and analysing data are necessary to gain accurate results. To achieve this, the researcher will implement data collection methods to make it feasible to collect, analyse, and interpret data relevant to gender legislation and gender gap phenomena.

Barret and Twycross (2018) differentiated data collection methods involved in qualitative data. These include interviews, focus groups, and observations. Interviews give a straightforward and more direct way of obtaining rich data about a particular phenomenon through engagements. According to Operandi, Elhami and Khoshnevisan (2022), semi-structured, unstructured, and structured interviews consist of interviews. Semi-structured interviews consist of open-ended questions to obtain adequate data and continuous follow-up questions derived from the participants' responses during the interviews. In contrast, unstructured interviews do not require pre-planning, as they are free flowing. In structured interviews, planning involves the type of questions to be asked and consistency among the participants. Another data collection method is focusing groups. Nyumba, Wilson, Derrick, and Mukherjee (2018) described this as synonymous with interviews, semi-structured interviews to be specific;

however, with focus groups, the researcher requires a group of individuals to all meet and have a discussion based on the participants' experiences, views, or beliefs about a particular topic.

The next data collection method found in qualitative research is observation. This method consists of using one's senses, in which the researcher looks and listens to social or behavioural patterns in a systematic way (Smit & Onwuegbuzie, 2018). This would require the researcher to be physically present to observe the patterns occurring. In qualitative research, there is also document analysis that the researcher will utilise when collecting data. According to Kayesa (2018), document review consists of analysing and reviewing documents that exist during data collection processes, which are done systematically. Therefore, this is applicable in this study.

In conducting the interviews, the researcher will conduct individual face-to-face semi-structured interviews rather than focus group interviews. This is because even though the participants serve the same role as panellists during management interviews in schools and are well informed about gender legislation required to close the gender gap, they all serve different roles in the function of the school, the district officials as leadership, the SGB as governance and union representatives as labour. They hold different views as per their experiences in their fields. Gundumogula and Gundumogula (2020) elaborated that focus groups can also be biased in terms of the dominant participants, and it is challenging to understand if the view given was personal or influenced by group members. The researcher will not conduct interviews in an unstructured way because they may be restrictive and do not open a meaningful space for further engagements through follow-up questions. Operandi, Elhami and Khoshnevisan (2022) also asserted that structured interviews often require the researcher to lead the conversations, which limits the data to be received from the participants. In the next section, the researcher will discuss the qualitative data collection methods as applicable to the study.

1.15.1 Semi-structured Interviews

According to Creswell and Poth (2019), semi-structured interviews use open-ended, interchangeable questions where one person attempts to elicit information from another by asking questions. This means that the researcher has no fixed questions of discussion for the participant but is guided by how the latter interprets phenomena. This study will include an interview protocol in which follow-up questions and follow-ups will follow, as the researcher needs the participants to engage in the topic and describe their experiences with the population.

1.15.2 Documentary Reviews

Dalglis, Shalid and McMahon (2020) defined document analysis as reviewing and evaluating existing sector documents. These are normally key characteristics of a bureaucratic system stipulating how a sector should be operated. Considering that the study is based on various gender legislations to be analysed, the researcher will employ document analysis as a data collection method to be utilised. The schools and district offices, which will form part of the study, are conducted in a bureaucratic system. Therefore, it is apparent from the description of this method that it will apply to this study document reviews. The documents will be reviewed and analysed, and the questions around them will be centred on answering the research questions. Andrade, Schmitt, Storck, Piccoli and Ruoff (2018) asserted that document analysis is highly valued in data collection because it brings richness to data by broadening knowledge about the investigated matter. Documents to be reviewed in this study are circular on the implementation of the Employment Equity Plan in the education sector, the Employment Equity Act aligned with affirmative action, the Gauteng Department of Education's gender equality and women empowerment policy, the CGE, the Women Empowerment and gender equality bill, and the 2022 vacancy circular for the appointment of post two until four.

Furthermore, audio recordings were used as an instrument during the data collection process. Williams (2020) stated that audio recordings are often used in qualitative studies and that this technique is important in retaining everything that was said without relying on one's memory. Subsequently, transcriptions were utilised. Nascimento and Steinbruch (2019) asserted that data collection that consists of interviews requires transcriptions, which involve transferring audio recordings of conversations into texts. The raw data was organised in comprehensive manner.

1.16 Data Analysis

De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont (2010) described data analysis as bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It can be an ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process that does not proceed linearly but in a spiral format and is not tidy. This study analysed qualitative data by creating themes and emerging themes from data collected from the participants. Thematic analyses were used during data analysis. Since the study is qualitative and consists of inductive reasoning, a suitable method of analysing data was thematic analysis. Dawadi (2020) described thematic analysis as a qualitative way of analysing data in which complex data was organised.

The researcher read the transcriptions and generates themes and patterns found in the data. This also included the formation of codes while analysing the data. According to Byrne (2022), applying coding assists with the reliability approach because themes normally develop early during data analysis. According to Dawadi (2020), *generating* codes consists of finding similar response patterns and giving those similarities the same codes.

1.17 Credibility

To achieve credibility, different methodological techniques and strategies, such as prolonging engagements, will be applied to gain in-depth data triangulation. Credibility also focuses on how this refers to the congruence of the findings about reality (Stahl & King, 2020) and how the participants view society, in this case. Gender legislation and its aim of achieving a quota within schools, with what legislation seeks society to implement. This brings a co-existence between reality and what is formulated in the legislation.

1.18 Authenticity

This includes applying the realness of the data received. Mauldin (2020) stated that with authenticity, the researcher considers the participants' different beliefs and values. This was achieved by fairness, acknowledging all the participants' values, and aiming for subjectivity without involving the researchers' sense of faith in society by accepting different views and contributions to the study.

1.19 Dependability

Mamba (2019) argued that dependability is also equivalent to reliability, which means that if a study were conducted under similar circumstances, the results would likely be the same as the initial ones. Also, even if changes occur, the results or emerging themes should be aligned, not completely different.

1.20 Confidentiality

The identifications of the participants remained anonymous. This means their names or school names will not be revealed. However, pseudonyms substituted this for both their names and workplaces. Badampudi, Fotrousi, Cartaxo and Usman (2022) asserted that confidentiality in research means the data collected must not be traced to the participants, and the raw data collected should be protected by not linking it to any sector or individuals. The researcher will assure the participants that they will remain anonymous and explain what their data study will

be used for. Drafting a consent form gives the participants autonomy to use their data for the research study. Bos (2020) emphasised that to achieve confidentiality, informed consent is an effective strategy to stipulate the fundamental rights of the participants, as well as the relationship between the researcher and participants. These discussions took place before the interviews to give the participants ample time to make informed decisions about their willingness.

1.21 Limitations to the Study

Gaille (2018) mentions that qualitative research has its limitations, such as creating misleading conclusions, that a small sample from people interviewed means not having the chance to gather other perspectives but only from those you collected data from, that there is no possible way of knowing that the conclusions the researcher made can apply for all the demographics. In this study, participants with different roles and titles who play a significant role in gender legislation implementation processes may all hold different views and understandings due to subjectivity, which may result in difficulties in gathering a uniform narrative. Furthermore, qualitative research often focuses on the participants' experiences. "Qualitative research approaches sometimes leave out contextual sensitivities and focus more on meanings and experiences" (Rahman, 2016:104). These are often subjective, and information relies only on those interviewed. The researcher will, therefore, go beyond what is given by researching the responses given to broaden one's understanding.

1.22 Ethical and Safety Issues

According to Torp (2022), research ethics consists of integrity, the value of truth and honesty, which bring reliability and quality to research. Ethics committee approval will be requested before conducting the study and communicating with participants. Permission from the University of the Free State will be requested from the general/human research committee. Furthermore, the Department of Education Gauteng will be asked to conduct data in schools and district offices. According to the Gauteng Department of Education (2018), guidelines for conducting research for the Department of Basic Education (DBE), section 6.2.1 under ethical consideration stipulates that research may only be undertaken if the department has issued the approval letter to the researcher.

Participants were not be forced to participate in the study, and the researcher informed the participants that they have an autonomy and liberty to withdraw if they were no more

comfortable to participate in the study. Bhandari (2022) described ethical considerations in studies as the principles that guide one's research and ensure integrity. The researcher ensured the participants that participation is voluntary, getting consent before commencing the study and maintaining confidentiality. Regarding confidentiality, both schools will be given pseudonyms and names to protect the schools' and the participants' names. According to Heaton (2021), pseudonyms are false names that researchers use during a qualitative study in which the participants are also allowed to choose for themselves. This strategy was employed to protect the identity of the participants and their workplaces.

1.23 Value of the Study

The value of the research is exploring various ways to address the gender gap in school leadership by evaluating the current existing gender legislation and its effectiveness in the education sector. The study discovered the causes of the gender gap to promote gender equality by establishing different mechanisms and strategies to make gender legislation feasible to implement or review.

1.24 Chapter Division and Outline

Chapter Two served as a focal point for reviewing the literature, exploring leadership as the foundation of the study. It examined the phenomenon of the gender gap and analysed the gender legislation that existed to address past inequalities faced by women. Additionally, it delved into women's leadership and the barriers hindering their advancement to school leadership positions, evaluated the role of women in school leadership, and identified the disadvantages of gender disparities. Furthermore, chapter one introduced and provided the background of the study, chapter three presented the theoretical framework, chapter four focused on the research methodology, and finally, chapter five discussed the findings of the study.

1.25 Conclusion

Chapter One provided an introduction and background of the study and was motivated by the purpose of the study. This chapter also determined the research questions and objectives aimed at being achieved—elaborating on the theoretical framework that underpins the study. Moreover, the chapter outlined the research paradigms, designs and applicable methods. Subsequently, it described issues relating to qualitative analysis. The chapter analysed the crucial aspects of ethical issues appropriate to this research. In the next chapter, the researcher will review various literature related to the study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the researcher reviewed international and local literature related to the study. This chapter begins by describing leadership. With various definitions in different sectors, the applicable description of education leadership is a focal point. This was achieved by exploring leadership within the education sector. Subsequently, the notion of the gender gap was evaluated in terms of understanding what the gender gap is and its dimensions in primary schools' leadership. An analysis of gender legislation that exists to close the gender gap will be explored. Women as the previously disadvantaged group and the root source of establishing this gender legislation will be explained. Lastly, it identifies women's barriers, resulting in gender gaps within educational leadership spaces.

2.2 Leadership Described

Various definitions exist around leadership, as there is a contrast between leadership and leader. Malik and Azmat (2019) differentiated this by stating that a leader sets various goals for his team and facilitates them by ensuring they are achieved. Meanwhile, leadership involves a process where the leader motivates and encourages their teammates to achieve set goals. The word, *process*, therefore, forms part of the integral element of leadership. Strait (2020) elaborated on the process by stating that leadership as a process means that in addition to influencing, the leader will also use intercommunication between themselves and different parties as they impact one another. This requires teamwork, as each person affects the next person. Leadership as teamwork will be analysed later in this study. Influencing teamwork means being aspirational and not dictating.

Jones and Shideh (2020) stated that leaders should motivate and inspire their teams. Furthermore, in a recent study, Luedi (2022) described different components of composite leadership, such as leadership being about serving, followership and consisting of various paradoxes. This brings an understanding that leaders are only sometimes right but need support from followership. Leadership allows leaders to serve rather than particularly guide. In school settings, beyond excellent leadership, schools need dedicated followers who carry the vision

and mission of schools by having eagerness and enthusiasm to carry out their tasks (Warfield, Young & Gill, 2019). This means leaders should lead with techniques where followers can learn from them.

2.3 Exploring Leadership

Like any other sector, education institutions consist of organisational functions composed of leadership and management. Shaturaev and Bekimbetova (2021) described educational leadership as influencing people in the educational spaces to achieve certain goals. This consists of resources in place as an input process to achieve the desired outcomes. For example, at a school level, leadership involves influencing educators positively for teaching and learning purposes to gain desired results, such as a certain pass rate. This includes inputs of resources such as adequate stationery and textbooks that encompass obtaining the aimed goals. Zaila and Bakr (2021) stated that school leadership is important because it handles one of the important sectors in the world: education. With leadership, schools can avoid unmanageable challenges. School leaders play an effective and vital role in schools (Ismail, Don, Husin & Khalid, 2018). For example, effective leadership has the capacity in schools to improve learner performance because educators and school leaders work collectively for the betterment of learners. Delpont, Jaarsveld and Challens (2021) mentioned that there is often a connectivity between learners' performance and school leadership. A hierarchal school structure starts with the SMT, which plays a role in educators' ways of teaching, which then gets transferred into the classroom amongst learners. Ahamed and Hassan (2020) stated that principals must employ effective leadership to achieve high school teacher performance.

Educational leadership goes beyond the internal school level of alliancing with external parties because schools do not operate in isolation. School leaders must form and manage partners and stakeholders to improve performance and aspects of accountability (Gobby & Wilkins, 2020). This means that holistic leadership is imperative in playing a role in various school parties. Embarking on leadership requires one to be broader-minded in understanding that positive relationships are restricted to not only members of the staff but also external parties. Where everyone is involved, "Education leadership is a process of influencing teachers and other stakeholders and is not necessarily limited to a single person" (Daniels, Hondegheem & Dochy, 2019:111).

The school principal must use managerial skills such as communication, delegation, and decision-making to ensure the smooth running of different parties involved in schools. Amalia, Komariah, Sumarto and Asri (2020) mentioned that school principals face teachers, parents, learners and the community. This makes educational leadership broader as it is not focused on one discipline.

Educational leadership is important because it concerns responsibility, delegation, and accountability. This means that when schools, such as primary schools, have designated roles to fulfil, each party can account for their department. Gobby and Wilkins (2020) exemplified this by stating that principals account for monitoring teachers and their performance, assessing the schools' finances, and evaluating the school's data. Furthermore, Dhillon, Howard and Holt (2019) mentioned that school principals must analyse the school's performance and employ teachers as adequate educators. It is of utter importance that school leadership is not only restricted to the SMT. However, delegation as a management task can assist when everyone at the school level has shared responsibilities. Van der Vyver, Fuller and Khumalo (2021) argued that the school's responsibility is not solely restricted to the principals but collectively within the school, such as involving teachers in decision-making processes. It is, therefore, mandatory for principals to play a mentor role to educators as they contribute towards the school's improvement. Saputra, Rini and Hariri (2022) asserted that how the principals lead the school influences the teachers' performance.

As mentioned above, however, the principals will depend on the nature of the school by analysing different strengths each staff member has to delegate different roles. For instance, in South African schools, the bureaucratic system is used to manage schools, where the government decides how schools are conducted. Van de Vyver, Fuller and Khumalo (2021) stated that in South African schools, leadership uses top-down leadership, where decisions made externally are more imperative. For example, the CAPS (curriculum assessment policy statement) as a daily curriculum dictates what schools should teach, what assessments to be given, and how much time each subject should be allocated. This elaborated that a school does not rely on its discretion.

As schools differ, a one-size-fits-all approach is implemented, which may challenge schools' leadership. Noman and Gurr (2020) emphasised that leadership is contextual and that school leaders who succeed adapt to different contextual factors. The legislation approach may not be effective in another school, but it must comply due to the top-down managerial approach. For

instance, gender equality committees formed in schools may be associated with gender, such as school safety tasks for male educators. This deprives females of understanding certain departments in schools. This may pose a challenge when they reach principal roles due to inadequate exposure as teachers. Primary school leadership is more delicate as it consists mainly of younger learners. According to the DBE (2021) admission policy in South African primary schools, grade 1 is between six and seven years old. Therefore, leadership in primary school may differ from high school or any sector. According to Turner (2023), primary schools are a unique sector and specific leadership approaches are needed. For instance, they are more involved with younger learners and not only the educators to put yourself on their level. This is because it is children's first formal schooling, new subjects, new systems and new environments. "Primary education constitutes the foundation building block of education" (Khumalo, 2019:23). It is the basic ground of learners' equipping of their knowledge. Additionally, Dhillon, Howard and Holt (2019) stated that excellent primary school leaders have the necessary traits needed in schools, such as interpersonal skills to work with children, being specific in their priorities, and setting values.

Principals do play a crucial role in the functioning of primary schools. Even though principals may not be involved in the classroom's teaching processes, their leadership impacts learners' performances. Principals affect and influence learners' performance through the teachers (Mhlanga, 2019). This means that when principals are effective in their leadership, educators bring the same effectiveness and positivity to their classrooms. For example, Van Wyk (2020) stated that when analysing primary school results such as the ANAS (Annual National Assessments), learners were performing below average due to the lack of commitment that the school leaders brought into these assessments. Therefore, Zaila and Bakr (2021) asserted that effective leadership of the school principal plays a significant role in educators' commitment and commitment to achieving the schools' goals. Primary school leadership is critical to the school improvement plan and financial accountability (Edwards, 2021). This may be due to the need for many resources that assist in concrete learning and leadership styles to be more appropriate for younger children. For example, Ahamed and Hassan (2020) mentioned that a change-orientated leadership style is more accommodative in leading schools. This involves analysing the school environment and visualising what is appropriate to the school space with needed changes. This may be done through contingency, where there is no fixed way of running schools, but different approaches can be suitable for different situations. Change, flexibility, and reflection are important in running primary schools.

Fortumatta, Suryana and Rasto (2019) stated that in primary schools, the leadership practice consists of the process of learning and that leadership and learning are connected. Primary school leaders should learn about different situations children get exposed to, which may differ for other generations. School leadership may not be effective when principals stagnate.

An adequate representation of women in school leadership, such as in primary schools, enables women to integrate their traits into leading. Abdallah and Jibai (2020) stated that women's leadership styles are more autonomous, which allows educators and staff members to abide by the school system and have autonomy in their various departments. Working with children requires educators to be flexible, as each day has different challenges that may require teachers to use their discretion. Furthermore, seeing gender equality in the management of schools instils these values as a norm in children without perceiving only male figures as the heads of schools and shying away from stereotypical views at an early age. Bruyn and Mestry (2020) emphasised that the underperforming of schools is sometimes associated with stereotypes of gender and cultural diversity. This means learners may focus on subjects where male educators are respected and seen as leaders, unlike female educators or principals, who are viewed as fragile or sensitive based on social labels.

Primary school leadership also requires continuous learning from leadership that will be useful to educators when instructed to attend developmental programmes. In a constantly changing world, what worked in the past may need to be more effective in the present. For example, corporal punishment is illegal now, and certain words may be regarded as verbal abuse to learners. Amels, Kruger, Suhre and Van Veen (2020) argued that educators attending professional learning programmes will keep themselves updated with new developmental tasks and current issues. This makes learning in schools modern and allows educators and learners to relate to new concepts. In primary schools, within the South African contexts, there are developmental programmes principals can undergo to improve their schools. For example, in 2013, the School Leadership Development for the Gauteng Department of Education was aimed at frameworks that would assist principals in being effective within the WSE (whole school evaluation), such as infrastructure of the school, assessments, tools and techniques, basic functionality of the school, governance and resources. Principals may be experts in certain areas, for example, teaching and learning, due to their teaching experience but need to gain knowledge of finance or procurement processes. Hence, developmental programmes are initiated.

2.2.1 Leadership as Transformational

To be specific about applying leadership in this paper, the researcher aligns leadership as transformational, which brings about change. Junnaid, Miralam and Jeet (2020) mentioned that leadership plays a significant role in bringing about and accepting change. Legislations, in this case, may be challenging to adjust to. However, leaders need to adapt to them. Furthermore, the Department of Education operates in collaboration. Primary schools require stakeholders such as the district, head office, SGB, the community and policymakers to have effective teamwork as leaders in different areas to bring the change and transformation needed. Fortumatta, Suryana and Rasto (2019) discovered that an effective partnership between the community, parents and society improves schools.

According to Mincu (2022), trendy movements in the current day include transforming the education system. This may include, for example, technology and how teaching and learning are conducted. Equally, legislation that may need to be more effective needs transformation. For instance, how school leadership was viewed, such as the norm of male figures in principal roles or inspired more females to take leadership roles in schools. Globally, Goker (2019) stated that education had drastic changes before the Middle Ages and ancient times when education was available to certain individuals. Bringing this nationally, South Africa is known for the apartheid regime beyond racial segregation. Gender also played a role; educational and job opportunities favoured the male sectors. Akala (2018) remarked that while black South African women lacked protection and had limited access to education, white females, in terms of professional and economic aspects, were restricted to certain jobs such as clerks and secretarial jobs.

Important factors such as equality, transformation, and equity must be prioritised when analysing aspects of leadership. Firstly, focusing on transformation, Adams and Muthiah (2020) stressed that the changes in the education sector, such as the roles of principals, have become more demanding due to government regulations and the pressure of accountability and policies. Also, how teaching and learning take place differs; for example, BusinessTech (2022) remarked that the DBE sector emphasises learners' Information and Communications Technology, financial literacy, and creative, critical, and problem-solving skills. This describes the focus on the areas of expertise in teaching and learning. Furthermore, to reflect on equality and equity in education, there are frameworks in place to address the gaps, such as section 29 of the constitution (1996), which outlines the right to equality in terms of education, such as

equity, practicality, and access to choose of the language of instructions. These highlight the education sector regarding equality, equity, and transformation. Various changes are occurring within the education system, in which adaptability and versatility are mandatory: “Schools today are faced with an urgent responsibility to transform curriculum and pedagogy to prepare our children better” (Tarbutton, 2018:5). This education system holistically goes beyond teaching and learning in the classroom, in terms of leadership. According to Adams, Kutty, and Zabidi (2017), current educational leadership is not a requirement but is necessary to ensure effective teaching and learning. This means there should be versatility in how schools function and how leadership is conducted, ensuring gender balance in school leadership. School principals, regardless of gender, are expected to perform the same leadership roles, including curriculum, administrative duties, and public relations (Amalia *et al.*, 2020). Both genders conduct the same roles as principals. Therefore, the treatment and respect male principals receive from their counterparts should also be given to females.

2.2.2 Leadership as Teamwork

Understanding leadership as teamwork means that leadership and followership play an effective role in schools. Mercader, Ripoll, Vela and Popescu (2021) defined teamwork as the capacity to be collectively involved in actions essential to reaching established goals. The researcher understands that leaders should be positioned as cooperative beings and not operating in isolation. Subsequently, Kumar (2020) described leadership as requiring adaptability within the rapidly changing environment, that no one has all the answers and merging different strengths allows holistic strength within the team by assisting each other. Furthermore, Mukhtar, Khan, Abro, Shaukat and Saeed (2022) emphasised that teamwork motivates individuals to work autonomously and collaboratively to achieve goals. It also enables individuals to assist each other in need. This means leadership as a cooperative team does not necessarily believe that a leader is the decision maker. Hassan and Raheemah (2021) stated that it is crucial to have a leader who guides and motivates the team and cares for the team's needs.

The cruciality of leadership being teamwork comes with unforeseen challenges that may be faced, for example, in schools. The principal, the SMT, the SGB, and educators can work and collaborate to assist each other. Hart (2018) stipulated that finding people with different knowledge and skills grows the team’s ability to be collaborative effectively. For instance, in a school situation, SGB members have other professions; it could, for example, be in the labour

department, and when there are labour disputes or issues regarding SGB-employed educators, their expertise becomes crucial, meaning the decision-maker is not only the principal.

Bringing leadership in the education sector regarding teamwork means that the SMT and school leaders can share tasks. Harpham (2022) described the school leaders as a team's role of giving resources, encouraging teaching and learning, and ensuring that a school is well run. Therefore, if teamwork is ineffective, the school leaders may be in danger of being unable to complete some tasks. In addition, leadership and teamwork assist the SMT in terms of morale and productivity, which will positively contribute to school results. Don and Raman (2019) analysed that, for example, the principal has a sense of pride when the school performs well, and the educators feel equally proud when their learners are achievers. Conducting the school gives good results. Overall, the individual's pride in their esteem is high when the school excels. Moreover, according to Anarumo and Lindsay (2019), teams and teamwork are at some level in every major organisation.

2.3 Describing Gender Gap

The gender gap stems from the word gender. Firstly, in understanding gender, Elbers and Grogore (2018) state that gender is the roles constructed by society in terms of attitudes and behaviours that society ascribes to either men or women. Kubala and Villines (2023) stated that the gender gap also includes unintentional actions where individuals may treat a certain gender based on the norms they grew up with. This paves the way for labelling each gender with certain roles. These roles assigned, therefore, create discrimination and stereotypes. Whereas both genders ultimately matter, Dabla-Norris and Kochhar (2019) emphasised that men and women are highly likely to be born with the same potential. Still, due to inequalities in terms of access to education, finance or cultural restrictions, women may not reach their full potential, resulting in the gender gap.

According to Shang (2022), the gender gap is the differences in social and economic factors between men and women, often caused by unequal rights or opportunities. If, for instance, in a school situation, practical tasks are given to male educators, such as woodwork, graphics and designs or home economics studies designated to female teachers. It creates a gender where learners view certain roles assigned to a particular gender. Hazel and Kleyman (2019) mentioned that in terms of education, females are still underrepresented in maths, technology or science. From the definition, this gender gap is viewed as social differences. Regarding economic differences, those in leadership positions have a higher salary scale. If more males

dominate the school leadership sector, they are favoured economically, resulting in the gender gap, which speaks of economic differences.

Gender inequality is a global concern, as viewed in the sustainable developmental goals formulated by the United Nations in 2015. Among the 17 goals, one of the sustainable goals aimed at achieving the 2030 goals is gender equality. Beyond girls' access to education, it also seeks to see women in senior and middle management positions in workspaces. Even though there has been an increase in women having access to education, women's education increased dramatically around the world between 1960 and 2010 (Evans, Akmal & Jakiela, 2021:7). However, their use of qualifications to climb the ladder into the managerial post is still moving at a slower and undesirable pace.

It is noticeable that women have access to opportunities; however, seeing women in leadership roles is still a concern. Barroso and Brown (2020) stated that one of the contributing factors is that women take care of household duties, which becomes a problem when juggling career and family responsibilities, which may result in them stagnating in one position. Women devote approximately one to three hours to housework chores than men (Bigelow, 2018). While the male gender fully focuses on growing professionally, the female may struggle to juggle between the two worlds. For instance, StatsSA (Statistics of South Africa) 2022, based on the political, economic and social empowerment of gender equality, states that most women indicated that grants or money received from their partners was their source of income. In contrast, their husbands' sources of income were salaries, wages, commissions or businesses. Hazel and Kleyman (2019) also mentioned that globally, there are still various women who are economically dependent on men. The economic differences are still a concern within the social factors, even in South Africa.

Beyond the economic sector, analysing this in the education sector, when women are more visible, it paves a way for possibilities to grow into senior management. Bertay, Dordevic and Sever (2020) stated that progressive gender equality allows women to work while building on their career ladders into promotions. Exposure in the field of work and leadership enables women to be more visible even in higher rankings in the educational leadership spaces. Additionally, the active participation of women in the economic sector may close this ongoing gender gap. Fernández, Sakova, Luna and Rambousek (2021) mentioned that besides gender equality being morally appropriate, it positively contributes to the country's economy because gender inequality closes many talents that women may possess when contributing to the GDP.

This means one gender dominating the economy brings a lack of representation from the other gender in terms of capabilities. Shang (2022), therefore, emphasised that gender inequality should not only be focused on legislation that enables not only the closing of the gap but also the root causes of this gender gap that still exists. For instance, the legislation ultimately focuses on bringing women to equal terms with men, but the root causes, such as workplace bias or societal contexts, are never covered.

Wool (2021), in describing the factors causing the gender gap in workplaces, mentions barriers to promotion in which males are more likely to get promoted due to the adequate time invested in gaining new skills and the flexibility to gain new knowledge. Furthermore, Soken-Huberty (2017) elaborated that another factor caused by the gender gap in leadership is the societal mindset that it is common for both males and females to view leaders according to their gender. Female leaders may need more respect in contrast to male leaders. This type of perception delays the significant change in gender equality.

Analysing this in a South African school's leadership context, Khumalo (2021) stated that South Africa is rich in cultural practices, with patriarchy being practised. These cultural beliefs get taken into school leadership, where men dominate women. Gender-related practices in the country are a disadvantage to women. While viewing this in South African female leadership in schools, Eiland (2022) emphasised that closing the gender gap is crucial because women are also capable of leading schools as principals, as are males. This includes that women rank higher in transformational and instructional leadership styles. This will be discussed in-depth in the theoretical framework.

2.4 Gender Legislations

The following section will evaluate the gender legislation aimed at equipping women and closing the gender gaps in workplaces, including schools. The legislation to be discussed is the EEA (Employment Equity Act) aligned with affirmative action, the CGE, the Women Empowerment and gender equality bill, and the Department of Education gender equality of Women Empowerment policy. The EEA is affirmative action (1998) that is not restricted to addressing past racial discrimination but also gender discrimination by ensuring that qualifying women are prioritised in employment, such as promotional posts. The purpose of the EEA, as per the South African Government Gazette No. 19370, is to implement affirmative action measures to redress the designated groups' past workplace experiences. According to

Landsberg (2021), the designated groups in South Africa include black people, women, and people with disabilities. The focus of this paper is on women. Previously, women not having equal access to employment inevitably affected their leadership roles. The emphasis of this plan, as mentioned in Chapter Three, p.18, elaborates that the designated groups, in this case, women, must be equally represented in all the levels and categories in the workplace. Levels include lower, middle, and senior management levels where women's visibility must be similarly shown.

Kenton (2022) described affirmative action as a policy that focuses on the underrepresented groups in the workplace, aimed at demographics with historically low representations in professional, academic, or leadership roles. Furthermore, the WageIndicator (2022) described affirmative action in South Africa as ensuring that qualified designated groups, including women, need equal opportunities, including the top management level. The effectiveness of this implementation has also left gaps in the basic education sector regarding women being recognised.

According to the White paper on Affirmative Action Government Gazette (1998) Vol. 394 No. 1880, based on affirmative action, its purpose is to set ways and steps on how workplaces can implement affirmative action programmes. This includes prioritising women. The white paper on Affirmative Action (1998), p.12, states that women were previously disadvantaged in accessing careers mainly associated with the health and education sector, where they would stagnate. This legislation aims to overcome barriers that would block women from attaining various roles in the workplace. For example, seeing women in principal school roles is a community norm.

The next legislative framework to be discussed is the constitutional body aimed at gender equality in South Africa, which is the CGE established in Chapter Nine of the constitution, 108 of 1996. It aims to monitor and evaluate policies, legislation, and education quality. With the education sector as part of this body, gender equality in leadership would be expected to transform; however, this is not the case. It is based on monitoring and evaluating gender equality by employing legislative initiatives. According to the Commission on Gender Equality Act Government Gazette (1996) No. 17341 p.6, the CGE holds powers to recommend that the South African parliament adopt or formulate other legislations based on promoting gender equality and the status of women in the country. However, most legislation that is gender equality related has been in the past century, with no recent ones

relevant to today's social changes and dynamics, which pose a gap in women's leadership in schools.

Looking at recent legislation, however, not necessarily formulated in current times is the Women Empowerment and gender equality bill (2013). Chapter Three, as proposed in the National Assembly in section 75, aimed at recognising and empowering women in decision-making. It stated that the bill seeks to build an understanding from communities to see women as their equals. Gender stereotypes and sexism exist in communities based on cultures and patriarchal systems. This legislation opens a gap by not having a programme that allows community members to evolve from gender practices and to see women as leaders equal to men. The continuous strive for women to be recognised in school leadership and managerial positions questions the effectiveness of implementing this act.

Based on the Ekurhuleni district, the more applicable legislation is the Gauteng Department of Education Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy (2014), which is aimed at realising the past concerns of gender discrimination and promoting women's empowerment in schools. It consists of objectives on empowering women by achieving equality for women as decision-makers through women empowerment initiatives that will work on obstacles that hinder gender equality in schools, district levels, or head offices. Viewing this at a school level, under human resources planning, it has been formulated that women are promoted in senior management. This is still an ongoing and transformational process that must occur until gender equality is balanced.

2.5 Barriers Faced by Women Leadership

Further into the literature section, the gender gap and prioritising women in school leadership have been discussed. The current stance of women's leadership in educational roles needs to be continuously engaged due to the gender gap. "In the twenty-first century, women are still underrepresented in educational leadership positions" (Pinar, 2021, p. 3). There is a visible gender gap in managerial positions in schools, regardless of the gender equality aims. Ndebele (2018) argued that gender inequality in South Africa is still part of the larger education system. This section aims at gathering literature to understand the *why* behind the reasons, irrespective of the gender legislations and policies aimed at promoting equality.

Primary schools are mainly centred around children and the early teenage stage, such as grade seven. This requires leaders with traits applicable to working with children. Women's qualities are needed for leading, social skills, attention to people and relationships (Voicila, Ghinea & Filculescu, 2018). The basic education sector, such as primary school, needs leaders with empathy working with kids. Drydak, Sidiropoulou, Selmanovic, Bozani and Patnaik (2017) mentioned that traits commonly associated with women include caring, loyalty and empathy. Transformational changes in education and transition need leaders who are patient and adaptable—leading while involving others in the decision-making of changes that occur. Abdallah and Jibai (2020) stated that leadership studies have shown that women's leadership styles are more democratic than men's, which is autocratic. As an educator, having a leader who involves you as an active staff member is appreciated.

In recent times, the rise in the independence of women has increased. An attribute needed in leading schools is autonomy. Hassan and Raheemah (2021) described this by stating that there is independent femininity, regardless of women being traditionally associated as caregivers of their families and abiding by stereotypes of motherhood. There is more value to the economic independence of women. Women's leadership traits are described as being more involved, nurturing, and approachable (Douka, 2019). Nurturing is commonly associated with women. Miessler (2019) asserted that enabling people aims to develop others and enjoy seeing those around them grow.

Bhana (2019) emphasised that working with children in schools requires feminine traits: caring, good listening, and leadership. ROHEI (2019) described that women are caring and often push for results while caring. This means that the feminine trait does not only focus on results but on the well-being of others throughout the process. In addition, positivity and optimism are essential feminine traits in achieving desired goals. Women show more results in terms of happiness and humour (Shamim & Muazza, 2018). This is beneficial in terms of crisis and easing staff members during uncertainties.

How women are perceived has a societal connotation regarding what is deemed acceptable. "Attitudes about women leaderships are informed by stereotypes and subjective biases resulting from elements of societal stratification" (Mberia, 2017:41). These factors may affect women's aspirational goals to lead, such as in school environments. These societal issues became complex norms to challenge the societal issues women get exposed to equally. Furthermore, Ndlovu and Proches (2019) stipulated that female school leaders are

still being exposed to gendered racism, being isolated, excluded from informal networks, and other means of discrimination.

Cultural practices at home often get integrated into workspaces. According to Kennedy (2018), one of the challenges women face in leadership positions is the stereotype that men are associated with doing business while women are good at caring. Caring is a woman's attribute; however, it is not stagnated only to household and family roles but can be applied in workspaces. Especially in schools centred around learners, a nurturing and caring quality is vital. Stereotypes exist vastly within women's spaces. "Since leadership is largely attributed in masculine terms, females often face the challenge of fitting into the stereotypical image of a leader" (Patel, 2016:3).

The Forbes Council (2018) argued that one of the challenges women leaders face is unequal treatment in the workplace. This escalates even in leadership positions, as there is continuous gender disparity in the education sector, especially for women aspiring to leadership. Support needs to be given from legislation on how women can obtain the same respect as males. School principals need help in receiving support from their counterparts. Female principals feel displaced and have no sense of belonging. Ultimately, this means they independently figure out situations and solutions (Davids, 2018).

Sinyosi and Potokri (2021) asserted that the DBE has stated that women have experienced stereotyping for many years and are still expected to be inactive and submit to their male counterparts. These stereotypes are proven through the lack of female leaders found in the South African education system. In addition to the existing educational problems such as socioeconomic classes or insufficient school resources, the challenges in education include gifted women who face challenges in school leadership due to socially constructed phenomena. Inevitably, cultural norms such as patriarchy in society affect women's leadership in schools (Bruyn & Mestry, 2020). According to Ndebele (2018), some educators in schools always carry their cultural beliefs to work by arguing that they perceive women as inferior and cannot lead like men.

The notion of the glass ceiling is an obstacle that challenges women in school leadership. Reiners (2022) described the glass ceiling as a barrier and challenge women face in their workplaces, keeping them in middle positions instead of evolving to higher ones. This causes women to be side-lined in higher decision-making if they are not in those positions.

Babic and Hansez (2021) stated that regardless of all the initiatives and qualified women, it is visible that they still need to be represented in decision-making processes. The glass ceiling has made having few women visible in managerial spaces acceptable and normal. When women are seen in leadership, it sometimes becomes unusual. When a male leader is viewed, he is seen as a leader, unlike a female leader, who is labelled with the adjective *female* before the word leader. It seems unusual for women to be leaders. Voicila *et al.* (2018) described that society has formed conceptions of associating leadership with maleness.

When women embark on leadership positions, they would be expected to toughen up like “men”. This requires a change of who they are to meet the masculine category. Alqahtani (2019) remarked that both genders believe that for women to succeed in leadership, they must think and act like men. The expectation is to deny women to be who they truly are. Furthermore, Koenig (2018) argued that women are often expected to be communal; this includes being sensitive or avoiding dominance. Women would find themselves in identity issues of whether to be masculine to be effective leaders or gentle to meet societal gender norms.

Davids (2018) stipulated that discrimination in school leadership often results in female leaders needing to improve in those positions. Aspiring women may also feel discouraged, hence staying underrepresented. These discriminatory acts may be combated by effective legislation programmes that explicitly state how women can be supported when reaching leadership roles in schools rather than only focusing on uplifting them to managerial positions. Furthermore, Jean (2022) described internal and external barriers women face in workplaces. The inner barrier is being afraid of success, which women presume would lead to isolation and home-career conflict; this may include balancing career and traditional gender roles at home, such as being a caretaker. The external barrier has societal expectations that affect how women view themselves regarding workplace treatment.

2.6 Disadvantages of the Gender Gap

Hazel and Kleyman (2019) concluded that even though there is greater recognition of women's equality and ways to close gender inequality, there is still a wide gap in gender equality, which seems to be increasing. Therefore, this has various disadvantages that may be impactful in the education leadership space. The barriers women face may, therefore, be because of this.

There are various barriers which women can come across in workplaces. Reiners (2022) described the glass ceiling as a barrier and challenge women face, keeping them in middle positions instead of evolving to higher positions. This causes women to be side-lined in higher decision-making if they are not in those positions. The glass ceiling has made having few women visible in managerial spaces acceptable and normal. When women's leadership is seen, it becomes unusual. When a male leader is seen, he is viewed as a leader, unlike a female leader, who is labelled with the adjective *female* before the word leader. It seems unusual for women to be leaders. Voicila, Ghinea, and Filculescu (2018) emphasised that society has formed conceptions of associating leadership with maleness. Furthermore, Appelbaum, D'antico, Daoussis and Students (2019) argued that women actively aim to be masculine in leadership roles and not be too feminine but not lose their female identity.

Leonard (2021) maintained that the gender gap has various implications for women, such as affecting mental health, such as higher stress levels, post-traumatic disorders or anxiety. This may be caused by socioeconomic equality or comments made. When, for instance, a previous school principal was a male, entering this new role requires women to work harder to prove their worth. Furthermore, Vigod and Rochon (2020) stated that gender gap implications result in women losing a sense of belonging. This may be caused by the underrepresentation of women in leadership, where women may not seem to fit in or belong—seeing fellow women in the same space results in a sense of collaboration. Bertay, Dordevic and Sever (2020) stipulated that gender gaps often affect the causal economy and that developing countries prioritising gender equality in employment grow faster. This means that the diversification of skills, talents, and abilities is broadened in contrast to stagnation due to male sectors being dominant. For example, Shang (2022) stated that the gender gap in employment and economic factors is slowly shifting as women emerge into previously male-centred sectors. The broadening of sectors to females combats the disadvantages of economic decline and high employment in a country where industries are open to both genders.

Another disadvantage of the gender gap in schools is the effects of decision-making. Babic and Hansez (2021) argued that regardless of all the initiatives and qualified women, it is obvious that they still need to be represented in decision-making processes. This may be caused by factors such as needing more qualifications, skills or experience due to marginalisation. Evans, Akmal and Jakiela (2020) asserted that globally, women still need to be equal to men in terms of education and qualifications. Transformation emerged during the recent century, but the

education gap still exists. One of the core functions of leadership and management is decision-making processes. Both women and men have the capabilities to acquire the necessary skills when it comes to leadership. However, society places women as second-class citizens due to its perspective based on women's roles in the past. This affects women's confidence, and they fear taking steps (Mokat *et al.*, 2022). Raising their views and participation during higher decision-making would still be a barrier, even in higher leadership roles. Mbiyozo (2022) stated that women still have fewer powers relating to autonomy in decision-making, and this is a result of gender norms where women's focus is on household duties.

Berik (2022) asserted that the ability to be participative in decision-making is a human right for everyone and should be equal. This means regardless of gender, race or culture. This can be achieved when there is equal representation in decision-making. In a school sector, for example, when school safety, code of conduct, disciplinary policies or programmes such as sexual harassment are drafted, most school leaders and governing bodies are male and female representatives will lack value. Therefore, Ilesanmi (2018) emphasised that women, as a homogeneous group, need to be given opportunities to have a voice in decision-making processes because their experiences, in most cases, are different from those of the male sector.

Therefore, it is of utter importance that barriers women have, with the disadvantage of the gender gap, are taken into consideration to be able to mitigate and explore available solutions. The United Nations (UN) (2020) suggested that to increase gender diversity in different managerial positions, unequal gender balance must be addressed, and men must be proactive. This can be done through education and programmes that address both genders—in addition to managing the gender gap, Ammerman and Groysberg (2021) stated that organisations should recognise aspects that restrict them from fully engaging in women's abilities and contributions. For example, principals can start identifying teachers' strengths in a school environment when allocating school committees to go beyond gender roles. Female teachers in musical or drama committees can become involved in maintenance, school safety and security departments. Ultimately, Bertay *et al.* (2020) state that helping women grow is not only an economic contribution but also diversifies economies and contributes to stability among women. For instance, their value in schools is not only due to financial growth as per higher leadership positions but also because they can be independent in running schools.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the literature on understanding leadership as needing to be an authoritative figure. However, leadership is training and influencing followers by effectively communicating the vision and mission. Educational leadership was a central focus regarding school managers ensuring teachers receive adequate support and resources. To conduct teaching and learning effectively, the gender gap was also discussed by first describing what gender is as a societal construction. The literature identified different legislations relating to gender. The discussions gathered that more legislation must be implemented, and existing ones must be emphasised. Literature was reviewed regarding women's leadership in schools with barriers faced. The next chapter will explore and discuss the theoretical framework that underpins the study.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will explore the theoretical framework, reflecting transformation in legislation and gender equality. It will outline the theoretical framework, provide an overview of different definitions of this concept, and evaluate the chosen theory by motivating the applicability of this theory, which encompasses and guides the study by providing congruent reasoning of the theory selection. Furthermore, this section will discuss the theory's assumptions and principles. Lastly, the researcher will engage in theory critiques.

3.2 Conceptualising Theoretical Framework

Kivunja (2018) described the theoretical framework as theories encompassing a researcher's study. This structure consists of concepts and theories guiding the researcher in analysing data and interpreting the results. According to Adom, Hussein, and Agyem (2018), a theoretical framework is a blueprint that will guide the researchers in building their research inquiry by conducting the study's path. This means it serves as a map that gives the researcher a route based on the chosen theory and aligns different components found in research.

3.3 Transformational Leadership Theory

The theory that is used for this study is the transformational leadership theory. This theory was established by James MacGregor Burns in 1978. In describing this theory, Saputra, Rini and Hariri (2022) stated that transformational leadership theory is defined as leadership theory that enables leaders to inspire followers to change their lives through motivation. Furthermore, it is an inspiration to achieve organisational goals. Therefore, changing perspectives is essential when working towards gender transformation in schools. This may be through how gender is perceived and how women in leadership are viewed by pursuing followers' thinking to see the potential and abilities of younger females in reaching managerial roles. According to Clifton (2019), transformational leadership theory sees a vision for the future that is well articulated to followers, where the leaders and followers are collectively eager to reach desired goals due to the driven inspiration. The reason for selecting this theory is that it provides a relationship in terms of changes and adaptation where leadership is concerned. According to Bradley (2020), transformational leadership is the strength to change an organisation's values, vision, and culture. The study is centred around challenging the status quo and cultural transformation

regarding gender norms in leadership. Lai, Tang, Lu, Lee and Lin (2020) stipulated that transformational leaders often use their intellectual ways of stimulating members and followers to challenge the existence of the status quo.

Lazou and Bainbridge (2018) asserted that transformational leadership theory alters people's ideas, interests, morals, and beliefs. Organisational behaviour requires individuals to modify certain behaviours. When getting into a school situation as a leader, one needs to be adaptive to different thoughts and behaviours that are different from yours. For example, leading a household as a male figure will not be applicable in a workspace due to the respect and promotion of gender equality, where both males and women are equal in the Department of Education. As Sparks (2021) maintained, transformational leadership theory focuses not on positional power but on influential power practices. Any form of marginalisation brings discomfort to the marginalised group; transformational leadership theory becomes a solution in such occurrences. Bradley (2020) emphasised that this theory removes individuals and organisations from an undesired state by transitioning them to a more desirable place. Furthermore, the transformational leadership theory emphasises leadership aspects such as effective leadership, motivation, and inspiration. Sparks (2021) maintained that this theory is highly effective in educational leaders because leaders who follow this will stimulate change, inspire, and form engagements with followers.

Performance and results are a top priority in every school; this forms evidence of diligence among teachers and school management. Alemnge (2019) asserted that the quality of education is mainly measured by academic results, the conditions of learning and the student-teacher ratios. Transformational leadership theory is also concerned with performance, making it suitable for a study on a school and its components, i.e., achievements. According to Abazeed (2018), transformational leadership encourages a greater level of performance in subordinates.

Lazou and Bainbridge (2018) stated that transformational leaders often strive for success and study progress in developing their teams. This will enable positive school outputs because school performance results should change through progress and effective changes. Clifton (2019) maintained that transformational leadership holds the power to improve performance in schools because it also focuses on creating a culture that strives for organisational success. Lastly, regarding performance, Noureen, Chaudhry, Ahmad and Ahmad (2022) established that transformational leadership sparks enthusiasm among teachers in a school environment and its performance. This is crucial because teachers, as drivers of the curriculum, and their interests

and motivation play an important role. Change and transformation are essential when schools stagnate. In gender traditions and roles, the vision of gender transformation may not be as effectively desired. According to Bradley (2020), transformational leaders can successfully change the organisation's culture by developing various strategies that align with the organisation. The theory does not focus on imposing changes and bringing discomfort in adapting to new norms. In recent studies, Saputra, Rini and Hariri (2022) elaborated that this theory changes individual awareness or builds enthusiasm and motivation because employees need to and are willing to. When change is not perceived as mandatory or an obligation, it thus enables autonomy and a voice in employees.

Some organisations' cultures are driven by habits, where things are done systematically or unconsciously. This may also be through innovation, where legislations, principles and systems are innovated to adapt to current eras. Therefore, transformational leadership theory is interested in evolving rather than being content with the norms. Arif and Akrab (2018) stipulated that transformational leaders aim to increase creativity or invention about the organisation's frameworks continuously. As the DBE is guided by different frameworks that need to be formulated, implemented, and monitored, this theory also applies innovation within the legislation. Moreover, Superman, Tahir and Aris (2018) affirmed that motivating or running an organisation without any stipulated framework would be challenging. Transformational leadership theory tackles different dimensions, which makes it effective as it does not only focus on the leader but also followers. Abazeed (2018) pointed out that the transformational leadership theory serves as a middleman between the workers and leaders, where employees' interests and motivation are understood and help them adapt to the environment's changes. Subsequently, Clifton (2019) asserted that transformational leaders do not solely view their followers as co-workers but as individuals with unique capabilities and beliefs contributing to a diverse workspace. Transformational leadership theory tackles different school components.

Khumalo (2019) elaborated that it focuses on the vision of the school, the environment, and the high level of performance and professionalism. This means transformational leaders must pay more attention to one aspect but transform different complexities holistically. Lazou and Bainbridge (2018) maintained that transformational leaders focus on more than one person's ambitions. However, it also focuses on existing structures and radical changes. This makes it a practical theory in schools, leadership, and legislation, as each one of those components requires transformation, growth, and changes to avoid being positioned in one place.

3.4 Application of Transformational Leadership Theory

In this study, leadership and transformation are not mutually exclusive yet aligned. The reason is that educational leaders require their followers to be example educators during the transformation process. Adapting to equality in various ways, such as recognising gender equality in schools.

According to Davis and Thilagaraj (2020), transformational leaders impact their followers' goals, values or beliefs. Transforming the cultural mindset of educators, members of the SGB, learners, and the whole school regarding women receiving the exact equal representation as their male counterparts requires transformation, not only through written documents such as legislation but feasible, implementable measures.

Therefore, in diminishing inequality, it is of utter importance to have strategies in place. In achieving this, Wooll (2021) stipulates different ways inequality can be combated using transformational leadership theory. This includes educating society about biases they are unaware of. Diversifying the panel members in interviews, educating and developmental programmes for women who were never exposed to leadership opportunities, and promoting the notion of mentorship for women who will lead and guide. These strategies are explained as follows:

3.4.1 Educate Members of the Staff on Unconscious Bias

Asana (2022) described unconscious bias as learned attitudes or beliefs that people have unconsciously experienced in their lifetimes. People accumulate these through life experiences; for example, in schools, learners from families where male figures are described as the homeowners while the mother is submissive. They may respect male teachers at school more than females by viewing male educators as dominating fatherhood. Wool (2021) emphasised that transformational leaders must aim to educate minority groups as well, in terms of unconscious bias.

3.4.2 Diversify Interview Processes

The shortlisting and interview processes in schools consist of different parties. Taylor (2021) stated that the shortlisting and interview process in South African principal positions consists of departmental representatives, members of the SGB, and union representatives. Diversification of different stakeholders can also consist of different genders to promote women to have a say in appointing school leaders.

3.4.3 Developmental Programmes for Women

The Gauteng Department of Education's gender equality and Women Empowerment policy (2014) stated that it aims to have initiatives where women can be equipped to be decision-makers. Implementable programmes must be in place and feasible enough for women in leadership and aspiring to leadership roles to have adequate training regarding leadership and management. For example, leadership programmes aimed at women to redress the missed leadership opportunities from the past. This can equip them with the skills and knowledge required when they are placed in school leadership positions. Understanding that both theoretical and practical aspects of leadership and management are necessary.

3.4.3 Establish Mentorship

Howard, Msengiand and Harris (2017) on transformational leadership and mentorship emphasised that mentorship experiences positively contribute to transformational leaders. When followers strive to be like their leaders, in which transformational leadership holds components of changing followers into leaders, women can be paired with mentors to aspire to leadership roles in schools. The focus will not only be on existing leaders but aspiring ones as well. Transformation requires an ongoing practice of inspiring potential leaders, such as level one female educators, to take the necessary steps to equip themselves to be school principals. As the employer, the DBE can use transformation models in training and modelling educators into managerial positions.

3.5 Transformational Leadership Theory Assumptions

Different theories hold various assumptions. Pal (2020) described assumptions as something to be expected as accurate. However, this has yet to be proven. This means theorists hold their own beliefs regarding their established theories and may be proven correct or incorrect through assurances. The transformational approach has its assumptions, which the researcher aligns with the educational and leadership space. Shabbir, Shabir, Batool, Parveen, Gondal and Jamil (2022) established different assumptions that hold the transformational leadership theory. The following hypotheses will be discussed next. Firstly, transformational leadership theory aims at transforming individuals and social systems through change. This is achieved by motivation and empowerment to be adaptive to change. Therefore, the theory enables leaders to inspire their followers when making changes. Men and Liu (2020) emphasised that leaders are essential agents when introducing change as they communicate the vision of what they are working towards with followers. With the study focusing on legislation, transitions, and

transformation in gender and leadership, the assumptions can be perceived as relevant to the theory and research.

The following assumption is that transformational leadership theory develops essential traits in individuals, where workers gain confidence and become positive towards their thinking in implementing the organisation's vision. Mburu (2020) explained that characteristics play a vital role in bringing innovation; this can include, for example, creativity. If schools do not have staff members with protective traits, it may lead to conflicts, stagnating in one position with no progress. This theory, therefore, assists in improving the necessary characteristics needed. Furthermore, the transformational leadership theory assumes that it benefits both the leaders and the followers. Both parties play a crucial role; the theory does not merely focus on leadership. Ralon, Rothenberg, Odeh, Turney and Wu (2021) maintained that leaders must understand followers and their contributions to improve teamwork performance, as followers acknowledge leaders through their knowledge, engagements, and behaviours also play a role in the team's success. Collectively, this theory recognises the contribution of both leaders and followers.

When women are not empowered, the gender legislation towards gender equality may not be practical, resulting in the gender gap as currently experienced. Therefore, transformational leadership theory assumes that it focuses on psychological empowerment. According to Meng and Sun (2019), psychological empowerment means that a person has an internal motivation to improve in their work continuously and is actively involved in their job task, which can result in enthusiasm for carrying out assignments. This is applicable for both leaders and followers to be internally motivated. As previously discussed, the theory focuses on both leaders and followers. To support this, Arif and Akram (2018) asserted that transformational leadership improves workers' self-efficacy and internal motivation and contributes to individuals' psychological empowerment. This is empirical, meaning the theory does not solely focus on end products or performance. Still, it also considers employees' internal drive to produce those results while gaining managerial exposure and growth. According to Udin (2021), transformational leaders often motivate employees to focus on professional development and achieve superiority.

Lastly, transformational leadership theory holds assumptions that address the notion of trust and well-being in leaders and their abilities. Transformational leadership furthermore builds trust in which the employees have a sense of belief in their leaders; this contributes to

performance enhancements (Noureen *et al.*, 2022). Subsequently, Yue, Men and Ferguson (2019) affirmed that when employees feel emotional care, support, and motivation, they are likely to want to reciprocate this to their employers, meaning they gain trust between them and the organisational changes they bring in. Following the study, this assumption supports the gender transformation of giving women opportunities to unleash their inner unique traits, which can open trust among followers. This builds good relations and trust between leaders and followers.

3.6 Principles of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership theory comprises four essential principles that guide the theory's core basis. The next model by Page (2021) described the transformational leadership theory in these four components, where transformation can take place effectively by employers inspiring the followers through (1) Inspirational motivation, (2) intellectual stimulation, (3) idealised influence, and (4) individual consideration.

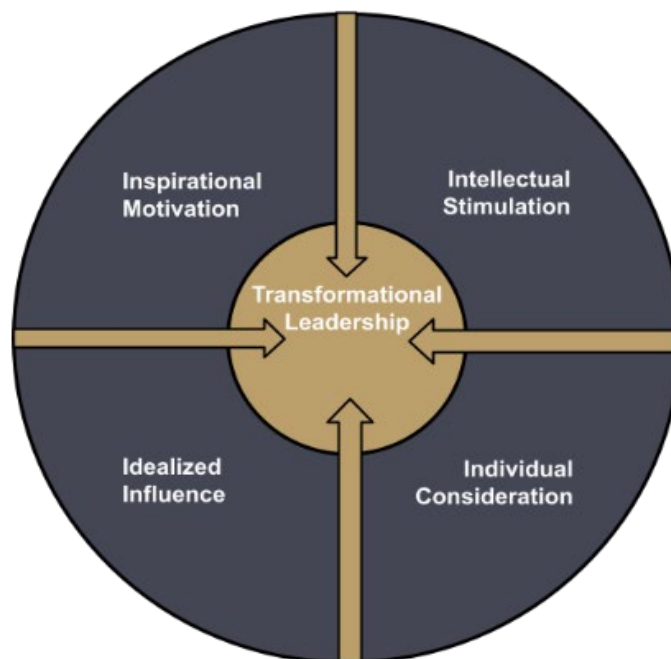


Figure 1: Transformational leadership. Inspiring and motivating teams

Inspiring followers can be done by setting goals. For example, managers can use visions and missions in school to communicate with educators. Such as seeing more women applying and being on the school management teams. The next component is intellectual stimulation. Cardona, Soria and Gumbau (2017) explained intellectual stimulation as a social resource where leaders provide learning support. The DBE has initiated a teacher professional

development master plan (2017), which consists of Educational Management and Governance (EMGD), where existing school principals get trained on schools' managerial and transformational aspects. The department's professional learning communities' programmes promote gender equality in schools. This describes the essence of principals' roles in schools. Tengi, Mansor and Hashim (2017) emphasised that the school manager, often the principal, plays an enormous role in the school's success. Therefore, the school leadership can use educational programmes to learn and teach followers, in this case, educators. Idealised influence has the notion of leading by example. Page (2021) emphasised that transformational leaders will set high standards regarding professionals and ethics. School managers can use the SACE (South African Council of Educators) Act 2000, which includes the code for professional ethics. Lastly, individual consideration has welfare, emotional empathy, and care for followers. Rathod (2020) advised that employers can implement women's interests in various ways, such as protection against sexual harassment, equal pay with males, and workplace hygiene to keep clean and healthy. These can be done in both genders as a concern for the employees' wellness.

3.7 Transformational Leadership Theory Critiques

There are always pros and cons that exist in situations. Critiques do not necessarily mean the approach could be more effective. However, it is through continuous research that the loopholes can be combated. Hunt (2022) described that critique in research means evaluation, which is characterised by judging and analysing concepts learned. This also enables the leaders in organisations to be aware of the concerns raised in a particular theory and develop strategies by proactively working with those loopholes. Mental health is essential in every organisation, including in schools. The South African Mental Health Act 2002 proves the importance of mental health. This act aims to improve the mental health and status of the population. This means in every dimension of an individual's life, including workplaces. Thompson (2019) stated that transformational leadership theory may lead to burnout. The continuous need to adapt to organisational cultures and values, to work through changes, with a constant focus on reaching the vision goals, can be strenuous for employees. For example, schools working around the Annual Teaching Plans (ATP), implemented and revised after the COVID-19 pandemic while simultaneously expecting higher results, became demanding to educators. According to the Department of Basic Education (2020) on recovery programmes, the DBE has Revised ATPs for all the grades and subjects in the country to assist in recovering all the lost time.

Transformational leaders would still want to strive for greatness in reaching goals, in this case, good results, regardless of the significant changes that require educators to go the extra mile, which may lead to burnout. Subsequently, Beatrice, Edwinah and Friday (2021) emphasised that transformational leaders' demands in labour and sometimes overtime may lead to employees performing below the optimum and can affect productivity. Burnout amongst employees brings a negative impact, in contrast to what the theory aims to achieve. Khan, Rehmat, Butt, Farooqi and Asim (2020) maintained that transformational leadership carrying the risks of burnout could implicate the employees and their productivity and increases absenteeism. Transformational leaders intertwine with their followers. This forces employers and employees to be on the same page, limiting creativity on either side. According to Siangchokyoo, Klinger and Capion (2019), there is only an entirely transformational theory if the followers are transformed due to organisational behaviours and people reacting differently to different situations. Leaders cannot enforce their beliefs and values amongst their followers. When followers resist, this may lead to this theory being challenging to follow. As discussed above, the theory also consists of psychological empowerment, where the followers will be intrinsically motivated without relying on their leaders to be effective.

On the contrary, through findings by Minai, Jauhari, Kumar and Singh (2020), the principles of this theory are only sometimes equal to psychological empowerment. Where vision looks at the impact followers and leaders bring, inspirational communication focuses on all types of empowerment, not solely psychological; personal recognition focuses on competencies, and intellectual stimulation focuses on determination. Moreover, when employees feel under pressure with the continuous need to change, adapt, and succeed, it may impact achieving the desired results. Lin, Xian, Li and Huang (2020) maintained that when employees work hard but do not achieve results, this may lead to demotivation and affect their vitality. This inevitably affects psychological empowerment.

3.8 Conclusion

Applying transformational leadership is essential and advantageous in running schools, promoting effective leadership, and transforming the education sector, such as gender legislation, with its different principles, such as individual consideration. Members of the staff in schools are seen as critical individuals, in which every teacher brings unique and vital contributions to the education system. Furthermore, leaders who adopt this theory become transformational leaders where systems and cultures evolve and adapt to different educational

trends. Understanding that this theory motivates and inspires, knowledge gets expanded and transferred to followers.

Transformational leadership theory aims to understand different systems and inspire followers to implement various legislations and changes. In this case, South African schools are under a bureaucratic system. This means, according to Serpa and Ferreira (2019), there is a hierarchy in the functions of subordinates and management where laws and regulations regulate the existence and operations. Where powers and decision-making processes are from higher levels of the hierarchy, in this case, schools are obliged to comply with different legislations established from the upper levels. When gender legislation is implemented in schools, the discomfort and resistance to adapt may bring discomfort to other educators in challenging the status quo. Therefore, transformation assists these individuals through motivation, inspiration, and intellectual stimulation to educate and embrace gender equality for the betterment of school and leadership. The next chapter will, therefore, focus on research methodology and design. This will include the paradigms and instruments that underpin the study. As well as applicable data analysis as appropriate to the selected design.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the theoretical framework that was applied to the study. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the research paradigms underpinning this study's design. Furthermore, the methods and the various ways the data collection was conducted is discussed.

This chapter discussed data analysis, which was structured using thematic analysis. This brought an organised structure, which stemmed from the findings. In concluding this chapter, the matters concerned with the research designs, which include credibility, authenticity, dependability, confidentiality, and ethical issues, were discussed. This chapter begins by exploring different paradigms. Ebohon, Ajayi, and Ganiyu (2021) defined paradigms as sets of beliefs that various experts share, which could particularly fall under the same discipline. It is basically how they view the world. Researcher paradigms are not restricted to a group belief or philosophy; researchers can view the world and have their beliefs separately. Furthermore, Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) described paradigms that signify the researcher's beliefs about their world.

For instance, the researcher analysed various gender issues in her workplace and formed certain beliefs about gender and leadership in a school based on her views. Paradigms describe patterns that typically involve cultures, worldviews, and mindsets about a particular notion (Perara, 2018). The following section provides a brief discussion on the main research paradigms.

4.2 Positivism

Park, Konge and Artino (2020) remarked that positivism is mainly associated with the hypothetical-deductive model concerning science, which builds on selecting prior hypotheses with experience by looking at variables and measures. This holds that observing or measuring certain aspects is mainly the reliable answer. Park, Yoon Soo, Konge and Artino (2020) further clarified that positivism does not only necessarily focus on numerical in a quantity manner, but some studies can require an analysis of the effects of certain interventions qualitatively, making the positivism paradigm a suitable approach.

Ontology: Park, Konge and Artino (2020) state that positivism is based on the understanding that there is only a single truth. That reality can be understood by, for example, means of

measurement. This means that a researcher's different beliefs or understanding is not effectively applied. However, the essence is believing that reality is similar for everyone in an objective manner. For example, for gender equality, there would be minimum attention regarding transformation, even if a belief is based on males being dominant to females due to biological reasons. This paradigm perceives that there is a single truth without being subjective to different abilities that both genders hold.

Epistemology: Positivists, in terms of epistemology, believe in being measured and observed; this applies to both the scientific and social disciplines. Scientifically, to obtain results, a system of measuring is used. Therefore, observations are applied in terms of social dynamics (Junjie & Yingxin, 2022). For example, the positivist researcher in epistemology would observe the schools' leadership with different genders leading in schools to conclude the effects of role gender in terms of leadership.

Methodology: McCleod (2023) asserted that positivism is studied scientifically using quantitative data. Therefore, the research methods used by positivist collecting consist of experiments, closed questionnaires or structured interviews. For example, the positivist would focus on gender statistics to describe social factors about how women or men lead.

4.3 Constructivism or Interpretivism

According to Van de Walt (2020), constructivism holds an understanding that knowledge is constructed, which is also based on the assumption that continuous adjustments and transformations characterise reality. This means there is no single truth. However, people build their knowledge, which is influenced by different experiences. For example, in a classroom, the learners will apply their prior knowledge, beliefs, or lived experiences, which differ from learner to learner, as fundamentals for continuous learning.

Ontology: Constructivists have an understanding that reality is socially constructed. On the basis that people cannot know anything outside the world that their society has built for them. This aligns with ontology regarding what exists in people's world (Cillien, 2019). For example, cultural practices which embrace patriarchal systems construct a reality for people that males dominate over females. Therefore, they make sense of their realities.

Epistemology: According to Omodan (2022), constructivists believe knowledge cannot be measured or objectified. However, interactions are crucial in constructing people's meanings

of reality. Therefore, subjectivity is essential to understanding social phenomena. For example, a teacher in a classroom will employ active learning where learners collaborate and engage with the educators to discuss social factors that contribute to gender inequality.

Methodology: The constructivist paradigm researchers use a qualitative method to analyse data. Since the qualitative method does not apply numerical methods, it relies on communication to examine human behaviour (Hepler, 2023). Subsequently, according to Nickerson (2022), intensivists can collect research using various techniques, including observations or document reviews, but the common approach is interviews. These can be conducted face-to-face or telephonically.

The two paradigms are detailed in the above section. However, the emancipatory paradigm underpins the study, which will be further elaborated in the next section.

4.4. Emancipatory/Critical Theory

Having discussed the three research paradigms, the emancipatory/critical theory mainly applies to the researcher's study. Makombe (2017) described this as a participatory inquiry and feminism, subjective and, importantly, self-reflective, which can be verbally articulated. Importantly, it addresses the issues of inequality, empowerment, and alienation. Bluhdorn, Butzlaff and Haderer (2021) emphasised that social justice, quality, economic or political dimensions, and cultural aspects are important elements in emancipatory theory. The UGM (2020) described critical theory as a paradigm that views society and challenges the commonly known status quo attached to people. This paradigm considers social critique that constrains a researcher's view regarding social, cultural, or political factors. Based on social problems and justice for the betterment of transformation. Critical theory aims to end oppression commonly seen in society; it seeks to diminish the common social construct perceived as the norm (Barowski, 2021).

This study is concerned with transformation within the basic education sector. The research questions aimed to discover the current gender gap in school leadership roles, whether the gender gaps are being closed, and the reasons behind the lack of transformation, irrespective of all initiatives in place. They are challenging the status quo of associating leadership and women in society. Critical theory researchers will continue to strive to transform gender values in an antiquing and understandable manner (Keong, Husin & Kamarudin, 2023). The critical theory paradigm also enables subjectivity. This allowed the researcher to gain various inputs

from participants without having a single objectified answer, which would restrict reasoning. “Some of the key principles of this research paradigm are openness, participation, accountability, empowerment and reciprocity” (Noel, 2016:3). The researcher aimed to achieve this by gathering understanding from participants.

The narratives with the population allowed engagements where the population was not restricted to giving their views or articulating their points. The basis of understanding a social concern, which may have implications in the education sector, is discovering the hidden truth without bias or narrowing the participants’ voices. Sabnis and Proctor (2021) emphasised that critical theory moves away from issues of being objective or neutral yet views knowledge as being transactional, which stems from the values of those who produced that knowledge. This approach in terms of the theory was implemented, where the experiences were not only centred on women but both genders' views were acknowledged Ba’Stefano (2021) asserted that the critical theory aims at discovering both sides of the world, those on the marginalised and those within the centre of society, in this case, it would be those benefiting within the social and cultural concerns.

Within The South African Context, Lötter (2020) associated the critical theory with an essential tool in the history of apartheid, where, in this case, women were also marginalised. During post-apartheid, the Department of Education decided to establish gender legislation, which formed part of the vital role within this study. The history of South Africa was not solely based on racial elements but also on gender, which the current gap would have resulted from the root causes of not exposing women to managerial positions and lacking that exposure. This theory, furthermore, looks at the root causes of social elements. According to Masiero (2020), critical research aims to transform the alienation that conditions subjects to be forced directly by engaging various forms of social domination and its causes.

According to Thompson (2017), this theory is based on understating life’s social and cultural aspects and transforming. Theory and knowledge are not only the focal points; the practicality of discovery of the employment of gender equality involves the practicality of allowing those responsible for the employment of school principals, who would assist in closing this gap, to narrate their experiences by applying the practicality of managerial employment processes in the sector. The legislation is theory-based; therefore, critical theory enables its implementation. Ryan (2018) emphasises that, as a critical theory paradigm, critical theory aims to challenge worldviews by acknowledging the evolution of society, which is becoming more complex.

Within the research paradigms that were discussed above, different elements are applicable. These include ontology, epistemology and methodology.

Ontology: Society is constantly changing and evolving. There is no single truth, meaning life is beyond what is observed or understood. According to Meem (2020), ontology is based on people's beliefs regarding reality, what occurs in the social world and the assumptions humans make about reality and its existence. The study is concerned with gender and understating that gender can be socially constructed. Moon and Blackman (2017) asserted that ontology is based on the understanding that reality is built, it is in the mind of a human, and there is no single reality. This includes cultures and norms that keep on evolving.

According to Mohapatra (2022), gender is socially constructed, which means that gender often determines the roles of man and woman, which varies from one society to the other and culturally by having assumptions on how each gender behaves. This study analysed stereotypes that often may label women as subjective and fragile. However, by exploring their traits, another truth could be discovered: They make exceptional leaders, equally as men. They are taking over spaces traditionally prescribed for males, like leading in schools.

In applying ontology, human factors that hindered women from reaching their potential were evaluated in one of the research questions, which aimed at discovering aspects that cause the gender gap to remain visible. This aimed to seek *reality* on the fundamental causes of the challenges in implementing gender legislation. By engaging different parties who understand gender legislation and gender social issues in the education sector, Blakeley (2022) stated that ontology studies all entities of existence and how people and ways understand the concept of existence they use to measure that existence. Different ways of measuring the researcher's understanding based on what exists within the leadership sector and gender were employed, such as inquiries, engagements, interactions, and interviews.

Epistemology: According to Abbadia (2022), epistemology as a research paradigm means the nature of knowledge by understanding how knowledge is gained. This answers how we know the reality—in this case, obtaining information from participants constructively rather than objectively. Furthermore, Abahneh (2020) emphasise that epistemology in critical theory brings the meanings that will come from human engagements as a social phenomenon that has created a certain perspective. This also emphasises no power hierarchy between the participant

and the researcher. However, the researcher relies on the participants' truth to gather knowledge beyond what is known.

By applying this paradigm in this study, the researcher invited participants as the *knowers* who know factors of gender legislation because of being implemented during appointments of leadership in schools, which may result in closing the gender gap. Understanding reality requires the population to be immersed in the phenomenon, achieved through their experiences as union leaders, SGB members, and district officials. Subsequently, a form of engagement occurs between the knower and the *inquirer*, who, in this case, was the researcher.

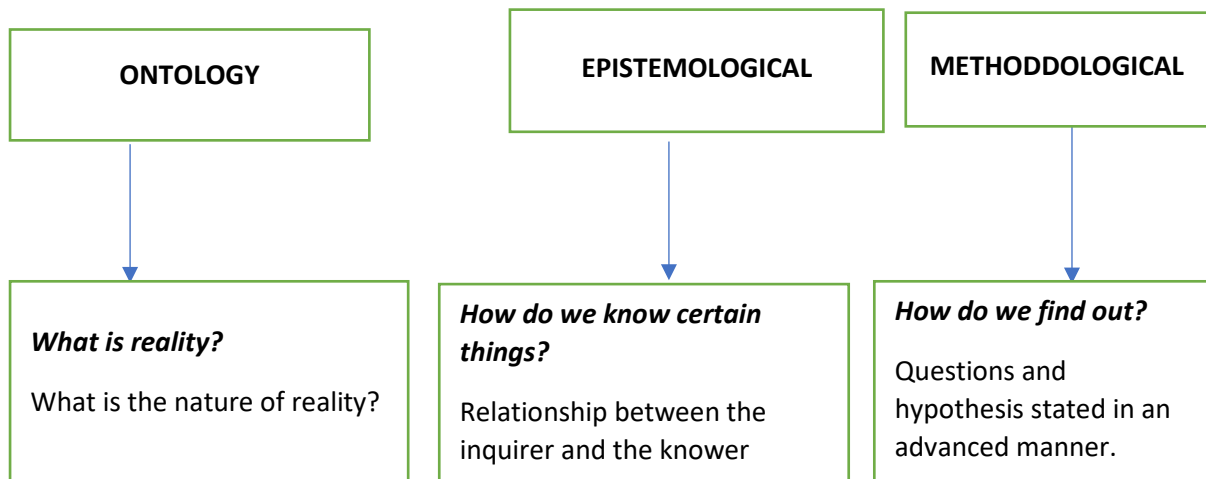
Methodology: methodology provides how reality is discovered. Kamal (2019) described methodology as a method and technique used in investigation processes. This discusses the researcher's strategies to discover gender gaps and legislation in Ekurhuleni Primary schools and analyse what was followed in collecting data, methods used in analysing that data and how the processes unfolded.

According to Abbadia (2022), the methodology allows the researchers to explore their social environment by proving how knowledge was gained using validity. The researcher employed qualitative research and its different methods to gain data. Having semi-structured interviews and using existing and applicable document reviews as research instruments allowed the researcher to discover reality in their environment, in this case, Ekurhuleni district.

The form of inquiry, which was narrative, allowed content-based conversations to occur. According to Ntinda (2019), narratives in research reveal the stories of people; these people are the ones who tell their own stories according to the world they live in. In applying the methodology paradigm, all participants had their environments and experiences they encountered when assisting in closing the gender gap that is still visible, narrating the ways of following legislation and the challenges faced thereof.

Guba (1990) formulated research on the following elements through three questions, which will be presented in Table 1 that follows.

Table 1: The Paradigm Dialogue Guba (1990)



4.5 Research Approach: Qualitative Research Design

According to Boru (2018), research design involves collecting, analysing, and interpreting data. The design that was utilised in conducting this study research process was qualitative research design. Therefore, it is a plan or strategy used by the researcher to assist in acquiring data to answer the research questions (Maree, 2015).

Busetto (2020) describes qualitative research as studying the nature of specific phenomena and their qualities, where data uses words and not necessarily numbers. Regarding words in contrast to numbers, Hammarberg, Kirkman, and De Lacey (2016) describe the qualitative research approach as theoretical, which is non-numerical, conducted by using questions to study that specific social phenomenon. Lastly, understating this design engages the interaction between the researcher and participants, gaining an understanding of the problem under exploration (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ugwu and Uze (2023) stipulate that qualitative research considers the experiences and feelings of individuals, which will be gathered narratively. It provides an answer to the question of *why*. The study sought to understand why there is a lack of female representation regardless of the various gender legislations aimed at closing this gender gap. Furthermore, Mthanti, Ngoca and Moreeng, (2023) point out that qualitative researchers recognise actions and institutions as social constructions rather than the product of external factors. In shaping females, unfortunately, males mainly dominate managerial positions—evaluating the legislation and its roles in combating this social phenomenon of gender equality. To achieve the above, the

researcher began the narrative approach by giving a social background in their workplace and observation. This led to the motivation to collect data regarding this phenomenon. Reflexivity, furthermore, enabled the participants to share their experiences working in the Ekurhuleni and their views on gender legislation applicable to the district.

Qualitative research is also concerned with social validity as a design that analyses social phenomena. “Social validity signifies feedback from research participants that provides information about the utility of participants” (Kozleski, 2017). The study, being socially acceptable, was concerned about closing a gender gap by not promoting sexism or favouring a particular gender yet acknowledging the social concerns of not closing the gap effectively throughout the establishment of the legislation.

Social validity was then considered by sampling both men and women in the study to gather different voices. Different post levels and titles were also considered to gain a broader perspective from lower management to higher management levels. Both males and females contribute socially to addressing gender issues and legislation. It is not necessarily a phenomenon concerned with one group by marginalising the other. The data collection process consisted of semi-structured interviews. Therefore, the participants narrated their lived experiences using narrative inquiry, which was applied in the study and will be discussed next.

4.6 Research Design: Narrative Inquiry

Karpa (2021) described narrative inquiry by stating that it is when people try to create a meaning of their world narratively; it is different from other methodologies found in a qualitative study, as its focus is on relatedness that shapes people’s lives. Furthermore, stories presented during the narrative inquiry assess the research in obtaining a particular understanding of social phenomena; the researcher becomes a co-participant. Moreover, Roller (2017) affirmed that the researcher could gain critical insight into the individual’s lived experiences with the inquiry. The study population consisted of two SGBs, two union representatives, and two district officials sampled from two primary schools and the Department of Education district. This population involved participants with adequate experiences within the education sector; their lived experiences brought about data which holds credibility, where it is not restricted to a single experience or encounter but what they have analysed within the different courses of the years in positions they hold. According to Norman (2020), the value of this approach is that it values the stories that are being told. The researchers and the participants collaborate on specific human development and world awareness research.

The district officials who served more than five years of experience, where shortlisting and interview processes in the SMT are concerned, were able to narrate different experiences and encounters towards answering the *why* question of not reaching the gender gap quota targeted by the Gauteng Department of Education. Capturing these narratives in audio enabled the researcher to analyse and find the meaning of each question addressed repetitively. “Narrating a story means giving narrative form to experience. It is to articulate what has occurred. In its early form, a field narrative is just a text, a voice or voices” (Jha, 2018:238). This described various forms of narration beyond face-to-face conversations.

4.7 Sampling Plan and its Instruments

4.7.1 Population Sample, Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

Two primary schools in the Ekurhuleni district were sampled. In each school, the researcher interviewed a member of the SGB and a union representative. The researcher will also interview two district officials from the DBE district office. In total, there will be six participants who make up the study population.

The researcher met the targeted inclusion criteria for the target population. According to Casteel and Bridier (2021), the target population needs to meet both the inclusion and exclusion criteria for eligible participants in the study. The inclusion criteria were on the selection panel involved in the shortlisting and interview processes of schools’ managerial posts, regardless of being an SGB, union representative, teacher, or district official. This means the exclusion criteria was any SGB educator representative, parental component, or district official who has never been involved in the panel because they did not have practical experiences in terms of the implementations of gender legislation in recommending candidates to the Heads of Department (HOD).

4.7.2 Sampling Plan

According to Obilor (2023), sampling refers to a group from which the researcher will collect data. To receive a quality study, the researcher must employ effective sampling techniques. Therefore, the researcher has adapted sampling techniques, enabling the study to be conducted as applicable to the research designs. Non-probability sampling was used when selecting participants for the study.

This means that the population is not chosen randomly. However, it is based on subjective judgement by the researcher (Datta, 2018). The judgement was based on selecting participants

who are knowledgeable about gender legislation and managerial positions in schools and who are employed by the Department of Education in Ekurhuleni district.

4.7.3 Purposive Sampling

Shaheen, Pradhan and Ranajee (2019) described purposive sampling as selecting participants with in-depth, rich information about specific phenomena, where categories such as experience or roles are considered. In this regard, participants who were crucial in collecting data were required to know about being panel members in schools’ managerial posts. This answered the reasons for not having enough females promoted to leadership posts.

Moreover, these participants had characteristics needed to give knowledgeable factors about the underrepresentation of women leaders in schools. They were given pseudonyms names to protect their identity. The union representative, SGB, and district official formed part of the shortlisting and interview process of appointing school principals. They are also required to follow legislation in developing the criteria. This will give the researcher an overview of the effectiveness of gender legislation in shortlisting candidates.

4.7.4 Demographic Participants’ Information:

Profile of the population of the SGB, union representative and district officials as study participants.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Participants

Pseudonym name	Age	Gender	Profile	Workplace	District
Mr Dennis	55-60	M	District official	DBE	Ekurhuleni
Mr Governdor	40-45	M	SGB member	School	Ekurhuleni
Mrs Smith	50-55	F	Union representative	School	Ekurhuleni
Mr Mabusi	40-45	M	SGB member	School	Ekurhuleni
Mr Dladla	25-30	M	Union representative	School	Ekurhuleni
Mr Malomane	45-50	M	District official	DBE	Ekurhuleni

Keys: DBE: Department of Basic Education. SGB: School Governing Body

4.7.5 Research Instruments and Methods

Collins (2021) described research instruments as tools which the researcher would use to collect data and analyse it, where each design has its applicable research instrument applicable to its form. Since the study is qualitative research, it consists of observations, interviews, focus

groups, and surveys such as questionnaires, thus offering a variety of methods applicable to obtaining data (Bhandari, 2022). The study will utilise multiple methods and instruments appropriate to qualitative research to collect data. The researcher will use semi-structured interviews and documentary analysis to collect data in this study. Audio recordings as an instrument, such as voice audio, can record and continuously listen to the participants' narratives for transcriptions and in-depth analysis without misquoting. These various instruments will assist the researcher in triangulating data received from multiple participants. The research methods employed in this study are discussed below.

4.7.6 Semi-structured Interviews

George (2023) describes semi-structured interviews as a data collection method focused on asking quantitative questions and used in interdisciplinary fields. This makes this applicable to the education field and the research design selected in the study. Furthermore, Creswell and Poth (2019) described semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions that interchange where one person attempts to elicit information from another by asking questions. Therefore, the researcher has no fixed questions regarding being restricted with discussion to the participant but is guided by how the latter interprets phenomena. This study included an interview protocol in which follow-up questions and follow-ups followed, as the researcher needs the participants to engage in the topic and describe their experiences as female leaders in schools. Without having any experience in leadership, the researcher was able to ask follow-up questions to gather more understanding of the subject. In understanding the advantages and disadvantages of using semi-structured interviews, Kakilla (2021) contrasted these by stating that the strength of semi-structured interviews is effective for in-depth conversation, the researcher can follow-up questions for the respondents to elaborate further, and it opens room for bringing different themes, which can be identified from different responses. On the contrary, the weaknesses are that data can be lost, especially if they were not conducted face-to-face or the interviews being written. Also, information can be limited if there are language barriers, resulting in participants needing help to express themselves in a language they understand. Lastly, if there is a limited understanding of the topic, responses may need to be more adequate for the data required. In addition, The Indeed Editorial Team (2020) evaluated these by stipulating that the advantages also are that questions can vary, unlike a structured interview, because the conversations tend to flow, leading to different questions for every individual, depending on the follow-up questions. The disadvantages are that they may be time-

consuming due to open-ended questions, whereas other respondents may also deviate, leading to time spent on additional information. Semi-structured interviews may also lead to bias since there is no objectivity. The respondents can answer according to what they deem as crucial.

Interviews were conducted verbally between the researcher and one individual at a time, one-on-one. The reason for this was that each participant held different titles and had various roles; however, they served the same purpose: to assist in closing the gender gap by employing principals and applying gender legislation. The relationship between one-on-one interaction and semi-structured interviews was effective, resulting in each respondent having a specific time and focus. According to Stofer (2021), semi-structured interviews in one session allow the researcher to have consistent questions for all participants. Still, this structure allows for probing of questions, which enables the researcher to see for clarifications. The interviews were all face-to-face and one-on-one interaction. According to Taherdoost (2022), face-to-face interviews normally occur in a one-on-one session between the interviewer and the interviewee. Still, they can also happen with group interviews consisting of more than one participant. The researcher chose the one-on-one interaction because even though the participants work under the Department of Education, some of their roles are not departmental based but have their organisations, such as the SGB and the union representatives, resulting in different experiences. The participants were asked if they wanted to produce their pseudonyms. However, others advised that the researcher could become creative.

4.7.7 Documentary Reviews

Rice and Thronton (2019) describe document review as collecting relevant documents for research and analysing those documents. The reason for selecting this instrument tool is that within the Department of Education, the sector is guided by legislation in all spheres, and every stakeholder must be familiar with legislation. Cardno (2020) maintained that people in the education department must be knowledgeable about policies because national and local policies instruct every function. The schools and the districts selected were situated in Ekurhuleni and categorised within the government sector. They must comply with legislation that acts as a framework in guiding how the education sector should function. According to Zeidan (2020), legislation is important in providing government officials with a framework for managing old and new institutions. This means legislation goes across the board within the different schools and districts in Ekurhuleni.

When collecting data within the interview stages, the researcher would explain different legislations to the participants, which most participants had adequate knowledge about and clearly emphasise key points relevant to a school situation. Dalglish, Khalid and McMahon (2020) argued that issues of reliability or authenticity can be a concern just like any other method; therefore, triangularity as a technique must be applied, such as enough examples of documents or well-executed briefing to the participants. Thus, various documents that were reviewed and communicated are circular on the implementation of the Employment Equity Plan in the education sector, the EEA aligned with affirmative action, the Gauteng Department of Education's gender equality and Women Empowerment policy, the CGE, The Women Empowerment and gender equality bill, and the 2022 vacancy circular for the appointment of post 2-4.

To achieve credibility, the researcher selected documents that existed for a long period and were meant to be implemented. This would give the researcher an understanding of the successes in implementing the missing gaps. In contrast, selecting new legislation, which needs a sufficient period to be applied, would make the judgement of its effectiveness unfair. According to Indeed (2022), document reviews in research are concerned with evaluating and interpreting existing documents to understand their meaning within the study.

The relevant documents were selected based on the ones the participants were obliged to work on by frameworks guiding them to implement gender equality in school leadership. Document reviews can assist in ensuring compliance in different departments and that certain standards are met (Rice & Thronton, 2019). The most applicable legislation that speaks of education and leadership where the concerned district is located was the Gauteng Department of Education's gender equality and Women Empowerment policy; however, other gender legislations, such as circulars, were brought forward by the participants in their responses which will be elaborated further during data analysis.

The study population consisted of leaders in different spheres, such as in the Department of Education, district level, and district officials. In the school governance matters, which would be the SGB members and lastly, labour matters, which are the union representatives. This selection makes them suitable as knowledgeable masters of legislation. According to Cardno (2020), leaders in the education sector need to have vast knowledge about documents and policies that guide the industry in terms of what procedures to follow and implementation. Each participant had appropriate scenarios, examples and situations encountered during the aim of

implementation of gender legislation. Their relevance of experiences, therefore, contributed to obtaining data.

4.8 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis will be employed in analysing the obtained data. Caulfield (2019) describes thematic analysis as a method used in qualitative data, where a researcher takes transcripts and closely examines them to find common themes or patterns. This study used six transcripts from different participants as an inductive approach. Morgan (2018) furthermore stated that themes are meaningful patterns seen as tools to allow the readers to understand the crucial aspects gathered from the data. The data received was from different participants who may hold both similar and different narratives regarding gender legislation and the gender gap phenomenon. This is why the researcher used codes during this analysis: “Coding in its most basic form is the simple operation of identifying segments of meaning in your data and labelling them with a code” (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019: 6). Dawadi (2020) gave feasible structures for carrying out a thematic analysis process. In which the researcher implemented the following five steps when analysing the data. Formalisation with data: This step was crucial; it was important for the researcher to read the data continuously to prevent misinterpretations or missing important information. This began by reading the notes the researcher took during the interviews. Transcribing through repetitive listening to the voice audio also assisted in understanding the responses. The transcriptions were read multiple times, with notetaking in every paragraph, which served as a summary of the conversation. Therefore, the researcher became fully immersed in critical readings of the data received.

Generating codes: After immersing in the data reading, being familiar with how each participant responded, re-reading the transcriptions and notetaking each paragraph, the researcher conducted this step using mind mapping. This was crucial in organising the data and avoiding confusion regarding what each participant alluded to regarding each question. Fearnley (2022) stated that mind mapping is advisable for developing qualitative research codes and themes for interview methods or focus groups. The researcher analysed each question separately from the six participants. Therefore, each question's interesting and similar responses were colour-coded in the mind map. These were phrases and explanations and not necessarily one-word answers. In which the researcher had to take those phrases to form themes.

Naming the themes: The phrases and responses highlighted were lengthy, and the researcher had to understand what the phrases focused on and based on the main message of each phrase. This is when the naming of the themes came about. Caufield (2023) stipulated that when naming the themes, it is important to be concise and ensure that each theme is understandable. Therefore, the teachers used a one-word method in naming the themes to avoid long and complex themes.

Thematic map: Mammen (2018) stated that mind mapping is a critical thinking tool in various research tasks, such as organising the information or during data analysis. Therefore, in finalising the thematic map, it was drafted as an annexure H. This consisted of the research questions, which were asked during semi-structured interviews. A summary of the responses for each question. The colour-coded phrases that were repetitive by different participants and answered the research questions. Lastly, the new names that emerged from those phrases were considered study themes.

Lastly, after the data was organised accordingly, the write-up stage followed. This involved designing a table with research questions, emerging themes, and categories of the participant's titles. The themes were explained by incorporating literature as supporting scholastic statements and participant quotations. It is advisable to present each theme with quotations that speak to the concepts that show how the researcher has identified similar patterns in the analysis (Mihas, 2023).

4.9 Issues of Quality in Qualitative Research

To validate the study, the researcher considered issues concerned with qualitative research to ensure the legibility of the data collected and analysed. According to Siraj (2021), qualitative research has its challenges. Therefore, validating the study before utilising them as final products is crucial. This step allowed the researcher to determine the appropriateness of the data received without restructuring or manipulating the raw data and gather information ethically and legally as per human study requirements.

4.10 Credibility

Korstjens and Moser (2018) described credibility as an aspect concerned with the true value of implementing different techniques. These involve prolonging engagements during interactions or interviews, adapting triangulation or conducting member checks. In this case, the researcher

utilised triangulation by using various methods when collecting data in the form of narrative inquiry according to the participants' lived experiences in the DBE and school structures. Semi-structured interviews involved probing questions for the effective elaboration of responses, and document reviews were used as resources for the participants. To ensure that the data used was accurate, member checking was implemented by summing up the interviews based on notetaking during the interview and rearticulating them to the participants to ensure that data was correctly noted. The semi-structured interviews also prolonged engagements in individual interactions, where each participant had adequate time to respond to questions.

4.11 Authenticity

Data collection and the conducting of the study required authenticity. Lehman, O'Connor, Kovács, and Newman (2019) describe authenticity in research as confirming the entities of a social norm category; this will also consist of the consistency of themes discovered. In this study, the social phenomenon was based on gender equality, in which the social understanding was that women were not adequately represented in management roles. The authenticity was to select participants who are experts in this expertise and, therefore, identify the themes that emerged through various participants; this gave sound validation about the different complexities that were discovered based on this phenomenon.

4.12 Dependability

This is associated with reliability. In recent studies, Trochim (2023) stated that dependability means that if a study were to be conducted again, the same results would be discovered. This also includes changes in contrast to the initial plans when formulating the study and how the changes affected the study. In the study, the researcher's assumptions differed from what was received when data was collected. This includes top and middle management factors that do not apply to lower management and the implementors of legislation discovered to be highly associated with the SGB. The different descriptions among the panel members make it difficult to ensure the effectiveness of gender legislation in primary school leadership.

4.13 Confidentiality

Pseudonyms were implemented to protect the participants' identities and school names. Participants were also informed that their identities would not be revealed and that the use recordings would be kept safe and used for only transcribing purposes. "Participant

confidentiality means the participant's identity is known to the researcher, but the data was de-identified, and the identity is kept confidential" (Fleming & Zegwaard, 2018:211). Personal information beyond their gender, titles and age groups was not required. Before the data collection, the invitation also explained the study's purpose. This is to clarify where their responses will be used.

4.14 Ethical Issues

Bhandari (2022) described ethical considerations in studies as the principles that guide one's research and ensure integrity. The University of the Free State granted the ethics number regarding ethical clearance. The Department of Education also permitted research in schools and district offices, as attached in the appendix. The principal of the schools was also informed regarding the interview dates and times. Moreover, not only were ethics considered, but the morals and human dignity of the participants were also taken as priorities. Permission was requested and granted by the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct interviews in schools and Department of Education district offices. Furthermore, consent forms were stipulated to the participants when conducting the interviews, which explained that the interviews are voluntary, and they can withdraw anytime. The study had no physical or mental harm to the participants and society. Lastly, the participants would remain anonymous, using pseudonyms to protect their identity.

Sign (2019) emphasised that ethics in research involve human principles that do not harm the participants or society, both intentionally and unintentionally. The interviews were voluntary, meaning no participant was obliged to participate in the study, informing the population that they were free to withdraw if they were uncomfortable with the questioning. Lastly, there was transparency in communication on what their data would be used for, and they received consent to utilise their data for research study purposes.

4.15 Conclusion

The chapter began by discussing various research paradigms and the elements applicable to this study. The focus was on critical theory as the suitable paradigm of gender legislation regarding equality and challenging the status quo regarding social justice for women. This paradigm was aligned with the methodology as a philosophy. Furthermore, this chapter explored various research methods and how data was collected through semi-structured interviews and document reviews using audio recording. This was aimed at the purpose of

triangulation. This chapter also gave a synopsis of the interview processes that took place between the researcher and the population of the study. By emphasising crucial factors observed, such as ethical issues, confidentiality, and validity, the research design was chosen according to its applicability to the study.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter focused on methodology regarding how data was collected. In Chapter Five, the researcher analysed participant data using qualitative research by employing semi-structured interviews, narrative inquiry, and document analysis. Descriptive notes were taken during the data collection, with audio recordings to capture the responses. This chapter analysed the responses based on each question, discussed the findings and found similarities in each response, enabling the researcher to form a thematic analysis. This will allow the researcher to discover what was mainly common based on the participants' engagements, which derived from their experiences and knowledge of the phenomenon.

5.2 Findings and Discussions

Five questions were asked of different participants. Six participants participated in the study: two district officials, two members of the SGB, and two union representatives. Table 5.2 below provides the semi-structured interview questions, emerging themes, and the participants' categories.

Table 3: Research Questions and Emerging Themes

RESEARCH QUESTIONS	THEMES	CATEGORY
How effective is the current gender legislation in promoting women into leadership roles in primary schools?	Establishment of Circular 09 of 2020.	Two SGB Two union representatives Two district officials
Does the selection panel observe and apply gender legislation in the employment of school principals?	Scoring criteria.	Two SGB Two union representatives Two district officials
What factors are responsible for the low number of female principals in primary schools?	SGB involvement and Disciplinary concerns.	Two School Governing Bodies Two union representatives Two district officials

The researcher presents the findings in the next section using the five questions posed to participants.

Question 1

When asked: There has been legislation aimed at gender equality in workplaces. (For example, the Gauteng Department of Education's gender equality and Women Empowerment policy, 2014). How effective is the current gender legislation in promoting women?

Mr "Mabusi" responded:

"Yes, the policy is effective and running. and it's being implemented in a way that even when we are doing interviews or short-listing. for any higher office position like principal, or deputy, we go back to that policy look at what it says, and in all cases, we'll find out that. to women to say sometimes we need to give more points to women so that we up them in the process of selection. For example, we might say where we give when it comes to another point. The man is one point for women it will be three or four. So we are trying to balance them because they have been disadvantaged for quite some time."

Mr "Dladla" responded:

"In my experience, I think this policy it is, right now, at present, most important in primary schools. There are a lot of women in leadership positions, but I understand the objective of this policy in terms of placing women into leadership. But at times, there is a gap whereby women are just placed there in order to meet the quota as opposed to those women having the skills in order to carry out whatever objectives that position demands. So it is effective"

Mr "Govendor" responded

"Yes, they are effective. For instance, in promotion posts, you always score when you are shortlisting and so a certain score to a woman. You will get a higher school. Okay. Okay. Like if I'm getting one for a male it's two for a female, I'm just giving an example. So it won't be the same. We always call the female higher. There is always the black female who scored higher. So there is also a racial element as well."

Mrs “Smith” responded:

“I may start by saying it was a good initiative from the government side to take care of our women, So, yes it is effective. According to circular 09 of 2020 when they were trying to redress this. It was indicated that in primary schools, there are very less women. More males in the senior management when I talk of senior management talking of your deputy principal and your principal. So basically if that has been addressed is a good step from the Department side. It is slowly getting there because when you check around our area. Most of the schools are being led by lately by women. Yes, but you check in the whole of Gauteng East, including Ekurhuleni North it is still males that are leading in primary schools. But looking at Benoni itself, yes, we've got schools that have been led by women.”

Mr “Dennis” responded:

“You know, I have to be brutally honest in terms of the implementation of the policy. One, there are limitations because of the manipulation of the whole policy. For instance, you look at circular 9 of 2020. Which deals with recruitment, actually, you know, address is specifically the gap we are having that to behaving in terms of all managerial levels in the primary schools. We’ve got a problem with the principals, still lacking in terms of selection, in terms of addressing that. However, what also is to be taken into cognisance is the fact that SASA stipulates, that the SGB is the one that recommends. Manipulation of the policy itself makes it actually a limitation towards the movement of that very good policy. It defeats the purpose of addressing the imbalances.”

Mr “Malomane” responded:

“We're not doing justice in the primary school sector. In fact, you find instances where women are dominating in terms of, you know in those posts, even in the promotional posts of principals in some instances, if you check circular 9 of 2020 which is the implementation of employment equity plans it shows that there's a need for say for example Indian males and in some schools Indian females schools. So that doesn't translate to the same situation. You find that for example there are still males still are dominant. And then even in other leadership positions in the department outside the

school, you find in SMT and middle management, there is still a dominance of males when it comes to a particular position.”

Discussion and Interpretations

Most participants stated that the gender legislation is effective and working. However, the gender legislation is effective regarding lower management and HOD. Still, in middle and top management, such as deputy principals and principals, the gender gap is mainly visible. Circular 09 of 2020 was a piece of legislation that came forward, especially in this question. This was used to redress the gender of the past, showing that women in top management were scarce. However, what was more crucial were the qualifications. For example, a bachelor's degree holder will score less than a master's on capabilities and skills when considering gender aspects. It was also communicated that even though legislation is effective, it is manipulated by panel members of the recruitment process during shortlisting and interviews of top management in schools. The South African Schools Act (1996) is the problem that hinders gender legislation from being implemented effectively due to its regulations that SGB members hold power in the shortlisting and interview processes, also with recommendations of possible managers to the head office. So, whether a female has capabilities, the SGB will be prejudiced against them. They may also have a lack of knowledge in terms of executing this gender legislation. This can be one of the reasons the implementation is moving slower.

Question 2

When asked: As you form part of the shortlisting process for principal positions, does the panel observe and apply gender legislation in the employment of school principals?

Mr “Mabusi” responded:

“Very much we do consider that! so that we make sure that the women, as somewhat to an advantage, or rather, in trying to balance to close the gap between men and women. So we really consider that way. We can allocate different points for women when it comes to shortlisting, it does.”

Mr “Dladla” responded:

“Yes, we they do. They do. Because of the criteria demands of them. But, there's a huge part. There's a lot of politics that are associated with selecting. So you'd find a situation

whereby there's a woman who is skilled, right? Okay, woman A and there's a woman B, who is not skilled because she is a member of the union the panel may be persuaded to take woman B, you know, as opposed to woman A who has skills and that is influenced by a lot of factors. So the Department of Education needs to do better I think that for each and every selection, you need independent people who do not have any connection with the district.”

Mr “Govendor” responded:

“Yeah, they still score according to the legislation, according to the criteria. As I mentioned, the black female will get a higher score than the black male, for example. You get a memo with the scoring criteria for the point system. I can't remember the exact points, but, it's always like a black female will get one point higher than an Indian male or a black male.”

Mrs “Smith” Responded:

“Yes, they are using a grid that shows to say at this point how many women are they as principals and how many males are there as deputy principals. So with a grid, when you are shortlisted as a woman, already have a mark for being a woman. So, it is being redressed.”

Mr “Dennis” responded:

“It goes back to what I was saying. Yes we do, The criteria, stipulates what particular position the principal post, is because we are lacking. That particular item needs to be addressed. How will we address it? For instance, you'll say because we are looking for a female, for a female, you would then give her three points on that equity. and then for a man, you would give one point. So that is actually trying to consider that gender legislation and all other criteria that can follow would actually lead to addressing the imbalance. That would favour women.”

Mr “Malomane” responded:

“We do, what we normally do is even the shortlisting criteria are points that are given to women, you know, if say for example the post in terms of circular 09 of 2020, we check areas where women are underrepresented. We do criteria for every woman that applies, that woman already has a particular number of points we then try to push the issue of gender equity. We also check our shortlist to say where we have a shortage of women, we can't have men dominating the shortlist, but before we do interviews and search questions, we decide on the right criteria.”

Discussion

The participants affirmed that they observe and apply gender legislation in the employment of school principals because it is required during shortlisting and interviews. This is done using a score sheet and grid during the shortlisting process. Women are, therefore, given additional scores in contrast to males. This gave the women an advantage. However, at times, this is not adequate because there could be males who will receive a lower score in terms of gender but higher scores in terms of qualifications, skills and experience. Gender is not only the only element that takes place but also racial factors, such as prioritising blacks since they were disadvantaged during the apartheid regime. Furthermore, observing the legislation varies according to the grid by analysing and determining where women are mainly underrepresented. The panel also ensures that males do not dominate the shortlisting. The problem also lies in the fact that shortlisting is objective, the given scores are fixed, and sometimes women may need to make it to the interview processes, which are mainly subjective because panel members may have different understandings in response to interviews, with favouritism taking place. During interviews, they also go beyond legislation by trying to find someone assertive to lead the school.

Question 3

When asked: We still need more women in managerial positions. What factors are responsible for the low number of female principals in primary schools?

Mr “Mabusi” replied:

“One of the reasons that we have observed is that some of them have not been empowered, or rather spiritual or more mental. Most of them do not want to apply for those posts. They feel they cannot lead schools and secondly, the other reason is after

shortlisting them, you'd find that find that sometimes a number of women have not studied, and have not done higher qualifications.”

Mr “Dladla” responded :

“I think the biggest factor of that comes from this mentality that a woman cannot deal with discipline and right now the learners that we have, I'm not saying, It is wrong for them to have rights, but they are right about putting teachers in a position whereby they cannot discipline the child. So they need to be male figures in the school, more especially in the management sector. So that's why you will see a lot of men as principals. And another thing, in some other areas, you must remember that we are still dealing with chauvinistic mentalities, whereby women are not allowed to be in leadership positions. Men need to be there because they are men.”

Mr “Govendor “ responded:

“I think experience in managerial positions. Secondly, I think it's the qualifications. that they don't have adequate experience. In the past, those opportunities of women not being principals or deputies for example were not so big so they didn't have experience. Now when they come to 2023 blacks in the 80s were not given that opportunity so they lack that experience. The level one now they're supposed to be principals they don't have management.”

Mrs “Smith” responded:

“Most of us are still having low self-esteem, which worked negatively during the apartheid, We still see ourselves as inferior to others. And this program they are talking of training of women. On the part of training the government is still very slow they are still crawling on that part. Women are not trained as they are supposed to be. It is not yet vigorous.”

Mr “Dennis” responded:

“The concept of saying women are actually weak in maintaining discipline. The problem there is the selection process In most cases you would find that the parent component will then say, No, no, no, no, we don't need a female because we need a person who's very strong. it's a myth to say women are weak. So if you still have to move away from the concept from the parent's perspective because the parents are the

ones that are also in a majority in this meeting. And they actually they've got this thing of saying no if it's a female. The man role would actually be a suited candidate to maintain discipline you still have to remove that from the concept. But we have well-run schools, led by females."

Mr "Malomane" responded:

"We don't have enough of the number of applicants for one is or another. There are posts and they don't apply, and then the other factors will be issues that we are exploring in question 1. It could be issues around prejudice. It could be issues around the enforcement of legislation. You know, it could be issues around favouritism, It's a basket of factors. Favouritism you prefer men over women prejudice. The SGB still has that mentality as stated the enforcement of legislation maybe we're not enforcing it that much."

Discussion

The factor responsible for the low number of female principals is that some women need to be adequately empowered to believe that they can lead schools; this is due to their self-esteem, so they do not apply for principalships compared to men. Also, they may not have higher qualifications in contrast to males. There is also a need for more experience in middle managerial positions, making it challenging to consider them for principal positions. Furthermore, the mentality of the SGB parental component is based on their misconceptions that women struggle with maintaining discipline. Believing that males will handle discipline issues successfully since discipline is a big school crisis, it becomes a key component when recommending candidates. The SGB components also have cultural factors that still deem men as superior. The development and training for women, as stipulated in gender legislation, is not happening or is still slow. There is also favouritism and prejudice that take place from the panel.

Question 4

When asked: In your view, what steps should be taken to close the existing gender gap?

Mr "Mabusi" responded:

"One, it would re-address the issue of qualifications. More bursaries should be issued to women so that they can start furthering their studies. Not only to have a bachelor of

education but also to have honours, master's and doctorate. There is a need for training women so that they have confidence in themselves to say, regardless of the fact that they are women, they can lead schools.”

Mr “Dladla” responded:

“The teachings of gender equality must happen at a primary school level, whereby Gender equality needs to be heavily taught in the curriculum. You know, it needs to be included in CAPS so that as learners grow, they grow with this mentality that we are even. We are even. You know, in terms of skills in terms of abilities. The only difference that we have is that you are female and I am. It's a biological difference. And we teach that at school. So once you are, when you want to limit the gap, start with education. Start with education. Teach it from the grassroots, you must not be mandated every time by the UN. What works for the other may not work for us. Different strokes for different folks.”

Mr “Govendor” replied:

“In my view, I think the old mindset of the male must change to accept, you know, the opposite sex as equal and as capable in all aspects of professional development. They need their need education. Yeah, they need to be educated on, uhm accepting the female as an equal, part of the entire system. Also, Well, look, you'll have to eliminate, those who are not cooperative you'll have to find out who exactly is the person. Then you have a one-on-one talk with the person, you know, in general.”

Mrs “Smith” replied:

“Basically, I would say it's back to training made, so that we can be mentors to young teachers and other young women, and in that training, I think we should include things like avoiding negativism. That is a disease that we have as women. Instead of uplifting each other. We look at the negative parts of a person. Then we start analysing that. Then it gives the self-esteem of that particular person. So basically we are still not yet there. We are still not yet there. We basically need that training. We need a mentor who is in the department to come to schools and give the training.”

Mr “Dennis” replied:

“We should review the SASA because it still empowers the parent component who might not actually be very confident with the dynamics within the system. Parents are the ones that are actually having more say in the recommendation of the candidates. Because you submit the recommended candidates to the director, who's going to actually take it to the HOD? The HOD is limited in terms of what? It's limited in terms of the choice because in the recommendation you have recommended three males. But I'd also go further to say, that while we are reviewing SASA. Interviews cannot be the only thing in the system that we do. Come up with other mechanisms to actually identify a suitable candidate What has happened in the past? You'd have the interview as part of the final decision-making process. But you then also look at a track record. From being a deputy principal, the results they produced, and looking at the whole background.”

Mr “Malomane” replied:

“I would affirm women, target them for growth and how would I do that, to design courses for developmental courses. for women and men just to bring them on the path. That would be the first agenda item. That training courses and development years. For women, make sure that you know. Show the issue of job shadowing in the department and therefore have that skills transfer to you know to the correct gender and then the other issue is you know try to enforce for better mechanism when it comes to the issue of employment equity, like that mechanism that will ensure that things are done.”

Discussion

The steps necessary to close the existing gender gap involve addressing the issues of qualification, where women get funding to further their studies since higher qualifications are mainly a concern during shortlisting due to having more males holding higher qualifications. There is also a need for developmental training, which will include women being assisted in building confidence and higher self-esteem, including developmental courses on leadership; the teaching of gender studies should also take place at the primary school level, which will assist in diminishing the stereotypes and misconceptions of women being able to lead. Education about gender legislation is needed for panel members to look beyond their myths. Besides interviews, there should be other strategies involved in appointing principals. The previous roles they have served, such as deputy principal, should have good results, proving

that the person can lead. Looking at task-orientated people because, in most cases, they get trained in preparations when they come for interviews. Some are well articulated, which will portray an image of being effective. Lastly, the focus should not be on reaching the quotas but on capabilities. Quotas mean that any woman can make it to leadership roles to meet the target set by the department.

Question 5

When asked: Do you think the implementation process of the current gender legislation should be reviewed?

“No, they are fine. but they need some additions. If we say we are empowering women if we are saying we are wanting women in that position what really are we doing? So one should be given to the implementation of the practical aspect of saying, how do we empower these women? Because sometimes we talk about empowering women, what are we really doing? So that part of the application should be done.”

Mr “Dladla” replied:

“Absolutely. Absolutely. The fact that There is a study as you've alluded that shows that they still lack female principles. It means that we haven't yet reached the Uhuru, We still have to do more. And that's basically life. You know, even if it was working well, we still need to review it to make it better you know, because generations are different. It might work for this generation, but it might not work for the next generation. So we constantly need to reflect on whether it happened, it's the good or the bad it still needs to be reviewed. because different generations are involved with its different challenges. And remember our fraternity's demands of that because we are lifelong learners.”

Mr “Govender” replied:

“No, I think it's working. Let's put it that way. It's working so it's fine, but in sectors, in different sectors there needs to be a more rapid movement of women to higher positions. Because some people may be still stalling in certain sectors. And as I said, the mindset of certain individuals is still the fact that women should play the submissive role and she's not as capable as the male, you know that kind of thing. So education is important there again. I think let's leave it as it is, okay? I've seen the effectiveness. And it is effective, you know? It's working, it's just a matter of time, let's just not change

everything you know, we might ruin. You can't just go into it full force. You just got to allow it to take up space.”

Mrs “Smith” replied:

“Yes, it should be reviewed, the policy itself I don't want to criticize it, but the clause that I can change is to put black women on the top list, the coloured, Indians and white women. It shouldn't be on the policy alone, there has to be a management plan, somebody on top who is driving or navigating this policy So, it's like this policy is there and who is driving it? There should be a post in the Department, that says this post is for equity, it's an equity post. Where this person will be able to train and mentor other women. So it's so clean in the policy, it's beautiful in the policy but implementation is still a problem.”

Mr “Dennis” stated:

“Looking at the slow pace, we in the slow pace remember we've got a very good legislative framework the slow pace of actually closing that gap. Suggest that there are things. There are loopholes within the what? There are loopholes within the policy. And that can actually be easily manipulated by all those people who want to actually get a particular result. So in that way, if we review it, we need to strengthen it. We don't actually have to take everything out. Especially the issue of the what? Parent components of the SGB. For the recruitment and selection process. If it means we need to get an expert who will sit in those, panels and motivate and give the report to the SGB, then we would actually go somewhere.”

Mr “Malomane” replied:

“Yes, simply because ever since the legislation is there there's little to no progress in some instances and therefore it talks to the issue of implementation because the legislation itself is good. It's good from a sense of saying, you know, for me it balances the two things. You know, just making good on the injustices of the past and looking at the job function and the capabilities that I need to have. So for me balances what the job requires and also affirms those that need to be affirmed. Okay. Because we have to correct the injustices of the past. In terms of implementing, yeah. And remember that implementing starts with the implementation plan that each department then comes forward with. and say, okay, this is how we plan to close the gaps and address the

imbalances of the past. Obviously, it's something that needs to be reviewed every time to say this is how much we moved. We check, Gauteng and say, okay, it's dominated by women, let's look as to how you know, they fare in terms of, you know, holding position in the senior management sphere, middle management. and where do they dominate.”

Discussion

The participants believe the implementation process of gender legislation should be reviewed and strengthened. It needs many adjustments due to its slow pace of closing the gender gap, such as the implementation plan and how feasible it will be to complete it. When the statistics are analysed, they are not school-based. However, according to the DBE, numbers are evaluated more broadly. The mistake that happens is evaluating numbers according to school levels, and a school is only a workstation. The selection panel for appointing principals also needs to be changed because it causes legislation not to be effective—the parental component especially, so that only experts get involved in recruitment processes. There should be an independent panel because union members also push their narratives to have their union members be school principals. Race should also be highly considered because race should lead schools dominated by a certain race. After all, learners should also draw motivation from their principals regarding role models. Generations also differ. As we move, legislation should also be adaptive to current changes.

5.3 Discussion of Emerging Themes from Research Questions

Three common themes emerged throughout the discussions aimed at answering the research questions. These will be discussed by merging the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. Therefore, the thematic analysis method will be implemented in this section. Jones (2022) describes thematic analysis as a way of obtaining themes from texts obtained during interviews, which assists in merging information with research questions.

5.3.1 Establishment of Circular 09 of 2020

The concern regarding gender legislation is the implementation processes, and the participants brought Circular 09 of 2020 to light during the interviews. Hence, recently, the Gauteng Department of Education formulated this circular to assist in implementing gender legislation. The circular also showed a grid in terms of gender in schools' leadership, where women's leadership in schools is still a concern as it is not reaching its quota.

Contrary to what was envisioned in the Gauteng Department of Education's (GDE) gender equality and Women Empowerment policy (2014) section 10.2.2 under women representation in GDE, which states the department wants to commit to ensuring that women in senior management reach a 50% quota.

District official Mr Dennis: *"For instance, you look at Circular 09 of 2020, which deals with recruitment, you know, it specifically addresses the gap we are having and behaving in terms of all managerial levels in the primary schools."*

Union Representative, Mr Smith: *"According to Circular 09 of 2020, when they were trying to redress this, it was indicated that there are very few women in primary schools. More males in the senior management when I talk of senior management talking of your deputy principal and your principal."*

District official Mr Malomane stated: *"If you check Circular 09 of 2020, which is the implementation of employment equity plans, it shows that there is a need... In SMT and middle management, males still dominate in a particular position."*

Analysing the district, the participants, such as Mrs Smith, stated that in branches around Benoni, which is situated in Ekurhuleni North, we see many female principals, for example. So, from a broader perspective, regions and districts, such as Ekurhuleni South and Gauteng East, are where the balancing could be more effective. Mr Govender from Palm Primary also mentioned that this policy is effective because, in his workplace, all four departmental heads are females. However, deputy principals are still males. This links to what Mrs Smith alluded to with senior and middle management: the gender gap is still vast. Most participants believed that legislation is effective but moving at a slower pace due to the manipulation of its implementation. The district official, Mr Dennis, emphasised that the manipulation of legislation derives from the selection panel in recommending school leadership, which needs to be conducted more effectively by the SGB and unions, who hold a higher voice in ensuring women are appointed. Circular 09 of 2020, under section 7.1 (b), mentions that the recommendations need to address misrepresentations such as gender. The selection panel, therefore, is expected to send the HOD the three recommended names after interviews. In most cases, the selection panel has its agendas; for instance, when a person is associated with a particular union, they get preference regardless of gender or capabilities. Mr Malomane, another district official, also raised this and emphasised that the SGB may need more knowledge of implementing legislation and the DBE's vision regarding gender-related issues.

According to GDE (2020), the department's measures in implementing the EEA were formulating Circular 09 of 2020. According to this circular, the purpose is to ensure equal representation at all levels within the department. However, through its grid and interviews with participants regarding top and middle management in schools, the representation is still not equal regarding gender. This means the steps in implementing legislation, such as the EEA, reviewed in the literature, have implementational concerns. According to the South African Government Gazette No. 19370, p.12, the EEA discussed earlier in the study aims to implement affirmative action measures to redress the designated groups' past workplace experiences.

From the gatherings in interviews, as discussed above, another concern with the implementation of legislation is that the SGB may have limited knowledge regarding gender legislation. Circular 09 of 2020, section 8.7 (a) states that the SGB needs to familiarise itself with EEA legislation to align the shortlisting and selection processes with the Department of Education's target. Policies and legislation can be formulated effectively, but if the implementation is ineffective due to a lack of training or knowledge, it will not succeed. According to Abdullahi and Othman (2020), the reason for the implementation of legislation to be a failure is that the policymakers and people responsible for implementation have no connection. This is why, through data gathering, the district officials, the union members and the SGB had different inputs regarding the implementation process; the SGB supported the legislation as effective, and district officials believed that the SGB needed more implementation, along with the union members. The DBE was an implementation concern due to the need for more connections and links between parties in the same sector.

5.3.2 Scoring Criteria

All six participants spoke about the scoring criteria in addressing this research question. The scoring criteria stipulate that during the shortlisting of school principals, women must be given an additional mark for being women. This shows that the gender gap is still not closed in the Ekurhuleni. This is applied by all selection panels involved in the appointments of school principals. However, beyond the scoring criteria, other concerns, such as skills, abilities, qualifications, favours, and connections used in obtaining these principal posts, may also contribute to the gender gap.

District official, Mr Malomane “...*For a female, you would give them three points on that equity, then for a male you would give one point. It is trying to consider that gender legislation*

and all other criteria...a man would sometimes perform better, in terms of qualifications... extra-curricular and other skills”.

SGB, Mr Govendor *“Yes, they still score according to legislation. Black females score higher than black males. You get a memo with scoring criteria...black females will get higher scoring than Indian males”.*

Union representative, Mrs Smith *“So, it is being addressed, you get a free mark for being a woman, a black woman, though I see it as being unfair, because when we talk of black women...policy includes coloureds and Indians, it was supposed to be black women... Indians and coloured were considered more than black women during apartheid.”*

The scoring criteria are used in applying and observing gender legislation. The participants added racial elements associated with the requirements. Furthermore, one of the union representatives stated that black females should be considered because being a woman and being black was a marginalised issue in the past, during the apartheid regime, while other female races were later recognised in contrast to Africans. About the scoring criteria, the promotional circular does indeed talk of race; GDE Circular 08 of 2023 stipulated that the employment equity for the designated groups are black women, who include Indian and Coloured, which by virtue is part of the designated groups, they should be considered during shortlisting criteria scoring.

Union representative, Mr Dladla

“The criteria demand of them, but there are lots of policies associated...favours as well, woman B who is not skilled, because she is a member of the union, may be persuaded to take woman B because you’re in my union”.

Even though the scoring criteria used aimed to bring about transformation regarding gender, the participants brought in other factors. For example, Mr Dladla, as a union member, mentioned that union members may also recommend people they are in favour of. Legislation is not the problem, but the people are bypassing the system. District official Mr Dennis also mentioned SGB that they sometimes manipulate the system or have less knowledge. These are the parties responsible for the recommendation of candidates, and the HOD appoints from those recommended names that are brought forward. The legislation supports this according to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (1999) Chapter B, section 3.3 (j), which stipulates

that, after shortlisting and interviews, the governing body submits the recommended names to the educational department in order of preference.

Another factor that emerged was that although the scoring criteria are applied, males still dominate in qualifications, experience, or skills, even during interviews, as the final determination stage. Males can still perform better than females. Applying the criteria to give women preferential treatment is required. Therefore, the issues of qualifications and experience pose a challenge. Men score higher, making them suitable candidates. As discussed in the literature review, Evans, Akmal, and Jakiela (2020) mentioned that globally, women are still not equal to men in terms of education and qualifications. This poses a challenge in aiming to achieve the quota set by the department. Even though these scoring criteria may be applied to give women an advantage, other essential credibility are recognised, such as qualifications and leadership experiences. Regarding the principal position processes, Taylor (2021) asserted that the nature of these posts requires specific qualities regarding leadership and skills, and those play a vital role during shortlisting. For example, a post-level educator with managerial experience would unlikely be shortlisted for managing a school. Mr Govender, in one of his responses, confirmed that for principal posts, they put the level one educator to one side and focus on the applicants with management experience.

Another alarming factor that the participants brought up is that, sometimes, the panel have their agendas, which makes the scoring criteria ineffective; even when applied, members of the unions are mandated on whom they should recommend. As discussed in the literature, the South African education system is bureaucratic, and Ekurhuleni Primary schools should also abide by that. The government makes decisions on how schools should function, including appointing principals.

Van de Vyver, Fuller and Khumalo (2021) stated that in South African schools, leadership uses top-down leadership, where decisions made externally are more imperative. In this case, the selection committee will conduct shortlisting and interviews on how they see fit, whether for personal or political gains. According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM) (1999) Chapter B, section 3.3 (f), the interview panel should set criteria for the interviews that are fair, non-discriminatory, and need to be aligned with the constitution of the country. Even though the scoring criteria are observed, the union representative and district officials assert that there should not be hidden agendas in which union labourers and SGBs have their preferential

candidates. Ultimately, this causes the transformation the GDE has envisioned regarding gender equity.

5.3.3 SGB Involvement and Disciplinary Concerns

The last theme that emerged in answering the question about the factors responsible for the low number of principals in primary schools was mainly the SGB parent component, which had concerns about how a particular woman would handle discipline in schools if appointed. Understanding that discipline is a concern in many districts and nationwide schools, the parent components have a stronger voice because they should dominate the SGB number during selection.

District official Mr Dennis: “ *The parents’ perspective, because the parents are also the ones in majority in this meeting. The myth is that a discipline, a good disciplinarian is a male, because what is actually key in our schools?... Recently it’s about the issue of discipline, because if you don’t actually have good discipline with the school then you have lost the plot*”

This goes back to the literature discussed in Chapter Two, which is based on stereotypes in which the SGB parent components still hold the belief that males are the ones effective in disciplinary measures. Lawson, Martin, Huda and Matz (2022) found that some underrepresentation of women in management is based on stereotypes that men are associated with agentic terms, including self-assured and firmness. The shortlisting may be, according to legislation, effective where women are scored higher, as discussed in theme 2. As Stanier (2019) affirms, the hiring teams use a scoring sheet during shortlisting to ensure that candidates are scored objectively, using the agreed-upon criteria. However, during interviews, myths, judgements, and stereotypes come into play. Panel members can interpret answers differently and form pre-judgements based on how they feel about a candidate’s response—as the other district officials mentioned, interviews are not objectives like shortlisting.

District official, Mr Malomane.

“*These interviews are not necessarily objective, and they are subjective...prejudice, you prefer men over women... the SGB still has that mentality*”.

A union representative from Palm Primary School stated that regarding discipline, there is a mentality that having men in management makes the running of the school discipline effective. Even when women are in management, they focus on administrative or classroom-based tasks, while the males manage the running of schools. This relates to what was discussed in the

literature. According to Tarbutton (2019), the number of female teachers is high; however, there is a need for more leadership positions. Subsequently, as revealed by participants in lower management, such as HOD, there are numerous females, but the middle and top management still need to improve.

Union representative, Mr Dladla:

“This mentality that women cannot deal with discipline...So they need male figures in the school, more especially in the management sector... Some women downplay their own abilities, you know, you'd find that mam A, has the capabilities to deal with discipline. She has the capabilities to manage the school perfectly. However because she is surrounded by men in management, she will be easily intimidated”

Union representative, Mrs Smith:

“Most of us are still having low self-esteem...we still see ourselves as inferior to others. On the part of training, the government is still very slow. Women are not as trained as they are supposed to be.”

The above statements, concerning women having doubts regarding their capabilities in leading schools effectively and ensuring discipline, were also mentioned by a female union member, Mrs Smith, who was appointed as a gender convener in her union. However, the lack of training and development has affected her esteem because she does not know how to embark on this leadership journey.

Gender legislation in Gauteng, applicable to the Ekurhuleni district, emphasises training programmes for women in its strategies for achieving gender balance in school leadership. This will equip women to gain self-confidence as leaders and build internal strength and abilities to manage disciplinary concerns. One of the factors that a district official mentioned was that more applications need to be received from women for principal posts. Furthermore, an SGB member from Stepping the Future Laerskool stated that women are not empowered; they understand that they cannot lead schools. This involves the self-esteem mentioned by the union representative, where self-esteem becomes a barrier. This may affect how they tackle disciplines in schools. However, legislation such as Circular 09 of 2020 and the GDE Gender Equality and Women Empowerment policy aimed at developmental programmes would enable the SGB to shift myths and stereotypes that women cannot handle school discipline.

Discipline is a major school concern, making this a top priority for the SGB when interviewing principals. According to Badire and Sinthumule (2021), discipline has been one of the enormous challenges schools face, which inevitably affects the school and has implications on teacher motivation. Discipline management is crucial as a school leader, as discovered during the interviews. The concern of discipline in schools associated with principalship roles derives from the SGB's duties, which also consist of disciplinary matters.

The Guidelines for Capacity Building of School Governing Body members (2018) section 15.12 under Discipline Corporal Punishment and Bullying states that the SGB needs to ensure that there is no bullying, discipline should be effective through the formulation of code of conduct, which learners and parents should be aware of. The emphasis on discipline stems from the national education system, which is currently facing a complex challenge, and effective leaders are needed to maintain it in schools. Shaikhmag and Naidoo (2021) elaborated that discipline in South African schools has also increased in violence, which causes the poor management of teaching and learning. According to the participants' concerns, this is also a crucial issue in Ekurhuleni district, where adequate training is necessary for women to combat the existing perceptions that they cannot handle discipline.

According to the GDE Gender Equality and Women Empowerment Policy (2014), Section 10.2.6.1 (c), the department will regularly have training and developmental intervention strategies to access training and development for women. The number of applications for principal positions would increase, understanding that it was also a concern if development occurred. Furthermore, Circular 09 of 2020, section 7.5 (c) mentions that to reach 50%, women's leadership need to be involved in decision-making, and mechanisms such as leadership training, mentoring and coaching will be provided for both national and provincial programmes concerning women. If development happens, the concerns of school discipline and gender can be attended to because this still becomes a factor responsible for the inadequate representation of females in principal posts. This is the responsibility of the DBE, which will provide a positive outlook from the SGB, which holds power in the recommendation of principals, which includes females.

The Employment of Educators Act (1996) Chapter 3, section 6 (3a) describes the powers of the SGB regarding promotions and states that the promotion of educators in South African public schools can only be made by the governing body. Furthermore, Taylor (2021) states that the SGB is responsible for forming the interview committee, which includes the trade unions

and a district official, and the parental component of the SGB should be more than the educators’ representatives. This describes their effective powers, which emerged during the interviews with the candidates. It shows that if they have concerns regarding a specific complexity, in this case, discipline, they should focus on it when recommending a suitable candidate to lead the school. Through engagements with participants, the SGB would associate this with gender, which will delay the transformational processes of gender balance in leadership. The union representative, Mr Dladla, and district official, Mr Dennis, emphasised in their responses that independent panels, instead of union leaders or SGB, are imperative in running the selection processes, which would make the implementation of gender legislation more effective.

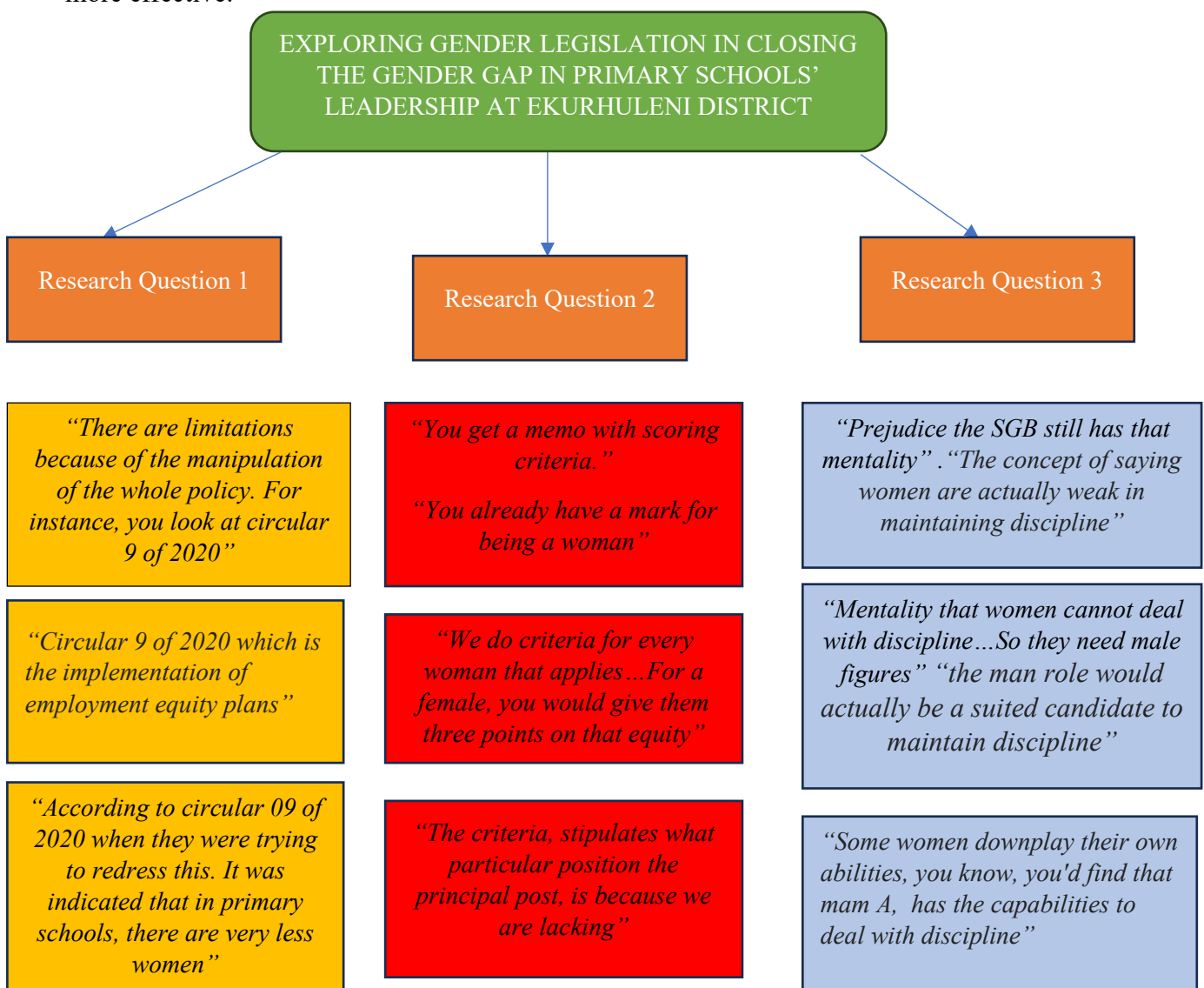


Figure 2: Thematic Analysis Mind Map

5.7 Summary

Gender legislation is effective due to the growing number of women in leadership positions. However, that is in lower management. When applying gender legislation in terms of middle and top management, that is where gender imbalances are visible. With various engagements with participants, their concerns and examples were mainly about female principals. The different personal agendas and favours from the selection panels are done for higher leadership roles.

In lower and middle management, there are other factors besides the glass ceiling factor. Furthermore, the prejudice by the SGB as the dominants in the selection panel is mainly applied to principal roles, which is top management, because this is viewed as a crucial role in leading a school. The positive attributes discussed in literature about women being nurturing as a trait needed in primary schools should be recognised. Still, only the negative qualities associated with women, such as not being strong enough to deal with discipline factors, were focused on when recommending principals to the HOD.

In the past, studies regarding women's leadership, as reviewed in the literature, were culturally based, such as women having home responsibilities and gender roles of being caregivers, which posed a challenge for them to grow in managerial spaces. However, this study discovered that women must be adequately trained or mentored as an internal personal factor and motivation. This causes fear and doubts, hindering them from applying for principal posts. They need to gain leadership experiences enabling them to reach top management, such as being principals. This is evident in various gender legislation emphasising training, development and coaching. Understanding this as a concern and key aspect is necessary in employing gender legislation.

Transformational leadership theory and emancipatory as a paradigm were effectively employed in terms of the participants responsible for transforming leadership education in Ekurhuleni. The participants' responses articulated the problems and discrepancies involved and, importantly, ways legislation can be changed to close the gender gap. This included redefining different legislations, such as the South African School Act, as a uniform system for conducting schools, including promotional posts. In essence, gender legislation does not function in isolation but is governed by different frameworks, ultimately when transforming and socially critiquing as per the emancipatory paradigm. Other legislation that has an impact on gender legislation should also be considered. This included changing the selection panel responsible for hiring principals as a factor causing the gender gap to remain visible. Ultimately,

participants stated that gender legislation implementation should be reviewed, which was asked as a final question.

Lastly, training and development are highly emphasised in gender legislation, but the *how* still raises a question. This affects the implementation process because lack of development amongst women is not effectively conducted. For instance, a participant, Mrs Smith, suggested that there should be a title post that particularly focuses on mentoring and coaching women. This would also be effective in moving away from the misconceptions the panel have regarding females when interviewing them for principal positions. It was also mentioned that roadshow programmes need to be conducted, and bursaries for women to further their studies are needed since their applications are similar to males. Therefore, solutions and feasible strategies for implementing the training and developments are required.

5.8 Recommendations

The prerequisite for any legislation is the feasibility of its implementation. The gender legislation applicable in the education sector in South Africa mainly relies on specific parties for implementation, which excludes people who are not in leadership. Through the gatherings, it is evident that the implementors manipulated and bypassed this legislation, resulting in the gender gap remaining stagnant. Therefore, the study recommends that all stakeholders in the education department should implement gender legislation in contrast to merely the selection panels, who often overlook it by imposing prejudice and self-interest agendas in leadership roles. This can include beginning in microenvironment structures like the internal structure of the school where subject heads, grade heads or any informal leadership roles begin to observe gender equality. Furthermore, implementation processes of gender legislation should be feasible by constant evaluation to identify its challenges and aim to meet educational trends that are continuously evolving. As gathered, prejudice involves women being associated with weakness in handling discipline. Therefore, training programs should be formulated on vital concerns such as disciplinary issues as a current challenge. Lastly, when reviewing gender legislation, different educational frameworks must be reviewed to form alignments and bring uniformity in the educational sector.

5.9 Recommendations for Future Studies

There is a need to focus on new strategies to improve the current implementations of gender legislation. This will require qualitative observation methods to identify areas of need

practically. Furthermore, mechanisms on how different stakeholders can have a voice in gender legislation in contrast to only certain groups of implementers. Using case studies will determine the challenges schools face in implementing gender legislation by shifting the focus from management. But to the involvement of educators who aspire to leadership roles in various ways beyond legislation that will assist in achieving gender equality.

5.10 Conclusion

The study, through the application of semi-structured interviews and analysis of gender legislation in terms of document reviews and data analysis, revealed new concepts in contrast to how the study began. These include inductive reasoning, where the research held assumptions that cultural factors, stereotypes, and inadequate opportunities from the past were the main reasons behind the gender gap. Furthermore, the concept of the glass ceiling, which was discussed in terms of leadership, was applied in a broader perspective, where, through data collection, it was discovered that school leadership is vast. Complexities found in lower management are not applicable in middle and top management. Moreover, as applicable to the study, the transformational leadership theory required the focus to also be on the selection panel as it was discovered to be a key element in implementing the gender gap legislation. Lastly, the lack of training and development, which resulted in low self-esteem, has resulted in fewer women applying for principalship posts. Therefore, gender legislation holds different complexities beyond the stipulated, which further research needs to engage to achieve the equality that schools' leadership aims to achieve.

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Appendix A: Ethical Clearance Approval



GENERAL/HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (GHREC)

17-Apr-2023

Dear Ms Joy Motloung

Application Approved

Research Project Title:

Exploring gender legislation in closing the gender gap in primary schools' leadership at Ekurhuleni district

Ethical Clearance number:

UFS-HSD2023/0008/23

We are pleased to inform you that your application for ethical clearance has been approved. Your ethical clearance is valid for twelve (12) months from the date of issue. We request that any changes that may take place during the course of your study/research project be submitted to the ethics office to ensure ethical transparency. Furthermore, you are requested to submit the final report of your study/research project to the ethics office. Should you require more time to complete this research, please apply for an extension. Thank you for submitting your proposal for ethical clearance; we wish you the best of luck and success with your research.

Yours sincerely

Dr Adri Du Plessis

Chairperson: General/Human Research Ethics Committee

Adri
Du
Plessis

Digitally
signed by
Adri Du
Plessis
Date:
2023.04.19
10:05:30
+02'00'

205 Nelson Mandela Drive P.O. Box 339
Park West Bloemfontein 9300
Bloemfontein 9301 Tel: +27 (0)51 401 9337
South Africa duplessisA@ufs.ac.za
www.ufs.ac.za



Appendix B: Title registration



30 November 2022

APPLICATION FOR TITLE REGISTRATION

Applicant: Motloung, JM

Student Number: 2012061855

Discipline: Education Management and Leadership

Study Code: Master's (EDML8900)

Dear Ms Motloung

Your registered title is as follows: "Exploring gender legislation in closing the gender gap in primary schools' leadership at Ekurhuleni district"

All of the best with your studies.

Yours sincerely,

Prof Patrick Mafora
Chair: CTR committee

Ms CS Duvenhage
Secretary: CTR committee

205 Nelson Mandela Drive | Park West, Bloemfontein 9301 | South Africa
P.O. Box 339 | Bloemfontein 9300 | South Africa | www.ufs.ac.za



Appendix C: Participants consent form



Research study information leaflet and consent form

Date of Study: 2023

Dear participant

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I Joy Mapule Motloug student number 2012061855, cell number 0714086692 hereby request you to participate Education-structured interview.

Faculty: Faculty of Education

Department: Education leadership and management

The title of my research project is: Exploring gender legislation in Closing the gender gap in Primary Schools' leadership at Ekurhuleni district.

The problem that warrants this study is exploring the gender legislation which has not been adequately effective in transforming the gender inequality in women's leadership in schools, due to the gender gap that is still visible in the 21st century. This is aimed at discovering the causes of the shortage of women leadership in schools regardless of initiatives in place. For example, the Employment Equity Act number 55 of 1998 encourages employers to take necessary steps to promote equality in workplaces including gender equality and affirmative action ensuring that qualified designated groups, which includes women address the gender gap. However, there is still a shortage of female leaders in primary schools, while there are various legislations aimed at combating this concern.

I am currently working for the Department of Education as an educator. The reason for selecting you as my participant is you form part of the interview process during the appointment of principals in schools.

The semi-structured interview is voluntary and you are not obliged to participate. This will take place at your comfortable location and the researcher is willing to come to your location of preference. There will be only one session and the interview will not take more than two hours. The information gathered will be private. To ensure confidentiality, all files will be encrypted as zipped documents. The data collected will be strictly used for my master's studies.

If you would like to be informed of the final research findings, please contact Joy Motloug on 0724086692 or email joymotloug1994@gmail.com

For any concerns, you can contact me, or my study supervisor Dr Bawinile Mthanti

Yours sincerely

Joy Motloug. Joymotloug1994@gmail.com

Dr Bawinile Mthanti. MthantiBJ@ufs4life.ac.za

Appendix D: Department of Education Gauteng approval letter



GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/21/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	29 March 2023
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2023– 30 September 2023 2023/111
Name of Researcher:	Motloung JM
Address of Researcher:	14 Tuscan Lofts 43 Van Torde Edenvale
Telephone Number:	072 408 6692
Email address:	joymotloung1994@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Exploring gender legislation in closing the gender gap in Primary Schools leadership at Ekurhuleni District
Type of qualification	Master's
Number and type of schools:	2 Primary Schools
District/s/HO	Ekurhuleni North

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below are met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1
Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

Appendix E: Turn it in the document.

30/11/2023, 22:33

Turnitin - Originality Report - JOY MAPULE MOTLOUNG M.ED THESIS.docx

<p>Turnitin Originality Report</p> <p>Processed on: 30-Nov-2023 21:02 SAST ID: 2243341482 Word Count: 44257 Submitted: 1</p> <p>JOY MAPULE MOTLOUNG M.ED THESIS.docx By Joy Motloung</p>		<p>Similarity Index</p> <p>6%</p>	<p>Similarity by Source</p> <p>Internet Sources: 6% Publications: 1% Student Papers: 1%</p>
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1/37

Appendix F: Language Editor Certificate



Brenda van Rensburg
Hugo Chandler
BA Psychology and Drama (UCT)
20 Oester Street, Struisbaai, Western Cape, 7285
Tel: +27 (0)72 244 4363
Email: info@busybeediting.co.za / brendavanrensburg2@gmail.com
Website: www.busybeediting.co.za

PROOFREADING AND EDITING CERTIFICATE

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Hugo Chandler - BA Psychology and Drama (UCT)

For Busy Bee Editing: Hugo Chandler

Brenda van Rensburg

For Busy Bee Editing: Brenda van Rensburg

Date: 10 December 2023

Appendix G: Interview Questions

Researcher: Joy Motloung

Purpose: Master's degree dissertation data collection

Type of questioning: Open-ended questions

Interview questions:

1. There has been legislation that aimed at gender equality in workplaces. How effective is the current gender legislation in promoting women into leadership roles in primary schools?
2. As you form part of the shortlisting process for principal positions, does the panel observe and apply gender legislation in the employment of school principals?
3. We still see a lack of women in managerial positions, what do you think are the factors responsible for the low number of female principals in primary schools?
4. In your view, what necessary steps should be taken to close the existing gender gap?
5. Do you think the implementation process of the current gender legislation should be reviewed?