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Contact Address:
Jasmine Mohammed
Dept. of Education, FNU - Lautoka Campus.

Permanent Address:
P.O. Box 3337, Ba.
WOMEN IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP: THE CHALLENGES FACED BY A SELECTION OF WOMEN HEAD TEACHERS IN BA, FIJI

by

Husnaeen Jasmine Hussain

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in Education

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School of Education
Faculty of Arts, Law and Education
University of the South Pacific
December, 2012
DECLARATION

I, Husnaeen Jasmine Hussain, hereby declare that this MA in Education thesis is my own work. To the best of my knowledge it does not contain any material previously published or submitted for examination. Where materials have been cited, due acknowledgement has been provided in an appropriate manner.

Husnaeen Jasmine Hussain

13/12/2012
Date
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my beloved parents, Khiefayth Hussain and Hasina Bi. It is in recognition of their eternal worth, guidance, knowledge, wisdom, love and prayers and for cherishing me throughout my life.

I also dedicate this thesis to my two daughters, Anisha and Zakiyya, for their unrelenting faith in me as I embarked on this mammoth journey of discovery and empowerment of self and other women.

Finally, my sincere gratitude to all the women teachers who have toiled hard to shatter the glass ceilings and glass walls. To those brave and brilliant women who managed to rise above the indomitable challenges in spite of being different and to the women who aspire to become educational leaders. So let your strength become the unified strength of all those who yearn for a just society and may you continue with the legacy of making a difference with the unparalleled female advantage intrinsic to you.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

"Verily, when He intends a thing, His Command is, “Be”, and it is (The Holy Quran: Chapter 36, verse 82) so His is the entire splendor.

This thesis would not have been completed without the assistance and guidance of several individuals who, in one way or the other, contributed in the preparation and completion of this study.

Foremost, I am deeply grateful to Dr Unaisi Nabobo-Baba, my former supervisor, for the inspiration, sincere encouragement and initial guidance as I embarked on this study.

It is with immense gratitude that I acknowledge the advice and support of my current supervisor, Dr Akanisi Kedrayate. I am deeply indebted to you for your persistence and patience in eloquently steering me through the various phases of my study to its culmination, despite your heavy schedule. Your valuable insights, deep knowledge and discourse has indeed, been a beacon of strength and empowerment for me.

This thesis would have remained a dream had it not been for the generous sponsorship of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAid), for which I am eternally grateful. I am also deeply indebted to my employer, the Ministry of Education, in particular, the former Permanent Secretary for Education, Mr Filipe Jitoko and the current one, Dr Brij Lal for awarding me study leave with pay (Year One) as well as further accommodating my request for extensions. In addition, I owe my sincere gratitude to the Research Development Unit for granting approval to execute the research in selected schools and related departments. I also express my deep gratitude to Dr Brij Lal, for consenting to the gender mainstreaming appraisal workshop. In addition, his brief presence at the workshop and special address to the participants is indicating his support to gender equality and leadership.
I am indebted to the research participants, the five women head teachers of Ba, for providing deep and valuable insights upon which this study is premised.

To the Principal Education Officer, Mr Kamlesh Chand Sharma, the Education Officers and ancillary staff of Ba Education District office, my sincere gratitude for your timely assistance and unwavering support in making available the required data and necessary official documents and circulars. I would also like to record my appreciation for the collaboration and successful implementation of the gender mainstreaming appraisal workshop with the Ba Education District Office.

The staff of the Dean’s Office, in particular, Ulina, for relaying every communication sent on my behalf to my supervisor and arranging for the essential supervisory schedules. To Anilesh, for his support in and the electronic submission of the thesis. In addition, I am utmost grateful to the staff of the Regional Scholarship Team (ReST), in particular, Ms.Tupou Chew, for her unrelenting support, empathy and assistance as I hurdled through all the obstacles from day one through to the final submission of the thesis.

My friends Hamida, Nazleen and Santi, I am deeply grateful for your steadfast encouragement and support.

Last, but not least, I am deeply grateful to my husband, Intaj Mohammed and our daughters, Anisha and Zakiyya, for continuing to accommodate the demands of my studies.

Jaza-Ka-Allah Khair (May Allah grant you goodness)!
ABSTRACT

This thesis is the first attempt to document and analyze the challenges encountered by selected women head teachers in primary schools in Fiji. It also examined gender mainstreaming as a roadmap to achieving gender equity in educational leadership.

Utilizing the phenomenological approach, this study seeks to understand why women are underrepresented in primary school leadership. It is underpinned by the interpretive and feminist paradigms. At the crux of this study are five women head teachers from Ba, the Western province of Fiji. Data collection methods involved semi-structured in-depth interviews and a participatory learning and appraisal workshop.

The important findings of this phenomenological study are outlined.

- The pervasive entrenched culture of patriarchy operates in various ways such as androcentrism, gender and sex stereotypes, sex discrimination and old boy networks at different levels of school organization, management and leadership which cause impediments to women’s advancement to school leadership.

- Women accord school leadership a kaleidoscope of unparalleled female advantages which include the feminine communal attributes, soft skills, high emotional competence, collaborative and democratic leadership styles and a strong focus on improving instruction and learning.

- The absence of constructive institutional support to advance and facilitate women teachers to school leadership.

- Gender mainstreaming has a transformative agenda and submits an elaborate roadmap for achieving equity in educational leadership. Therefore, there is a need for a gender mainstreaming policy at the Ministry of Education.
Based on these findings, the study concludes with important implications for policy and practice and recommendations for further research which include:

- Large-scale phenomenological studies/feminist research on women head teachers in the country to gather deeper insights of the challenges they encounter.

- Comparative studies to identify the commonalities and differences in the experiences and worldviews of women educational leaders from different ethnic groups, geographical locations and leadership contexts such as the secondary schools, higher education, school management committees and education boards.
# ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AusAid</td>
<td>Australian Agency for International Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPFA</td>
<td>Beijing Platform for Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention on the Elimination for All Discrimination against Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESRI</td>
<td>External School Report Inspection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESSDP</td>
<td>Education Sector Strategic Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiji EFA MDA</td>
<td>Fiji Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFPs</td>
<td>Gender Focal Points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMCW</td>
<td>Inter-Ministerial Committee on Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoW</td>
<td>Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MQR</td>
<td>Minimum Qualification Requirement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWAC</td>
<td>National Women’s Advisory Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSC</td>
<td>Public Service Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PDU</td>
<td>Professional Development Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLA</td>
<td>Participatory Learning and Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPU</td>
<td>Post Processing Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDSSD</td>
<td>Roadmap for Democracy and Socio-Economic Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNDP GES</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme for Gender Equality Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USP</td>
<td>University of the South Pacific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNECOSOC</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WPA</td>
<td>Women’s Plan for Action</td>
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<th>Term</th>
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<tr>
<td>Empowerment</td>
<td>refers to the process by which people take control and action in order to overcome obstacles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality of Opportunity</td>
<td>everybody has an equal opportunity, especially for equal access. Equality of opportunity for women would mean an end to all gender discrimination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>is the fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and boys and girls, as well as the relations between women and between men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Analysis</td>
<td>close examination of problems/situation in order to identify gender issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Awareness</td>
<td>the extra ability to identify and understand hidden issues relating to gender, arising from gender inequality and discrimination. It involves a more analytical, critical and more questioning stance of gender disparities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Discrimination</td>
<td>is giving differential treatment to individuals on the grounds of their gender.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Division of Labor</td>
<td>social pattern where women are allotted one set of roles and men another set.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Equity</td>
<td>is equality between men and women in the quality of life, academic and work outcomes valued by our society without limitations associated with gender, stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices. Also refers to the fairness of treatment for women and men according to their respective needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Equality</td>
<td>means there is no discrimination on grounds of a person’s sex in the allocation of resources or benefits or in access to services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Issues</td>
<td>arise where an instance of gender inequality is recognized as undesirable or unjust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Mainstreaming</td>
<td>process of assessing the implications for men and women of any planned action, legislation, policies and programmes in all economical, political and societal spheres and at all levels so that men and women benefit and inequality is not perpetuated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Planning</td>
<td>means taking account of gender issues in planning. In development planning, it means recognizing gender issues in the identification of the problem and addressing it developmental objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Roles</td>
<td>are roles within which are classified by sex, where this classification is social and not biological. For example, if child-rearing is classified as a female role, it is a female gender role,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
not a female sex role because child-rearing can be done by men or women.

**Gender Role Stereotyping** is the constant portrayal of women and men occupying social roles according to the traditional gender division of labor in a particular society.

**Gender Sensitivity** is the ability to recognize gender issues, and especially the ability to recognize women’s different perceptions and interests arising from their different social location and their different gender roles. Gender sensitivity is the beginning of gender awareness.

**Gender Training** means providing people with formal learning experiences in order to increase their gender awareness.

**Patriarchy** is the male domination of ownership and control, at all levels in society and operates the system of gender discrimination.

**Sex Roles** refer to an occupation or biological function for which a necessary qualification is to belong to one particular sex category. For example, pregnancy is a female sex role because only members of the female may bear children.

**Structural Gender Inequality** exists where a system of gender discrimination is practiced by public or social institutions. It is more entrenched if it is maintained by administrative rules and laws, rather than by customs and traditions.
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INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Women teachers in primary schools, although significant in numbers have long been neglected in terms of promotion and leadership status. Official data sourced from the Fiji Education for All Mid-Decade Report (2007) indicates that there were only 17.6% female headteachers in the year 2006.

It is an observable fact that women represent the most productive members of society that boost a nation’s economy. They are considered the “producers and consumers in an increasingly feminized “postmodern” workplace” (Blackmore, 2002, p.50). However, women do not permeate the high echelons of leadership status in society. Their advancement into leadership positions is slow. Hence, women are grossly underrepresented in leadership in various sections in the society.

It is important to note that the underrepresentation of women is a global phenomenon. Despite the fact that there is evidence and much publicity in the twenty first century about feminized leadership styles (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Shakeshaft et. al., 2007), leadership positions are apparently inaccessible to most women, particularly in developing nations. One could assume that the female group which makes up half of the population (United Nations Millennium Project 2005) has been overtly ignored and/or thwarted from accessing leadership positions.

It is a notable fact that when a few of the brave and strong women permeate into the hegemony of male leadership, they are viewed with scepticism. Strong women are often conceived to be dangerous and difficult because they are different. Presumably, the difference is what is feared most because it challenges masculine practices. Therefore, women are increasingly regarded as pariahs to the hegemonic male territory. This means
that generally, they are treated as social outcasts even to the extent of being *ridiculed*, largely by male counterparts.

On the other hand, one also cannot ignore the fact that most societies are deeply entrenched in hegemonic masculine practices. Therefore, it is not surprising that historically, leadership has been considered a male privilege. Similarly, educational management and institutions are predominantly led by the males (Tavola, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Oplatka & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2006; Shakeshaft, Brown, Irby, Grogan & Ballenger, 2007; Coleman & Fitzgerald, 2008). It is therefore worthwhile to draw one’s attention to the pedagogy of teaching and leadership. Ironically, the pedagogy of teaching has been conceived the work of women while the pedagogy of leadership is considered the male domain (Fitzgerald, 2003). One could argue that this in itself is problematic because the pool of talent that women bring to leadership is left uncharted and women continue to remain saturated in the shadows of society.

People often draw upon gendered assumptions to explain the underrepresentation of women in educational leadership. For instance, it is assumed that women teachers are not interested in running schools; that they are complacent in teaching and do not have leadership attributes or *what it takes to be a leader*. By far, the most popular assumption is that *the hand that scours the pot cannot run the school*. Perhaps these assumptions are more pronounced in primary schools. It is important to mention here that women use different perceptual lens to internalize things. Hence, women’s ways of doing things are increasingly regarded inferior by men who presume that they are the sole custodians of what is right and superior. It is sufficient to say that because women function differently it should not imply inferiority.

Nonetheless, a small percentage of women have managed to gently shatter the metaphorical glass ceilings (Brunner, 1999) by being bold enough to permeate into school leadership. While this is encouraging, it appears that the advancement of women into school leadership in Fiji is *snail-paced*. Hence, this explicates the need for elaborate studies on the experiences of women (leaders) in education.
It is worth mentioning that drawing upon the experiences of women teachers will unearth the harsh realities of women in Fiji. This will provide comparable data unique to their contexts and elucidate how gender inequalities are created and structured within school administrations. In addition, it will offer the evidence for the formulation of appropriate policy. Then women teachers in Fiji can be strategically positioned for a proportionate representation in educational leadership.

The term Head teacher in the Fiji context refers to a primary school leader. While it is likely that the findings may resonate with some male teacher experiences, the focus of this study is on women. It is also to be noted that the terms school leadership and educational leadership have been used interchangeably in this study.

**The Aims of this Study**

This study aims to explore the challenges faced by a selection of women head teachers in Ba, the Western province of Fiji. It also proposes to examine gender mainstreaming as a roadmap to achieving gender equity in educational leadership. The general aim is delineated into two distinct yet interrelated purposes.

First, it is to explore the challenges women head teachers encounter and give voice to certain long-standing issues pertaining to and emerging from them. For long, pertinent issues concerning women have been ignored and treated as non-issue. It is envisaged that by employing a feminist perspective insights that allow appreciation of women teacher’s struggles and limitations will be developed. This study is not merely a hearing exercise, but listening for a higher purpose, that is, interpreting and attempting to improve conditions affecting women. It hopes to verify the validity of assumptions and claims within real-world contexts. Hence, the findings will be useful in abating preconceived notions of women’s underrepresentation in school leadership. It is further hoped that the findings will evoke empathy towards women’s issues and engender
strategies to eliminate inequity. It is suffice to argue here that the prerequisite to any development is women’s equality.

Second, it examines a roadmap for achieving gender equity in educational leadership. It is intended that the findings of the study will foster greater political will and compel the Ministries of Education in Fiji as well as the Pacific Island Nations to be more proactive in eliminating inequities in leadership by capitalizing on gender mainstreaming. In Fiji, gender has often been ignored as a key issue (Tavola, 2000), although commitment to gender equity is articulated in the government’s Strategic Development Plan 2007-2011. One needs to contemplate the future and embark on a legacy that safeguards the interests of the future generation of girls and women.

The Objectives

Three main objectives underpinning this study are to:

- examine challenges faced by women leaders in Primary schools in Fiji.
- discuss reasons for promoting more women teachers into educational leadership, and
- propose gender mainstreaming as a roadmap to achieving gender equality in educational leadership.

It is important to mention that gender shape research agendas. This includes choice of topic and foci, data collection methods and relationships between the researcher and the researched (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Because this study involved a woman researcher who engaged with women and issues affecting them, this study is grounded in feminist research. In using a female lens to view educational leadership the researcher is deviating from the norm. However, it is important to note that she will be providing a fresh perspective. It is also essential to pinpoint that even though feminist research is “legitimate, relevant and popular” (Crotty, 1998, p. 54), it is often regarded with cynicism; especially in societies entrenched in patriarchy. Therefore, it is exceedingly important to outline the theoretical framework, the underlying philosophies and the
guiding principles of this study at the outset. This will dispel any mythical notions and/or predispositions that may cloud the significance of the findings of this study.

**The Theoretical Framework**

This study is underpinned by feminist theories. The underlying assumption of feminist theories begins with gender as a pervasive category for understanding human experiences. Hence, it has generated new theoretical perspectives by deconstructing the dominant and reconstructing new possibilities. Feminist scholarship generally defines feminism as a generic label for a perspective or group of theories that explores the meaning of gender concepts. However, Weedon (1987) argues that feminism is both a range of theories and a politics that is directed at transforming power relations between men and women in society.

Feminist theories emerged in the 1960s and have represented the interests of women and women’s unequal position in society (Weedon, 1987; Grant and Giddings, 2002; Cohen et al., 2007). Recent feminist theories such as the radical feminist, the socialist feminist and the psychoanalytic feminist theories have emerged as a result of critique of patriarchal values and interests. The nature and social role of women are defined in relation to male norm. Therefore, qualities such as patience, emotion and self-sacrifice are equated with femininity. These define women’s access or the lack of, to the labour market and public life (Weedon, 1987). Withstanding these, feminist critique aims to expose the powers, as well as the limits of gendered divisions. Their implicit aims are to contribute to ending women’s subjugation. Conversely, feminist theorists argue that analysis of women’s experiences from the male theoretical standpoint furthers women’s oppression.

Given these, feminist theorists further argue that theoretical perspectives should not deny subjective experience if they are to be politically useful to feminists. According to feminism, theories should encompass differences in subjectivity. Subjectivity in ascribing meaning to women’s lived experiences is important because it provides a
starting point for understanding how patriarchy structures society (Weedon, 1987). It is suffice to mention that emotions are integral to research because it is central to human life.

Amidst mixed reactions, controversy and misconceptions, feminist research is gathering support. This is because it is underpinned by principles which include research to empower women and implicates the need for collective, qualitative, reflective and introspective biographical research methods. Another reason for its growing support is its commitment to unearthing core processes and recurrent characteristics of women’s subjugation (Cohen et al., 2007).

**The Underlying Philosophies**

Philosophies of feminist research underpin this study. Feminist research elicits knowledge by making women visible, placing emphasis on women’s experiences and representing women’s perspectives. It is significant to note that knowledge educed from feminist research is not for its own sake but rather, explicitly dedicated to bringing about change and improvement in the conditions of women. Basically, feminist research is *on* women *by* women and *for* women (Weedon, 1987; Crotty, 1998; Kirsch, 1999; Letherby, 2003).

Feminist research emanates from the assumptions that:

- the powerful dominate social life and ideology
- research is owned by the powerful (men) at the expense of women
- men and women differ in their perceptions of life due to their social status.

(Crotty, 1998, p. 55)

Therefore, feminist research adopts a critical and an emancipatory stance. This means that while it documents aspects of reality, it also takes a personal, political and engaging
standpoint. Feminist research acknowledges the persistent influence of gender as a category of analysis and organization (Cohen et al., 2007) thus exploring contexts and reasons as to why women experience what they experience. It studies social conditions of women in a sexist, ‘male stream’ (Stanley & Wise, 1983, cited in Crotty, 1998, p.54) and patriarchal society. Hence, this study expounds the reasons for inequalities between men and women and related reasons for subordination of women. In doing so, it seeks to enlighten people about taken-for-granted sexist practices and gender blindness of policies and community practices.

Furthermore, feminist worldviews suggest that the world can and should be understood in a variety of productive ways; in the ways that are distinct from the masculine ways of knowing. It acknowledges different realities that exist for different individuals and argues they are essentially valid. Given this, feminist research recognizes the need and calls for an emancipatory commitment to knowledge stemming from a feminist perspective.

Sexist practices and gender blindness have displaced, ignored and silenced women. Women have often been treated as “others” (Kirsch, 1999, p. 10) and have even been blamed for causing trouble. For these reasons, an unequal and discriminating social order has been created. In keeping with the tradition of feminist research, this study is committed to improving the status of women by “understanding why”(Weedon, 1987: 8) women’s realities are different from males in terms of educational leadership and identifying gender mainstreaming as a strategy for eliminating inequities.

**The Guiding Principles:**

Three main principles of feminist research which guided this study are:

- recognition that women are subjugated, and that the reasons for subjugation need to be examined so that action can be taken and changes made;
- valuing of women’s experiences and
The following research questions guided this study:

1. How do female head teachers in Fiji perceive educational leadership?
2. What challenges do women teachers encounter when advancing to Primary school leadership in Fiji?
3. What are the factors that support the advancement of women into educational leadership in Fiji?
4. What are the advantages of promoting more women teachers into educational leadership?
5. What are some ways in which we can achieve gender equality in educational leadership?

The Research Questions

Scope of the Study

This study focused on five female head teachers in Ba in the Western province of Fiji. The district of Ba was selected as focus because the researcher was familiar with the geographical location and the leadership context. All except one taught and resided within the vicinity of two to twelve kilometers from Ba town. One participant was from a remote rural school. The study was logistically and financially viable. Fieldwork was conducted from the nineteenth of October, 2010 to the eleventh of January 2011.
Significance of the Study

Review of literature shows women in educational leadership are underrepresented and understudied. Research on leadership in the past has been premised on male perspectives, theories and interpretations or has explored other gender/women issues.

This study has great significance for the following reasons:

- This thesis is the first attempt to document and analyze the challenges women Head teachers in primary schools of Fiji encounter. Hence it will fill the void in the available literature on educational leadership in one of the Third World countries and in particular, the Pacific region.
- Headteachership is a respected, highly-contested and often a political leadership position in Fiji. It is assumed the privilege of the male population. The study of individual female educational leaders will provide a female-centered perspective on leadership.
- It will also provide an important context for increasing understanding of these women and their experiences. This will enable us to better interpret the role of women in leadership positions.
- There is also a need to study women in educational leadership in order to foster a better sense of what we know and what we think we know about women’s leadership opportunities and experiences. Imperatively, there is a profound need to explore ways to expand women’s roles and responsibilities in the pursuit of public interests.
- This study will also inform the Ministries of Education in Fiji as well as the Pacific Island Regions on the challenges women teachers encounter in order to advance to leadership positions.
- The findings can possibly culminate in the legacy of a significant breakthrough in policy and practice.
- It is envisaged that this study will illuminate long-standing issues pertaining to and emerging from the female head teachers. Thus it will encourage gender
equity in educational management and enhance performance of both aspiring and current women leaders.

- It is further envisaged that this study will add to the knowledge base of leadership.

**Methodological Issues**

The overall research methodology detailing data collection methods is explained in Chapter four. This study utilized the phenomenological approach underpinned by the interpretive and the feminist paradigms. This approach was utilized for two reasons. The first was to interpret and raise consciousness of the lived experiences of women head teachers. Secondly, it was intended to provide a pathway to eliminate future inequalities in educational leadership. The participants were purposefully selected to extricate relevant data. Therefore, they represented those that directly experienced the phenomena under study.

Data collection methods involved in-depth interviews of five female head teachers in Ba, supplementary resources and a participatory learning and appraisal workshop. The workshop addressed the two major themes of this study which included the challenges faced by women head teachers and the appraisal of gender mainstreaming as a roadmap for enhancing equity in educational leadership. However, the major part of the research drew up on the experiences and perceptions of the five female head teachers from Ba.

The study has unveiled the pervasive entrenched culture of patriarchy as the most formidable barrier to women’s advancement into school leadership positions in Ba. The various manifestations of patriarchy perpetuated the metaphorical glass ceiling effect and impeded the women’s advancement. The metaphorical glass ceiling effect was perpetuated by the culture of patriarchy at different levels of school organization, management and leadership. These included androcentrism, sex and gender stereotypes, sex discrimination and old boys’ networks. However, it is important to mention that in the diverse postcolonial context, Fijian women are confronted with multiple oppressions such as culture, violence, divorce and separation, “vulnerability of the coup cycle
phenomenon, social and economic class, poverty, religious rightism and race” (Jalal, 2002, p. 2).

**Limitations of the Study**

The major challenge of this study was the potential bias of the researcher which could have influenced data collection and analyses. Hence, the researcher engaged in critical self-reflexivity in order to optimize the elimination of biasness. This required the researcher to maintain impartiality by bracketing personal experiences, prejudices and assumptions prior to and during the study in a self-reflective journal.

It is important to note that this study was primarily based on five female head teachers in Ba, the Western division of Fiji. Hence, the selected sample is considerably small and limited by the geographical location of the study. As such, the voices and perspectives in the study are not generalizable to the experiences of all the female head teachers in Fiji. In addition, only those who consented to participate informed the study, thus limiting the voice and perceptions of many others who could have contributed. However, the representations capture the essential themes which may perhaps be applicable to other contexts. It may also raise further questions concerning differences between women’s experiences within and across a diversity of contexts.

In addition, while it was unintentional, the voices and perceptions of the Fijian female head teachers of Indian descent dominated the study. This was because at the time of the study only eighteen percent of head teachers in Ba were females with Fijian female head teachers of Indian descent dominating headteachership. Hence, the sample selection was restricted to a ratio of four Fijians of Indian descent to one indigenous Fijian. As a result, great care was taken to include the voices of the Fijian indigenous women head teachers in the supplementary resources from the neighbouring district. This was done in order to identify the common themes emerging from the interviews of all the Fijian indigenous women head teachers. It is also important to note that the confounding factors such as age, social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and physical abilities which are often
discussed in terms of gender are neither highlighted in the general literature nor in the findings.

Furthermore, it is essential to note that majority of the fieldwork was conducted in the third school term, from the nineteenth of October 2010 and it extended over the Christmas vacation to the eleventh of January 2011. Essentially, the third term was a hive of school activities ranging from sports, Annual examination, Awards Giving Day, the External School Report Inspection (ESRI) visits by the District Office and the newly introduced Class Based Assessment and related workshops. In addition to being full time class room teachers, these women were heavily engaged in finalizing their Annual Plans 2011 for submission to the district office.

Given these, it was quite evident that they were continuously pressed for time with new professional demands surfacing every now and then. Therefore, the schedule for in-depth interviews had to be postponed two weeks after the initial negotiation and was re-scheduled time and again. Assuming that this had some impact on the mindset of interviewees, it is possible that it could have impacted on the scope and intensity of their responses. Nonetheless, all care was taken to elicit the desired response and data.

Finally, one major participant withdrew just a day before her scheduled interview. She cited workload and heavy personal commitments as the major reasons for withdrawing. A substitute was identified and included in the study.

**Organization of Thesis**

This thesis is organized into seven chapters. This Chapter has presented an overview of the study outlining the research questions, methodological approach, the theoretical underpinnings and major findings emanating from the study of the five selected female head teachers. Chapter Two sets the context of the study which is educational leadership. The third chapter presents a review of the relevant literature that describes theoretical perspectives and previous research findings. Chapter Four outlines the methodological approach employed for the study; Chapter Five submits field data while Chapter Six
submits discussion of findings with reference to relevant literature. The Seventh and final chapter discusses implications of research findings on policy and practice and for further research. It also provides a summary of findings based on the research questions.
CHAPTER TWO
BACKGROUND

Educational Leadership in Fiji:

According to the Fiji Education for All Mid-Decade Report (2007) there were only 17.6% female head teachers in 2006. There were an even lower proportion of secondary school female principals standing at 14.6% (see Table 3). In spite of the fact that in Fiji, teaching is a feminized profession (see Table 1 below), educational leadership opportunities are highly gendered. The gender composition of teachers and the disparities are further illustrated in the following tables:

Table 1 reports the gender composition of the teaching workforce in Fiji for the period 2005-2008. It shows that in Primary schools, female teachers have, like always, outnumbered the male teachers in the recent past years. Comparatively, a similar trend is noted in secondary schools. Recent data emanating from the Millennium Development Goals Second Report (1990-2009) and the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation, illustrate that women constituted 53.8% of the total teaching workforce in 2008. Thus, these reports further validate that teaching in Fiji continues to remain feminized.
Table 2 submits gender composition at the higher echelons of the administrative cadre of the Ministry of Education (MOE) for the year 2006. Comparably, females are outnumbered by males in all administrative positions except in that of education officers. The underrepresentation of women is more pronounced at the higher levels of planning and decision making in policy issues at the MOE.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>% FEMALES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Education Officers</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Education Officers</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>38.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Officers</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>109</strong></td>
<td><strong>62</strong></td>
<td><strong>47</strong></td>
<td><strong>43.1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MOE, Fiji (cited in the Fiji EFA MDA Report 2007)

Table 3 Educational Leadership and Management Composition by Gender as a percentage of the total, 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIMARY</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>17.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>99.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>90.7</strong></td>
<td><strong>9.3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECONDARY</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>91.5</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>88.4</strong></td>
<td><strong>12.6</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: SIMS, MOE, Fiji (cited in the EFA MDA Report 2007)
Table 3 illustrates that women are grossly underrepresented in both the primary and secondary school leadership and management. Men continue to reign as decision-makers and custodians of influential positions in education.

Tavola (2000) contends that in Fiji, gender is used as a justification for blocking women’s promotion to leadership and management in education. Hence, school leadership is construed as the male domain. It is also appropriate to mention that underrepresentation of women in school leadership and management in Fiji is pervasive. This is alarming since teaching in Fiji is a feminized profession. Arguably, men and women undergo the same teacher preparatory institutions and curriculum and are exposed to similar teaching, learning and school cultures in terms of the broader education context. However, when it comes to school leadership, males hold the reigns.

It is worthwhile to note that teaching experiences are now complemented with the leadership and management capacity building (since 2004) by the MOE. In efforts to sustain capacity building and intervention initiatives, the MOE established the Professional Development Unit (PDU) which took full ownership of school leadership development in 2008. The PDU identified five development areas: leadership, teaching, professional administrators, clerical administrators, and committees. Henceforth, two major strands of leadership development, the Current and Future Leaders, evolved. While it could be argued that the establishment of PDU is as recent as the mid-2007 and like any new initiative it may have had teething problems, one cannot ignore the fact that the ultimate purpose of PDU is also to provide continuing professional development to future educational leaders.

Given this, the existing criterion for the selection of future leaders is questionable. This is because data from PDU indicates a blatant gender disparity in the selection and development of future leaders. According to the MOE Annual Report (2008), a meager 24% of females participated in the school leadership development program in 2008 (see Table 4). It is arguable that if a similar trend is sustained it will reproduce similar discrepancies. Therefore, it is only prudent that gender should take precedence in leadership development and implementation programs.
Table 4 reports participation of educational leaders and school managers for leadership workshops held in all education districts in 2008 which included both the Current Leaders and the Future Leaders strand. Comparatively, only 24% of the women participated in the workshops, illustrating inequitable representation of women.

It must be noted that these Leadership and Management Workshops were implemented in two phases; Phase 2: School Improvement and Planning and Phase 3: Change Management and Planning. A further total of seventy nine (79) workshops were administered in the same year.

Table 5 submits comparative data on the professional development of current and future leaders conducted by the PDU for the years 2007 and 2008. It is important to pinpoint that there has been a slight decline in female representation from 45% to 41% in the year 2008. However, according to the MOE Annual Report (2008), there were one hundred and sixty six (166) workshops conducted in 2007 compared to 2008 which saw an increase to two hundred and sixty four (264). Unfortunately, females have yet again been underrepresented in these milestone initiatives of the MOE.
Assuming that nothing substantial can be done to foster gender equity among the prevailing cohort of school leaders; PDU seriously needs to contemplate a gender equitable selection of future leaders. It is important to mention that this explicates urgent need for gender disaggregated data at all levels of school leadership. Data can thus be utilized to make informed and gender equitable selection for the professional development of future leaders. Hence, a pool of future female leaders in the Education sector can be generated.

It is worth mentioning that the MOE gives priority to leadership development. However, it appears that the advancement and development of women is not prioritized. A cursory analysis of the Education Sector Strategic Development Plan (ESSDP, 2009-2011, p.28) reveals only a single reference to increase the proportion of female school principals, vice and assistant principals to be not less than 25%. It is essential to mention this single reference totally excludes women in the primary schools and higher echelons of leadership.

Furthermore, while the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women is a targeted outcome in the MOE Annual Corporate Plan (2010, p. 11), it appears efforts to achieve and sustain gender equality lack political will and budgetary/resource allocation to foster significant impact. In addition, while the achievement of gender equality in schools is clearly articulated by indicating the quota 1:1 for boys and girls, it fails to articulate the same for men and women in leadership. Arguably, gender equity in school enrolment does not guarantee gender equity in the workforce.

Given this and taking into account pervasive trends of underrepresentation, it could be argued that strategic planning and equitable budgetary/resource allocations are needed to alleviate the disproportionate representation of women in leadership positions. As Fondas (1997) posits, women increasingly possess “people-oriented or soft skills” (p.271) which embody the panacea for leadership dilemmas in the twenty first century.
Furthermore, one cannot ignore that most schools thrive on subservient, backstage efforts of female educators. Their efforts do not translate into higher levels of decision-making and empowerment, remuneration and recognition. One could argue that gender is used as a justification for blocking women’s promotion in the teaching profession. It is a paradox that while teaching is a feminized profession, women are grossly underrepresented in educational leadership. It is also important to note that the Millennium Development Goal three (MDG 3) has been in existence for the past decade, explicitly espousing gender equality and empowerment of women. However, statistics in all sectors of development continue revealing gross underrepresentation of women.

It is unfortunate that while Fiji has succeeded in achieving gender equality in primary and secondary school enrolments, gender disparities in educational leadership are pervasive. This calls for the provision of more sustainable gender sensitive and equitable opportunities. Strategic efforts are needed to fully realize gender equality in education leadership and management. Gender mainstreaming has globally been identified as a roadmap for achieving gender equity. This will be discussed in the latter part of the literature review.

Nonetheless, a few women have managed to reach higher echelons of educational leadership. However, this does not mean gender equity in educational leadership. One must be cautious of generalizations because it creates an illusion that conceals the magnitude of disparity. As such, any efforts to achieve equity will either take a backseat or eventually evaporate.

Finally, it is particularly encouraging that at this stage of the research, a cabinet endorsement has made it mandatory for the incorporation of sex disaggregated data into all government policies and documents. Collection of sex disaggregated data was perceived a necessity for mainstreaming a gender perspective in design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes. It is worthwhile to note that this initiative emanates from the government’s commitment to the Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development 2009-2014 (PSC Circular No. 44/2010)
The School Management

Schools in Fiji are predominantly run by school managements. The ownership and management of about 98% of schools are with the non-government organizations affiliated to the different cultural, ethnic and religious denominations in Fiji. Notably, the school management committee is an extremely important stakeholder in school leadership and management. However, the majority of school management committees have predominant male membership and leadership. It is also essential to mention here that it is the school management that has the final prerogative in the appointment of head teachers.

The conspicuous absence of women in school management committees is a matter of grave concern. According to the Fiji Education for All Mid-Decade Report (2007), a considerably lower proportion of women participated in school management with 8.5% in the secondary sector and only 1% in the primary school management for the year 2006 (see Table 3, p. 15). Presumably, women are deterred from membership because of the male predominance and the hegemony of masculine practices.

Hence, it is important to draw one’s attention to the crippling effects of the absence of women in school management boards. It could be assumed that the absence of women in school management boards and committees perpetuates factors that impede women’s advancement to school leadership. This is likely to happen in three distinct ways. Firstly, the absence of women perpetuates lack of appropriate role models. Secondly, it perpetuates lack of female voice and perspectives. Thirdly, assuming that male-dominated management only promote males who closely resemble their leadership attributes and styles, one could argue that absence of women from management committees further exacerbates the underrepresentation of women in school leadership. In retrospect, leadership has historically and traditionally been male prerogative. Therefore, men continue to promote men in the unthinking belief that men are natural heirs of leadership.
It is worthwhile to mention that the lack of appropriate role models, female voice and perspectives and women in school leadership and management reproduce myths and misconceptions regarding women and leadership. They continually diminish women’s leadership potentials and values. Hence, leadership continues to be construed as a male domain.

Given these, it is worthwhile to mention that women’s inclusion on school boards and committees would also necessitate gender sensitization and gradually transform hegemonic masculine committees to a more feminized, gender-friendly representation. In addition, the presence of women in influential positions within management committees and education boards would solicit greater support and understanding for their gender.

**Recruitment and Promotion Policy**

The general recruitment and promotions policy for all public servants is detailed in Section 9 of the State Services Decree (No.6 / 2009) which states that the Fiji Public service is an equal-opportunity employer and vacancies are open to all citizens of Fiji. Appointments and promotions are to be made on the principles of merit and equal opportunity. The standard criteria for stipulating merit is articulated in the Minimum Qualification Requirement (MQR). This articulates essential attributes such as work-related skills and abilities, qualifications, training, competence and standard of work performance. Attributes such as capacity to perform at the required level, demonstrated potential for further development and ability to contribute to team performance are also specified.

It is to be noted that primary schools in Fiji are graded according to enrolment numbers of students. For instance, the smallest primary school in Fiji, that is, 6D grade school, would have student enrolments ranging from ten (10) to one hundred and thirty five (135). Considering the leadership context of this study, that is, the primary school, it is
important to mention that in order to advance to school leadership in the smallest primary school of 6D grades, the MQR generally stipulates:

- The qualifications for the teacher in ED8 grade and at least one year superior assessment in the ED6A grade or eight (8) years in ED8 (ED6A refers to the grade of an Assistant Head teacher in the higher 5E grade school).
- Three years rural service or superior assessment in the previous three years.
- Proven administrative ability and management skills.
- For a Special Education post, a relevant tertiary qualification from a recognized institution.

Similarly, in order to advance to leadership in larger schools teachers must be either confirmed or have a provisional appointment in a smaller school grade.

Promotions to school leadership have been exclusively determined by the seniority of teachers in terms of teaching experience. However, this has worked predominantly to the advantage of males. This is because most senior women have scarcely managed to venture past the pedagogy of teaching.

It also appears there have some degree of overt, direct and/or indirect discrimination (see Figure 2, Chapter 3 under the section *Sex Discrimination*) against women during provisional promotions. More men than women have been advantageously positioned during provisional appointments. This draws attention to the equal opportunity legislation. While the MOE asserts to be an equal opportunity employer, one cannot ignore the blatant gender discrepancies. The extent to which the equal opportunity legislation translates into practice is questionable. Arguably, equal opportunity legislations are “necessary but not sufficient conditions for gender equity” (Blackmore, 1999, as cited in Coleman, 2002, p. 159).

It could further be argued that an equal opportunity employer follows the principles of equal opportunity in its regards to hiring and promoting procedures. This means that
everyone has an equal opportunity to be recruited or advance to higher levels because there is no sex, gender or racial discrimination. However, the equal opportunity legislation fails to impress when provisional appointments are made at the district levels. This is because women have been deprived of the equal opportunity to advance to provisional positions.

Hence, many women have been denied the opportunity to acquire relevant administrative ability and management experience which is an important prerequisite for advancement. In addition, it appears that some equally or even more qualified women have been not been considered for provisional appointments because their qualifications and potentials have been trivialized. As a result, women are not productively channeled for promotions.

Therefore, assuming elimination of women at the provisional promotional stage is one of the stumbling blocks to women’s advancement, it is imperative that all provisional appointments adhere to principles of equal opportunity employer. This will eliminate the need to swap teachers or engage in sideways transfers which mostly work to the advantage of male teachers.

The recruitment and promotions policy states all appointments made by the PSC should follow an open, competitive selection process. In addition to these, it states the relative suitability of candidates should be assessed after an interview or an alternative competitive selection process. However, it must be noted candidates for school leadership are not interviewed to determine suitability. One could only assume that they undergo a fair, competitive selection process.

It is worth mentioning that vacancies are formally advertised through the local newspapers and PSC circulars. However, the selection and appointment to acting positions largely rests with district education offices. In the past, candidates were shortlisted at district education offices and the most meritorious applications forwarded to the Post Processing Unit (PPU) for further evaluation and consideration. It could be
assumed that either there had been no applications at all for headteachership from women or if there were it got eliminated at the preliminary phase. Given that the latter occurred, it suggests women candidates failed to meet the MQR and/or they were subjected to sex discrimination. Considering the pervasive underrepresentation of women in school leadership, there is a strong inclination to presume that sex discrimination occurred. On the other hand, if one were to argue that women did not meet the stipulated MQR, then again, it is important to pinpoint that women, in spite of having the minimum prerequisite of eight (8) years teaching experience, strangely have not secured first line and acting appointments for over a considerable number of years.

Nonetheless, from the recent past years, prospective candidates are required to submit their applications directly to the headquarters where the Post Processing Unit scrutinizes all applications and forwards it to the selection panel for further consideration. It is also worth noting in both past and recurrent practice, names of three most meritorious candidates are submitted to the respective school managers who have the final prerogative in the appointment of school leaders.

It is further worth pinpointing that the recruitment and promotion policy stipulates the access to adequate and equal opportunities for training and advancement to both men and women. However, this seldom translates into reality. Training and advancement opportunities lean heavily toward males. As mentioned earlier, data from the Professional Development Unit confirms gender disparities in leadership training.

It is also important to draw attention to the implementation of two most recent short-term state policies. The compulsory retirement policy (see Appendix F1.1) compelled mass retirement of civil servants when the retirement age was reduced from sixty to fifty five. After the initial staggered implementation between 2007 and 2008, the policy took full effect from 1st January 2009. It affected a large number of teachers. While the sudden mass compulsory retirement created a huge leadership vacuum, it also catapulted many young incumbents into leadership through acting appointments.
Subsequently, a policy on the regularization of acting positions (see Appendix F1.2) was introduced to address large numbers of substantive vacant positions which had been filled by acting appointments for lengthy periods. This one-off exercise began in April 2010. Officers who had acted continuously for six months either got confirmed in the position or received a contractual promotion for three years. This one-off event has been instrumental in the catalytic advancement of the few women teachers who managed to advance to acting positions at higher levels.

Unfortunately, it appears that the recently introduced government policies on compulsory retirement and the regularization of acting positions did not alleviate gender disparities in educational leadership. For instance, in Ba, that is, the geographical contexts of the women in this study (see Appendix A), after the compulsory retirement and regularization exercise, a mere 18.2% of the head teachers were women (see Table 6 below). Comparably, quite a large number of young male teachers secured promotions. Many senior meritorious women missed out.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>HEADTEACHERS</th>
<th>ASSISTANT HEAD TEACHERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Confirmed</td>
<td>Contractual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>82.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>17.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Promotion List for Primary Positions under the Regularization Exercise, Ba Education District Office, November, 2010

Table 6 submits comparative data on the percentage of Head teachers and Assistant Head teachers in Ba promoted after the implementation of the policy on the regularization of acting positions. It illustrates women are underrepresented in primary school leadership in Ba with only 20% confirmed in positions and a meager 17.4% on
contractual appointments. Some of the women head teachers with confirmed status are on the verge of retirement.

While it is encouraging to note women at the deputy level of headship are becoming visible, it is disappointing that none have acquired the confirmed status. Table 7 illustrates a similar trend for the past five years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Levels of Primary School Leadership</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Head teacher</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>73.2</td>
<td>26.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>78.1</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>80.5</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ba Education District Office, Staffing Details- 2007-2011

Assuming one was aware of gender inequities, the enactment of compulsory retirement and regularization of positions proffered an excellent opportunity for accelerating gender parity in educational leadership. A significant number of meritorious women have yet again been marginalized during the regularization of acting appointments because they were not placed in the first lines and acting positions at the right time. Because they have missed this one-off exercise, women may yet again, have to wait for longer periods to advance to school leadership or, at the worst, relinquish their aspirations and retire discreetly.

It is to be noted that only a fraction of women possess the exclusive advantage, although not a sufficient condition, of progressing to higher echelons of educational leadership.
This is because they were fortunate enough to have acquired either the confirmed or the contractual appointments during the regularization exercise.

Nonetheless, in light of the recent revolutionary reforms in the education sector, it is encouraging to note the MQR for recruitment and promotion is currently under review. This review is in response to the need to appoint the right people in terms of qualifications, skills and experience into the right jobs (PSC Media release 80/2010). One hopes the revised MQR generates gender equity in educational leadership.

It will be equally interesting to monitor the career pathways of the tiny fraction of women head teachers who have acquired confirmed status in school leadership or have secured a contractual appointment to school leadership. It is deemed prudent to track advancement of female teachers who are faintly visible in first line positions (assistant head teacher) and appear to be fairly concentrated in second line positions (executive teacher). It will also be worth contemplating the intervention strategies that are implemented to bridge the gender void left by existing women head teachers post retirement.

In retrospect, one could only assume that the rather dispassionate attitude towards the female gender has become ingrained in the system. It is arguable that if strategic interventions are not facilitated, then the future will continue to reproduce similar inconsistencies.

Hence, it is important to draw one’s attention to the development of women in Fiji. Perhaps this will expound the need for translating gender equity into educational leadership. The following section provides a brief overview of women’s development in Fiji:
Women Development in Fiji

The Government of Fiji is committed to the development of women. The establishment of the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation, which is the primary advisor to Government on women and gender issues, reflects this commitment. The Ministry of Women’s work revolves around the economic, social, legal and political needs, interests and aspirations of women. In addition, the commitment to gender equality and empowerment of women is further endorsed by the Millennium Development Goal three *Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women* and the Women’s Plan of Action 2010-2019.

It is also worth mentioning that Fiji’s ranking on the global indicators demonstrates some progress in gender equality. However, a significant degree of gender inequality persists in Fiji (Kaumaitotoya, 2003). According to the most recent report on the Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3), it is unlikely that Fiji will achieve its second target of MDG3 promoting gender equality and empowering women by the year 2015. This is because males continue to dominate the labour market despite strong pro-women government policies.

Narsey (2007) also offered compelling evidence of gender disparities in the formal employment sector. He highlighted women were mostly concentrated at the lower income threshold of the labor market. Comparably, there are three times more male wage earners and twice as much male salary earners with female representation in politics falling short of the state’s 30% target (MDG3 2nd Report 1990-2009).

Relative to improving women’s status and working towards full equality between men and women, Government has ascribed to the following international instruments and conventions:

• Millennium Development Goals 2000.
• The Pacific Plan 2005.
(Source: Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation-online)

Despite ratifying the above-mentioned conventions clearly articulating equal participation at all levels of decision making, Fiji still has a long way to go in achieving gender parity in leadership. According to the Millennium Development Goal 3 Second Report (1990-2009), there is a need to reconsider the capacity of the Ministry of Women to support gender analysis and mainstreaming of gender in government policies, plans and budgetary/resource allocation to enhance the monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming as well as the implementation of stand-alone gender initiatives. This will ensure the availability and continuity of gender disaggregated data. Funds and resources can be allocated to better inform, monitor and evaluate the implementation of policies and plans.

The Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation has established the Department of Women in its efforts to prioritize women’s development in Fiji. Its functions are briefly explicated in the next section:

**The Department of Women**

Women development plans and implementation are spearheaded by the Department of Women, subdivision of the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation. It is the primary policy advisor to the government on women’s development and gender issues. It is worth mentioning that fostering the representation of women in decision making bodies in the public sector continues to be a major challenge. The ultimate responsibility of encouraging positive actions to increase the participation of women in
decision making and to ensure the promotion of gender equality lies with the line ministries.

In order to fulfill its commitment to the national and international obligations, the Department of Women formulated the Women’s Plan of Action (WPA) 1999-2008. This identified broad directions for action by Government and its stakeholders. However, the WPA 1999-2008 has not made significant impact on achieving gender parity. This is because relevant intervention actions have not translated effectively into the general workforce. The WPA has now been strengthened to foster greater commitment and direction for strategic actions articulated in the recently modified WPA 2010-2019. The document attempts to revitalize implementation strategies in order to address the major areas of concerns which are explicated in the next section:

**The Women’s Plan of Action 2010-2019**

The new Women’s Plan of Action (WPA 2010-2019) aligns its commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action 1995, the revised Pacific Platform for Action (2005-2015), the Millennium Development Goal 3 “Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women” and the Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio-Economic Development 2009-2014. It identifies the need to recognize and support mechanisms that will enable the achievement of the goal, “Making Women Visible in Formal Decision-Making in Fiji”. Hence, the WPA 2010-2019 encompasses five areas of concern:

1). Formal Sector Employment and Livelihoods.
2). **Equal Participation in Decision-Making.**
3). Elimination of Violence against Women and Children.
4). Access to Basic Services:
   (i) Health and HIV & AIDS
   (ii) Education
   (iii) Other Basic Services (Water & Sanitation, Housing and Transport)
5). Women and the Law.
To facilitate and ensure successful implementation of the WPA 2010-2019, five taskforces are to be established with members from the government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private sector to spearhead and drive activities. The Permanent Secretary for the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation, has reiterated the Ministry is actively promoting gender equality through the implementation of the Women’s Plan of Action 2010-2019 (The Fiji Times, April 30, p.8).

For the Plan of Action to translate into practice line ministries need to have a more decisive and structured role in realizing concerns outlined in the WPA 2010-2019. Without active participation of women and incorporation of women’s perspectives at all levels of decision-making, goals of equality, development and peace articulated in global women’s conferences will be difficult to achieve.

Finally, it is worthwhile to mention that at this stage of the study, a cabinet endorsement has made it mandatory for the incorporation of sex disaggregated data into all government policies and documents. This will become an integral part of design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in each ministry (see Appendix F1.3 for PSC Circular No. 44/2010).

The next chapter will examine relevant literature on women in educational leadership.
CHAPTER THREE
LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a review of literature related to Women in Educational Leadership: Challenges faced by Selection of Women Head teachers in Ba, Fiji. A literature review enables the researcher to make connections to the research problem and offers a rationale for the research methodology. This chapter provides related literature that illuminates “previous research findings” (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010, p. 66) and enhances the interpretation of the findings.


Furthermore, research papers emanating from surveys, in-depth interviews and qualitative studies of women leaders in education and corporate sectors from various countries such as Africa, Australia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan, Britain and United States of America were scrutinized. In addition, regional and local research papers on women teachers and educational leaders included one each (due to scarcity in research) from Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. Data was also sourced from online portals of the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation and the Fiji Islands Bureau of Statistics.

The first section sets the pace by looking at some trends and assumptions that establish women’s underrepresentation in leadership. It is also important to note that these have necessitated the phenomenological study of *Women in Educational Leadership: Challenges faced by a selection of Women Head teachers in Ba, Fiji*. Next, it examines the types of challenges women encounter in accessing and retaining (school) leadership. Then the term gender is defined and conceptual understandings and distinctions between gender equity and gender equality is also made. This is followed by literature on gender mainstreaming which is depicted as the roadmap to achieving gender equity.

**The Underrepresentation of Women in Educational Leadership**

Women’s absence from leadership positions is relatively conspicuous. It is also worth mentioning that leadership has been defined and theorized primarily through the male lens. Feminist researchers (Coleman, 2002; Cubillo& Brown, 2003; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Strachan, 2009 and Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010) posited leadership is construed a masculine attribute. This apparently holds true in almost all the cultures and contexts. Given these, the conspicuous absence of women in educational leadership is not entirely surprising.
Women in educational leadership are increasingly generating global interest. Possibly, the emergent shift in attitude is the result of more women aspiring to and rising into leadership positions. In addition, feminist scholarship illuminates the implicit and explicit advantages women bring to leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Rosener, 1995; Fondas, 1997). These have been endorsed and extended by contemporary literature (Coleman, 2002; Eagly and Carli, 2003; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Shakeshaft, 2010). The changing face of leadership apparently proffers females some advantages not accorded previously.

Conversely, the plethora of theoretical and empirical research revealed the gross underrepresentation of women in educational leadership and management (Coleman, 2002; Cubillo& Brown, 2003; Kariuki, 2006; Oplatka& Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2006; Coleman & Fitzgerald, 2008, Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010). It is important to note that a similar trend has also been observed in the Pacific Island countries such as Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Fiji and Vanuatu where women do not advance as rapidly as men (The Fiji Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment Report 2007; Akao, 2008; Strachan, 2009 and the Millennium Development Goals 2nd Report, 1990-2009). For instance, in Fiji, as already mentioned in Chapter one, there were only 17.6% female head teachers and an even lower proportion of secondary school female principals, 14.6% for 2006.

Given these, the complacent attitude towards women’s underrepresentation in educational leadership is quite alarming. This is because firstly, teaching has increasingly become a feminized profession, that is, numerically the females outnumber the males. Secondly, most countries have equity legislations and have ratified the international treaties such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDG’s), the Beijing Platform Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA) and the Convention on the Elimination for All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

Bartol (1978, as cited in Powell, 1987, p. 731) described the phenomenon of the persistently lower percentage of women at the higher echelons of organization as the
“sex structuring of organizations.” She argued that sex structuring can be explained by analyzing the different phases of men and women’s careers which demonstrate that the transition phase is a potential filtering phase for women. Nonetheless, the commonly proposed explanations for women’s underrepresentation in leadership include the pipeline theory, the stereotyping theory and the western metaphor of the mysterious glass ceiling (Heilman, 1997). Proponents of the pipeline theory assert that the active presence of women in public life and on the labor market is relatively a recent phenomenon. They argue that women’s absence at the top levels is a natural consequence of not being in the workforce and managerial positions long enough. They further assert that because women do not gain the necessary qualifications to advance to the higher echelons of leadership, their natural career progression is stunted. Accordingly, the proponents postulate that ‘it is simply a matter of time’ (Heilman, 1997, p.877) when women will make it to the top levels.

This argument is flawed. Firstly, it ignores the traditionally strong feminized occupations in the education, health and welfare sectors. Paradoxically, these are the very occupations which exemplify the gross underrepresentation of women in higher echelons. For instance, in Fiji, although teaching has been a feminized profession since decades, there has been a snail-pace growth of women in school leadership.

Secondly, in the broader economic context, women are significantly underrepresented in managerial positions and are mostly concentrated at the low pay end of the labor market (MDG 2\textsuperscript{nd}Report, 2010). In retrospect, a critical analysis of female participation in the labor sector in Fiji (Narsey, 2007) presents compelling evidence of disparities between women’s high qualifications, income threshold and the highest rank of employment. Hence, this also demystifies the hypothesis that women do not advance to managerial positions because they lack the necessary qualifications and experience in the workforce.

The second argument illuminates the stereotyping theory which perceives women to be deficient in attributes and skills that are required of particular positions. Hence, it postulates that women themselves are to be blamed. This theory is further explicated
under the section *Stereotyping*. Conversely, research reports on women in educational leadership (Strachan, 1999; Coleman, 2002; Cubillo & Brown, 2003) demystify this theory and are further explicated under the section *Women*.

The third argument illuminates the well-known mysterious western metaphor of the glass ceiling. The ‘glass ceiling’ refers to invisible barriers and complex factors which are often used to explain why women’s advancement to higher management positions is stunted (Oakley, 2000; Rhode, 2003; Draulans, 2003; Weyer, 2007). It is worth mentioning that the glass ceiling emanates from both the organizational (external) and cultural (internal) factors, that is, “the corporate practices such as recruitment, retention and promotion and the behavioral and cultural causes such as stereotyping, power and preferred leadership styles” (Oakley, 2000, p.322). Feminist scholarship also illuminates the glass ceiling as the invisible barrier that perpetuates women’s underrepresentation.

Proponents of this explanation argue that women encounter glass ceilings at multiple levels and in diverse organizations. Sectors such as politics, education, service industries and churches act to perpetuate and support this phenomenon. Factors which constitute the glass ceiling inevitably reinforce and influence each other. For instance, a school embedded in hierarchies of masculine leadership is likely to discriminate against women during promotions because it is a common practice that male leaders prefer and recommend male subordinates for promotion. Notable examples of factors constituting the glass ceiling are further explicated under the section *Barriers*.

A plethora of feminist researchers (Nath, 2000; Oakley, 2000; Blackmore, 2002; Coleman, 2002; Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Rhode, 2003; Coleman and Fitzgerald, 2008; Sperandio and Kagoda, 2010; Shah, 2009 and Strachan, 2009) have judiciously documented and unveiled the significant formidable barriers women encounter in terms of career trajectories. They assert these barriers limit women’s advancement to higher echelons of leadership in both educational administration and the broader context of leadership.
However, it is rather unfortunate that the career trajectories of women teachers in Fiji have yet to permeate educational literature. Although, very few studies have been done, for instance, a study on some Pacific women teachers (which included the narratives of Fijian Indigenous teachers) by Kedrayate and Schulz (1996), it appears that issues affecting women (teachers) in terms of advancement to school leadership have not been prioritized. It could be assumed that lack of introspection perpetuated a culture of ignorance and diminished the value of women’s potentials and aspirations. It is highly likely that gender disparities are also perpetuated by lack of periodical introspection and sustained intervention. One can only assume that the interplay of invisible barriers is at work and continues to perpetuate the underrepresentation of women in (educational) leadership.

Given all these, it implicates the need to look beyond the stereotypical assumptions to the factors that actually impede women’s advancement to and the retention of leadership positions. It is important to note while these barriers have been observable elsewhere, they provide the context for identifying and understanding the barriers women in Fiji may encounter.

The following section explores the challenges that impede women’s advancement into (educational) leadership. It is worthwhile to mention here that the term barrier has been used interchangeably to represent challenges because of its explicit use in the general literature.

**Barriers**

There is general consensus among a number of leading researchers across the continent (Hill & Ragland, 1995; Coleman, 2002; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Coleman & Fitzgerald, 2003; Kariuki, 2004; Oplatka, 2006; Strachan, 2009; Shakeshaft et al., 2007) that women teachers encounter various types of barriers that perpetuate their underrepresentation in educational leadership and management. The literature examined in terms of barriers included research reports, surveys, career trajectories and qualitative studies on women
Reviews of the perspectives of the global commonality of women’s struggles for equity in educational leadership (Reynolds, 2002; Sobehart, 2009) as well as critical analyses/reviews of research papers and text books in educational administration, gender studies in education and comparative studies (Oplatka, 2006; Shakeshaft, et al., 2007) have also been examined. In addition, the review draws from the experiences of women in the higher echelons of the corporate sectors (Oakley, 2000; Nath, 2000; Rhode, 2003).

Internal barriers are described as the intrinsic and cultural factors that concern the individual and occur at the micro-levels. They exemplify the stereotyping theory which includes women’s perceived lack of self-esteem, poor self-image, lack of self-confidence, lack of aspiration and motivation, lack of competitiveness and fear of failure (Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Oplatka, 2006; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Sperandio and Kagoda, 2010). The cultural factors include the lack of socializing, patriarchy, androcentrism and stereotyping (sex and gender).

On the other hand, externally imposed factors which are mostly derived from organizational factors include the hegemonic hierarchical male organizations, gender, race, sex and occupational discrimination and old boy networks. Other external barriers include the absence of appropriate role models, mentors, networks and sponsors, gender insensitive preparation programmes and curriculum materials, domestic violence and familial responsibilities (Curry, 2000; Nath, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Cubillo and Brown, 2003; Coleman and Fitzgerald, 2008; Akao, 2008; Shah, 2009 and Strachan, 2009).
Internal Barriers

It is essential to mention here that the review of literature illuminates the culture of patriarchy as the single most formidable barrier. Hence, the various manifestations of patriarchy, which are illustrated in the diagram below, will be followed by the prelude on patriarchy:

![Diagram of Internal Barriers and External Barriers]

Patriarchy

Weedon (1987) defined patriarchy as the male domination and power relationships in which “women’s interests are subordinated to the interests of men” (p.2). Conversely, a more contextualized definition entails “the male control of culture, religion, language and knowledge while ignoring or devaluing women’s experiences and knowledge” Kariuki (2006, p.65).
Weedon (1987) further elucidated that patriarchy manifests itself in all the spheres of life, from the family to the world of education, politics, culture and leisure. In retrospect, Beechey (1979) argued that patriarchy is not a “single or a simple concept” (p. 66) because it translates into a whole variety of different meanings. At the basic level, patriarchy implies that the male is the Supreme Being; he is the know-it-all and almost anything and everything must conform to the culture of the males. At a deeper level, it implies that femaleness in and of itself represents subjugation; therefore women must silently bear it all and do whatever it takes to conform to the male culture. Hence, patriarchy affords men the superiority lens while concedes women to the lens of inferiority.

According to Beechey (1979), the theory of patriarchy has a history within feminist thought and “it attempts to penetrate beneath the particular experiences and manifestations of women’s oppression and to formulate some coherent theory of the basis of subordination which underlies them” (p. 66). Increasingly, it is feminist theory that has drawn distinctions between the operation of patriarchy and the construction of the feminine. Feminists argue that patriarchy is the basis of women’s oppression. Hence, patriarchy is used to analyze the underlying principles of women’s oppression.

Although people have entered the twenty first century, patriarchy continues to dominate and influence societies. For instance, India, countries in the African continent and Pacific Islands are entrenched in patriarchal practices (Lateef, 1990; Razvi & Roth, 2004; Varani-Norton, 2004; Kariuki, 2006; Jalal, 2007, as cited in Nicholl, 2008). Patriarchal societies reinforce male supremacy and female subordination. The entrenched assumptions among Fijian societies are that authority and decision making are men’s prerogative (Varani-Norton, 2004; Jalal, 2007, as cited in Nicholl, 2008). These assumptions are grounded in the “unthinking belief that there is a ‘natural order’ male leadership and female subordination” (Coleman, 2002, p.79). Hence, women remain in a subordinate position to men both at home and at work.
Lateef (1990) had earlier noted that women learn the concepts of submissiveness and subservience through the powerful and influential familial ideologies that demand and emphasize the need for female submission to male control, particularly among the Fijians of Indian descent. Similarly, Varani-Norton (2004) asserted that Fijian women legitimize male leadership by harboring embedded feelings of not wanting to disturb tradition. Many women are inhibited by two concerns: “a desire not to lose their time-honored role as conservators of the status quo and a fear of disrupting social harmony by challenging what they will see as men’s proper role…” (p. 242).

Court (1997) argued that patriarchy establishes and reinforces the stereotype of the “real man” (p. 18). Based on these stereotypical notions, the real man apparently, cannot and should not engage in chores that are considered feminine or has been historically and traditionally done by women. For example, it is assumed that a real man does not change nappies, he does not help with the laundry, he cannot take instructions from a woman and/or he does not become emotional and shed tears. Conversely, male behaviors deviating from the stereotypical real man often imply emasculation (although it doesn’t lead to) and as such men are subject to ridicule and even contempt amongst peers.

Male roles are centered on social and political activity. Men’s social and political roles confer them with status and power which evidently becomes the male prerogative. Thus, men disassociate themselves from child rearing and domestic chores. Paradoxically, it is the women’s roles that are associated with productivity (Pacific 2020).

Moreover, Oakley (2000) argued that men in patriarchal societies feel challenged and “experience discomfort and unconscious fear of powerlessness” (p. 328) when women have authority over them. Coleman (2002) and Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) have also cited similar sentiments of resentment among men and some women. For some women, it is absolutely wrong and unacceptable for a woman to be at the helm of leadership. Hence, they adopt a resentful attitude towards them and attempt to instigate others.
As Kedrayate and Schulz (1996) argued, culture in Fiji is a dominant discourse for perpetuating men as “protagonists, “the leaders, the ones who get to do things, and women are in the background” (p. 43). Subsequently, the “back-seat image” (Tavola, 2000, p. 260) of women impedes their advancement to formal leadership. Given all these, it is significant to note that patriarchal cultures and traditions inarguably push women into invisibility and immobility.

Furthermore, Dutt (1999) illuminated the patriarchal binary thought prevalent in the literary texts in Fiji and Samoa secondary schools. She argued that sexist literature reproduces the common ideologies of gender. In a similar vein, criticisms are leveled against leadership and training curriculum and programmes which ignore equity issues, under represent women in curricular materials and case studies and are underpinned by gender deficit theories (Shakeshaft et al., 2007). Conversely, sexist curricula perpetuate veiled barriers which further exacerbate women’s underrepresentation in leadership.

Given all these, it is important to understand how the forces of patriarchy subordinate women’s aspirations and interests. The following section further illustrates how women are disadvantaged by the shackles of patriarchy. Although the following barriers are delineated under separate conceptual lenses, the common underlying thread is patriarchy.

**Androcentrism**

Bem (1996) defined three lenses of gender that shape how people perceive, conceive and discuss social reality. These include “androcentrism, gender polarization and biological essentialism” (Bem, 1996, as cited in Greenbaum, 1999, p. 97). Feminist critique also draws attention to the androcentricity of educational leadership practice (Strachan, 1999).

Androcentrism is defined as the “privileging of males, male experience and the male perspectives” (Bem, 1996, p.3). It manifests in everything and implicates the male as the
standard, representing the positive and the neutral and all that is best and correct. The familial ideologies of male supremacy and female subordination reinforce and maintain that ultimate authority and control lies with males (Lateef, 1990; Varani-Norton, 2004; Jalal, 2007 as cited in Nicholl, 2008). Therefore, women should always be under the control of males. As such, leadership is exemplified as the male privilege. Societies in Fiji also assume that men are better suited to leadership positions. Hence, school board members and management committees prefer male candidates for school leadership. This is evident in most school boards in Fiji where many, if not all, board members are males.

Hill and Ragland (1995) drew attention to how the privileging of males within educational institutes deprived women of political savvy and career positioning. What mostly happened was that:

...selected “golden boys” or “young turks” are carefully positioned on the “right district committees with the right people. They are then groomed to meet the demands and specifications....

(Hill & Ragland, 1995: 12)

A similar trend has been observed in small island Pacific countries such as the Solomon Islands and Fiji. Male teachers have been groomed by male head teachers within schools and districts. They are then recommended and appointed to “first line positions” (McKenna & Johnson, 1981, p. 227). Thus, many women teachers have been deprived of political savvy and career positioning. The first line position in the context of primary schools in Fiji refers to assistant head teachers.

The preference for and the privileging of males for first line positions have displaced many experienced and qualified women teachers. By operating institutionally, androcentrism has perpetuated overt, direct and indirect sex discriminatory practices. Hence, women’s opportunities and perspectives have been marginalized and this has reproduced gender inequity.
Stereotyping

Heilman (1997) argued that a stereotype was “a set of attributes ascribed to a group and believed to characterize its individual members simply because they belong to that group” (p.879). They are often very stylized perceptions of defining people into categories such as race, age, gender and sex. While stereotypes in some instances may be effective and efficient, it is also problematic. This is because stereotypes about groups of people often are inaccurate as they are overgeneralizations which do not apply to the targeted individual group member. Hence, stereotypes become the basis for faulty reasoning. Consequently, this engenders biased feelings and actions.

Researchers, for example, Coleman (2002), Draulans (2003), Oplatka (2006) and Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) asserted that stereotyping theory has increasingly been used to explain the underrepresentation of women in leadership. It posits women are deficient in attributes and skills required of particular positions. Similarly, Coleman (2002) asserted that stereotypes project “women as less worthy or qualified than men to lead and manage” (p. 77) schools.

The review of literature illustrated two categories of stereotypes, sex and gender-based stereotyping. These perpetuate impediments to women’s advancement in leadership and management (Oakley, 2000; Rhode, 2003; Cubillo& Brown, 2003; Oplatka, 2006; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Jackson et al., 2007; Coleman & Fitzgerald, 2008 and Sperandio and Kagoda, 2010). The following section discusses with examples the two basic categories of sex and gender stereotypes:

Sex Stereotyping

According to Heilman (1997), sex stereotypes are attributes which are ascribed to men and women by the virtue of their sex. While both men and women subscribe to sex
stereotypic conceptions, the ways of describing men and women differ dramatically. Studies (Heilman, 1997; Oakley, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Rhode, 2003; Shah, 2009) reveal that men and women are often portrayed as polar opposites. Men are portrayed as strong and active while women are perceived to be weak and passive. Adjectives such as decisive, independent, rational, objective and self-confident are used to describe men. On the other hand, women are described as indecisive, dependent, emotional, subjective and insecure. The qualities of warmth and expression are also described differently.

In addition, Heilman (1997) argued that the powerful influence of sex stereotypes persist even when women become managers. Women managers are characterized more negatively and are conceived as “less competent, active and potent, emotionally stable and rational” (p. 880) than male managers. Similarly, Coleman (2002) highlighted that women are perceived to be lacking in the drive to advance to higher echelons. They are often typecast as having negative self-perceptions and lacking in self-confidence.

Women are also accused of self-exclusion. The self-selection choices that women make as they seek to balance their professional and private lives are often perceived negatively. Likewise, Shah (2009) posited that sex stereotypes often project women as less motivated and less ambitious. However, it could be argued that not all women internalize these stereotypes. This is because women are taking on many roles as well as behaviors that were traditionally reserved for men, for instance, leadership and management.

Nonetheless, such beliefs are problematic because firstly, they are valued differently and secondly, they facilitate negative impressions of women. It perpetuates the belief that women are deficient in either skills or temperament to handle the demanding role of a leader. Conversely, the traits associated with men are viewed very highly by societies.

Heilman (1997) further elucidated how sex stereotypes may impede the advancement of women to the higher echelons of leadership and management. She asserted that management and leadership positions and certain occupations are sex typed as “male”
Good management and leadership are construed as men’s enterprise and proffer males the distinct advantage.

Feminine skills and attributes of nurturance, sensitivity and service have been stereotyped as leadership deficient skills and portrayed women as weak and a poor fit to the male sex-typed leadership. Hence, women are generally concentrated at the “traditional “pink collar” occupations” (Lateef, 1990, p. 44) such as teaching, nursing, sales assistants, clerical and secretarial positions.

However, feminist scholarship and contemporary literature on leadership refutes much of the stereotyped feminine leadership deficiencies (for example, Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Fondas, 1997; 2002; Eagly & Carli, 2003; Bass &Riggio, 2006; Begley, 2008; Daft, 2008). The once considered weak and leadership deficient feminine attributes of nurturance, sensitivity and service are considered crucial to effective leadership in the 21st century and increasingly embodies a distinct “female advantage perspective” (Fondas, 1997, p. 259) in contemporary leadership, management and organizational conceptualizations.

To put in a nutshell, sex stereotyping subordinates female attributes and provides the premise for biased decision making. Subsequently, it perpetuates gender-based stereotypes and leads to sex discrimination at workplaces. The following sections explicate these.

**Gender Stereotyping**

Powell (1987) argued that gender stereotypes of men as masculine and women as feminine emerged from gender differences. These stereotypes represented men as high in masculine traits such as independence, aggressiveness and dominance. On the other hand, women were believed to be high in the feminine traits of dependence, passivity and nurturance (p.731).
Gender stereotypes are probably the consequence of socialization through which the expected behaviors of males and females were ordained. Children are socialized into gender-specific roles from an early age. Girls are generally tasked inside household chores while boys are given work outside. This reinforces the ideologies that men are expected to move out into the public sphere, make decisions and exercise power. Women, on the other hand, are expected be confined to the private sphere of the home. Hence, children come to understand that “‘men’s work’ is more highly valued than ‘women’s work’ and to believe that males are more valued than females” (Jalal, 2007, as cited in Nicholl, 2008, p.5).

Kaufmann and colleagues (1996) argued that gender-based stereotypes such as being less intelligent and less competent impose the “double uphill battle” (p. 31) for women. Stereotyping women as leadership deficient represents a battle in itself when they want to advance to leadership. Simultaneously they also have to conform to the male behaviors and norms.

Furthermore, Oakley (2000) asserted that gender-based stereotypes reinforced the perceived feminine leadership deficiency traits. Subsequently, they portrayed female leaders as “less self-confident, less analytical, less emotionally stable and possessing poor leadership abilities” (p.326). In addition, Kaufmann, Isaksen and Lauer (1996) argued that women were also incorrectly stereotyped as less intelligent and less competent and less able to meet the job demands. For these reasons, it engenders the mindset that women cannot assume leadership, cannot discipline students, supervise other adults, criticize constructively and manage finances.

In a similar vein, Oakley (2000) contended that women were subjected to “behavioral double binds” (p. 324) in leadership positions. A typical and particularly troublesome double bind that many women leaders encountered was the femininity/competency bind where acting feminine was associated with incompetence and acting competent was considered unfeminine. This is because leadership is stereotypically male in sex type and is equated with the masculine attributes of assertiveness, competition and authority.
Thus, women leaders are often pressurized to de-feminize (Shakeshaft et al., 2007). For instance, it has been observed that some women executive teachers and deputy head teachers display the notable masculine toughness and authority in order to prove themselves as leaders. In doing so, as Coleman (2002) argued, most successful career women are conceived to be “cold, hard and single-minded” (p. 87). Paradoxically, retaining femininity undermines their credibility as leaders whereas adopting masculinity devalues the essence of being a woman.

Oakley (2000) further argued that linguistic styles of women leaders also acted as a femininity/competency double bind. This is because women differed from men in the way they communicated. Therefore, when women leaders adopt language that expresses courtesy, is supportive and responsive, sounds conditional and tentative and encourages conversation (Oakley, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Hudson & Williamson, 2002, as cited in Moore, 2007), it is often misinterpreted and devalued by men. For this reason also women leaders are judged negatively and are conceived to be lacking in self-confidence and leadership competency (Oakley, 2000; Coleman, 2002). In contrast, when they emulate the masculine assertive and authoritative linguistic styles, they are considered unfeminine.

Furthermore, feminist scholarship has also illuminated that women have to deal with the well-entrenched double standard behaviors (Hill & Ragland, 1995; Nath, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Razvi & Roth, 2004; Kariuki, 2006). Employing double standards means “using male criteria, measures and standards to judge the behavior of women and vice versa” (Robson, 1993, as cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 35). Hence, for the same opportunities and experiences, males and females are subjected to different norms.

Coleman (2002) argued that women had to work twice as hard as male aspirants. This means that for the same promotional opportunities, women have to prove that they are not just qualified but unusually better qualified. She further reported that women head teachers in her study were “desperately trying to operate as superwomen because the odds are stacked against them for being there in the first place” (p.85). In addition,
women had to speak louder and fight a little more for their rights in order to be heard (Hill and Ragland, 1995; Nath, 2000; Coleman, 2002 and Kariuki, 2006). In a similar vein, Nath (2000) reported that professional women in India effectively undertook three jobs, including domestic chores and child care. However, they were rarely given credit for the extra burden. Rather, women were discredited as being less committed than men.

In the tradition of illuminating stereotypes, Oakley (2000) and Coleman (2002) drew attention to other forms of gender-based stereotypes. Certain aspects of femininity which include the tone and pitch of voice, physical appearance and the mode of dress are often regarded as making women unsuitable for leadership. In addition, personal appearance and physical stature (being too short, small or being beautiful) has often been considered inappropriate for disciplining boys or running a school. Conversely, physical appearance has also been portrayed, although in very limited instances, as a success factor in attaining leadership positions (Cubillo and Brown, 2003).

Furthermore, stereotypical characterizations also include woman’s place is in the home (Strachan, 2009); they are unsuitable for leadership, they possess limited stress-resistance and have delusions of leaving workforce or changing jobs.

Finally, Coleman (2002) contends that most of the stereotypes illustrated were generally negative and judgmental about the potential and performance of women in leadership and management. However, she further asserted that most inappropriate stereotypes were becoming less prevalent in schools. Conversely, because stereotypes “operate at unconscious levels and selections for leadership positions involve subjective and confidential judgments” (Rhode, 2003, p.12) the extent of bias is difficult to determine.

Inevitably, the behavioral consequence of sex and gender stereotyping is sex discrimination in the selection and retention of school leaders.
Sex Discrimination

The review of literature heavily documents the dynamics of sex discrimination at workplaces (Heilman, 1997; court, 1997; Coleman, 2002; Rhode, 2003; Draulans, 2003; Kariuki, 2006; Oplatka, 2006; Shakeshaft et al., 2007, Akao, 2008; Shah, 2009; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010). The strong preference for male leaders takes precedence over experience, higher qualifications and the female advantage that women bring to leadership.

Court (1997) argued that women leaders encountered discrimination and prejudice both prior to and during their leadership tenure. They encountered difficulties in being accepted as leaders in the hostile male dominated cultures because authority is predominantly associated with masculinity. This was further endorsed by Coleman’s (2002) study conducted in the late 1990s among English and Welsh head teachers. Large scale surveys of both men and women head teachers and in-depth interviews of women head teachers illustrated that different forms of sex discrimination impeded women’s progression into educational leadership.

In the tradition of illuminating discrimination against women, Coleman (2002) distinguished the different forms of sex discrimination illustrated in Figure 2:
Coleman (2002) further argued that sexism in the selection process was evident despite legislation and culture change. Her study illustrated examples of sexist remarks and attitudes which included “everything from subtle questioning to domestic arrangements” (p.44). She suggested that married women with children were more likely to encounter direct discrimination on the grounds of sex.

One could assume that in Fiji, women teachers also experience similar discriminative behaviors where school managements prefer male teachers for school leadership. Many a times, the preference and the imminent appointment of males are made explicit during the short listing and/or selection process. Some prospective women head teachers have drawn attention to discriminatory remarks like, “Oh, but we are looking for a male for this position because he will be able to attend meetings with the committee members held in the evenings.” Arguably, the existing tradition of having meetings in the
evenings which extend to the typical tanoa session is too lame an excuse for not appointing women.

Furthermore, Coleman (2002) drew attention to indirect discrimination. These included non-essential requirements such as the importance of particular sports, for example rugby in the school, which resulted in women’s elimination from the candidacy of headship.

In a similar vein, Shakeshaft and colleagues (2007) have reported instances of male intimidation and personal silence about gender issues. For instance, male colleagues may hush issues such as the harassment of a female co-worker and/or may blow a sensitive issue out of proportion. Rhode (2003) also pinpointed that colleagues (both males and females) often did not actively engage in seeking solutions to discriminatory practices and gender-related issues although the vast majority of colleagues (both men and women) were sensitive to them. This is because men hesitated to become typed as a ladies’ man while women did not want to be typed as the woman who frequently raises issues concerning women (Rhode, 2003).

Moreover, Draulans (2003) asserted that between equally qualified and experienced male and female employees at the same workplace, the career possibilities of the female employees were retarded for each absence due to pregnancy and birth. Conversely, the males were advantaged by regular attendance which not only provided opportunities for professional growth but also intensified collegial contacts and networking. Thus, the career prospects of males were enhanced.

Finally, it could be assumed that sexism in the predominant male organizational cultures increasingly deters women from accessing and retaining leadership positions. Unfortunately, discriminatory behaviors have the tendency to be taken for granted and are inarguably, perpetuated by the unquestioned values of the society.
The Women

Cubillo and Brown (2003) argued that over the years women have been blamed for lack of confidence, lack of competitiveness, fear of failure, lack of motivation and self-esteem. This has been demonstrated by the stereotyping theory asserting women are deficient in terms of leadership skills, attributes and vision. In addition, women have been increasingly blamed for adopting a critical attitude towards specific (masculine) organizational cultures. Apparently, these so-called deficiencies have stunted women’s progress into (educational) leadership.

While it is notable that some studies (Oplatka, 2006; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010) have illustrated negative self-perceptions and lack of self confidence in individual experience and qualifications, these should not be taken at face-value to imply that women are naturally leadership-deficient. As Coleman (2002) asserted, the negative perceptions of gender experienced by women significantly perpetuate their low confidence levels. In a similar vein, Coleman and Fitzgerald (2008) argued that the gendered assumptions of “what is ‘best’ and by inference of what is ‘right’ for the school” (p. 123) imposes barriers for women because it is taken for granted that women cannot identify what is best and/or right. Needless to mention, it is an accepted and a common norm that men know what is best and what is right.

Furthermore, Oplatka (2006) posited that women in some contexts were subjected to greater traditional and patriarchal cultures which apparently stripped women off their aspirations, confidence, image and self-esteem. This happened particularly because of the process of enculturation and socialization into family roles which often indicate that women are incapable outside their domestic role (Brown & Ralph, 1996, as cited in Oplatka, 2006). In addition, as Cubillo and Brown (2003) asserted, the perceived lack of confidence and the fear of failure “has more to do with the unfamiliarity of the territory rather than the lack of faith in their abilities” (p. 281).
The review of literature also pinpointed to other factors that perpetuate negative self-perceptions and lack of confidence among women. These included the absence of role models, little or no mentoring opportunities and lack of support (Coleman and Fitzgerald, 2008; Sperandio and Kagoda, 2010). While men had a popular gallery of models and heroes to admire and emulate, women lacked good contemporary role models for inspiration.

In contrast, various studies have concluded that women do not suffer from the internal barrier of poor self-image or lack of confidence. For instance, the female school principals in Strachan’s (1999) study confidently practiced feminist leadership and thrived on the challenges they encountered. In a similar vein, the executive women in Nath’s (2000) study exhibited personal drive and desire for success as well as ability to harness their strengths in spite of cultural constraints. In addition, the women in Cubillo and Brown’s (2003) study (from nine different countries and educational contexts) exhibited relatively high levels of “self-confidence, self-esteem and personable appearance” (p. 287). They emerged remarkably self-reliant and self-motivated and were simply not deterred by the hostile male-dominated cultures and work environment.

Given these, the stereotype-deficient theory is flawed because it ignores the social and cultural contexts of the women. In addition, as Heilman (1997) argued, the stereotype-deficient theory lacks social and psychological evidence. She further asserted that there was no scientific evidence to validate the notion that women were crippled by their presumably lower aptitude or lack the drive to advance to higher levels.

Furthermore, Eagly and Carli’s (2003) meta-analytic database on leadership styles refuted claims that women have lower aptitude. They illustrated that more women surpassed their male colleagues in transformational leadership attributes such as empowerment, interaction and collaboration. Arguably, a lower aptitude would negate the higher propensity for transformational leadership attributes among women. It is appropriate to mention that transformational leadership styles also embody greater social skills and emotional intelligence.
External Barriers

Old Boy Networks

Oakley (2000) defined the old boy network as “an informal male social system that stretches within and across organizations, and excludes less powerful males and all women from membership” (p. 328). The old boy networks may also exclude all those “who appear “different” on other grounds such as race, ethnicity, disability or sexual orientation” (Rhode, 2003, p. 13). The members of the network transfer competition and power advantages onto friendship patterns and alliances within the informal system. Competent women with stronger qualifications have often been marginalized because old boy networks serve well in preserving and enhancing rewards for males at the higher echelons.

Hill and Ragland (1995) asserted that old boy networks were persistent and operated as men’s dominant gate keeping where:

“....deals are often made and agreements cut before many women know positions are available. Many times competent women with stronger qualifications are not considered..... Understandings have already been bargained during golf, on the fishing trip....... Women are not usually privy to those avenues or decisions made outside the work setting..... People in positions of power not only frequently decide on finalists but they also quite often determine their own successors. The “good ol’boy” networks exist so strongly in many school districts that many men can tell you the number in line to superintendency. They are just waiting their turn”

(Hill and Ragland, 1995, p. 11)
In Fiji, examples of two old boy networks include the Queen Victoria School Old Boys (QVS Old Boys) and Ratu Kadavulevu School Old Boys (RKS Old Boys). One of the main objectives of these old boy networks is to provide Fijian boys with education, mentoring and training necessary for leadership. Fijian males have benefited from these networks with most of the former students holding senior or supervisory positions in both public and private sectors.

It also appears that old boy networks function under membership of teacher unions, school management committees and board members, head teachers from same and/or different clusters, higher echelon educational leaders and/or affiliated members from the professional and religious associations. The males form cliques which are established and strengthened around the tanoa (grog bowl) mostly in the evenings or after a formal meeting and/or gathering. Yaqona or grog is an indigenous ceremonial drink utilized mostly as a relaxant by men from different ethnic groups. While it is not conclusive, it could be assumed that pacts regarding potential positions in schools have often been negotiated in advance. Hence, these relationships may often be influential in determining promotions for male teachers.

Given all these, it is worthwhile to draw attention to some of the implications of old boy networks. It undeniably disadvantages the women because sitting around the tanoa with men is culturally inappropriate and unacceptable for females in Fiji. Hence, while old boy networks act as powerful gatekeepers of informal social networking for women, it affords men the added advantage of cultivating friendship and alliances that comparably place them on a higher pedestal. Consequently, women fail to generate collegial support and secure contacts that possibly could pave way for future advancement.

Moreover, Hill and Ragland (1995) purported that old boy networks function as efficient distribution system of obligations and reciprocity. Those at the higher echelons, apparently, are obliged to update their network members informally about future career prospects. Hence, if a member secures promotion through another influential member, he is most likely to have negotiated ways of returning the favour. Sometimes it may involve gifts of cash, livestock, liquor, seafood, return air tickets, piece of farmland.
and/or other forms of reciprocation. Arguably, such forms of obligations and reciprocations also imply veiled practices of bribery and corruption.

Finally, as Oakley (2000) asserted, a significant mass of women at higher echelons would be a threat to the old boy networks. Firstly because, the large number of women would challenge the prevailing masculine cultural norms. Secondly, women often advocate change from the status quo. Hence, these could ultimately result in the disintegration of the existing old boy networks or reduce them into powerless informal structures.

**Familial Responsibilities**

Various studies of professional women illuminated the tension between the personal and professional (Nath, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Curry, 2002; Rhode, 2003; Oplatka, 2006; Razvi & Roth, 2006; Shakeshaft et al., 2007 and Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010)). These tensions emerge because women are increasingly engaged in activities within the dual worlds of the public organizations and homes. Apparently, the historical culture of domestic role stereotyping engenders and reinforces the natural assumption that women are to be directly responsible for nurturing the family and home.

Coleman (2002) asserted that the role conflict, geographical mobility and the time constraint affecting home and career produced feelings of guilt among women. Male head teachers, on the other hand, did not assume major responsibility or virtually took any part in the everyday care of their children. As Court (1997) had earlier argued, men do not perceive a need to do so because women are “naturally suited” (p.18). Thus “the impact of domestic decisions, difficulties and responsibilities seems to play a large part in nurturing doubts about career progress” (Coleman, 2002, p.33) among women.

Harding (2004) further endorsed that the natural talent and inclination for childcare and domestic chores is a common justification for women not to advance their careers. In a similar vein, studies in Uganda, Kenya and Turkey revealed that women did not aspire to
administrative positions because of the long hours, difficult conditions, husband’s resistance to career advancement and heavy domestic responsibilities (Oplatka, 2006; Sperandio and Kagoda, 2010). Women in Fiji may also undergo similar tensions between their personal and professional lives. Hence they may not aspire to advance to leadership positions.

In contrast, Shakeshaft and colleagues (2007) argued that although family and home responsibilities invariably influence career choices and mobility, it does not imply that women lack conscious aspirations for leadership careers. As the women in Nath’s (2000) and Coleman’s (2002) studies demonstrated women continuously strive to create a balance between the personal and professional. Paradoxically, the onus is on the majority of the women to create a balance. Therefore, as Court (1997) asserted, the attempts to create a balance often become a gendered tug of war because the gender battles are fought more on the home front where the sharing of domestic chores largely remains an illusion.

Furthermore, the review of literature suggests that women across cultures share the inevitable similar child care and domestic responsibilities (Court, 1997; Nath, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Rhode, 2003; Harding, 2004; Oplatka, 2006 and Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010). For instance, women in India effectively engage in three jobs which include housework and childcare (Nath, 2000). Similarly, Harding (2004) asserted that women undeniably do a “double day of work” (p. 19) as they juggle between the home and workplace in their efforts to supplement the financial and economic benefits to their spouses and the family. In Fiji, women are also heavily engaged in child care and domestic responsibilities. However, it could be argued that stronger extended family networks provide women with opportunities to fulfill their professional obligations.

Nevertheless, the historical legacy of the disadvantage women have faced projects them as a vulnerable minority. But, it can be argued that women are definitely not a marginal group (UN Millennium Project Task Force 3, 2005). Undeniably, women represent the other half of humanity and form the backbone of the care economy. In addition, as Va’a
(2006) posited, they are increasingly the peace builders, voters, intellectuals, advocates of change, community and nation builders.

Finally, it must be noted that women have the potential to catalyze enormous power and progress. It is therefore, prudent that women’s choices and voices are acknowledged and heard. More women need to be visible in the higher echelons of leadership in order to level the playing field and create socially just, sustainable and democratic societies.

These insights implicate the need for advancing the review of literature to the conceptualizations of gender equity in terms of educational leadership. The following section briefly examines the rationale behind achieving gender equity. Next it defines the term gender and attempts to present a conceptual understanding of the terms gender equity and gender equality. Following this, it examines gender equality and empowerment embedded in the concept of mainstreaming of gender. This is integral to sustaining the much needed and diverse array of skills and values that women bring to the workplaces. It is also worthwhile to mention that gender mainstreaming is depicted as a roadmap for achieving gender equality and empowering women.

**Increasing Gender Equity in Educational Leadership**

As feminist researchers (Oakley, 2000; Oshagbemi & Gill, 2003; Harding, 2004 and Shakeshaft et al., 2007, Shakeshaft, 2010) posited, for many people it is quite often difficult and confusing to differentiate between gender and sex. Gender is usually taken to refer to women’s problems and is most often used as a code word for female. In addition, the term gender may be used interchangeably to refer to sex in many languages or it may not identify with any distinct terminology. Consequently, this has produced misconceptions about the term gender. This is problematic because it has the propensity to reproduce antagonism and skepticism for gender related issues among both men and women.
Draulan’s (2003) defined gender as the “psychological and social conceptions of what it means to be a man or woman” (p.69). Feminist scholarship (for example, Oshagbemi & Gill, 2003; Harding, 2004; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Shakeshaft, 2010) similarly identified gender as a cultural and social construct. The term gender is also articulated as a part of broader socio-cultural context in the United Nations Development Programme 2007 (UNDP 2007). According to the United Nations Women, gender refers to:

...the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or a man in a given context.

(Source: UN Women-online)

Sex, on the other hand, refers to the biological differences related to one’s way of reproducing. The terms male and female signify sex differences while the terms ‘man’, ‘woman’, ‘masculine’, and ‘feminine’ are reserved for describing the culturally defined gender (Draulans, 2003, p.69; Harding, 2004, p.3). It is also important to note that gender embodies a dynamic process that is open to change because gender roles are determined by the social construct. Inevitably, these roles and relationships can and do change over time with evolving needs and opportunities (Hijab and Lewis, 2003; UN, 2012).

It is also important to draw attention to transgender identity which has emerged as another crucial construct in the gender discourse. This covers less commonly represented gender categories which are collectively referred to as gender queer identities and includes either a combination of female and male categories (two-spirit identity) or a rejection of both female and male gender categories (Tate, 2012). This includes gay, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual groupings.
Gender empowerment has become central to the development agendas globally. Hence, achieving equality and empowering women have become synonymous with terminologies such as gender equality, gender equity and gender mainstreaming. These are increasingly appearing in every policy or programme.

However, as Hijab and Lewis (2003) argued, there remains considerable conceptual confusion between the terms gender equity and gender equality even though gender proponents are striving for equality and women’s empowerment. They further asserted that the real meaning is eventually diminished and subsequently this creates a gap between rhetoric and action, between commitment and implementation. Hence, in order to generate authentic equality and empowerment, it is critically significant to define gender related terms.

Klein and colleagues (2007) posited that generally there is no consensus on the distinctions between the commonly used terms gender equity and equality. Educators generally prefer to use the term equity because it implies the concept of fairness or some differences in education processes. Accordingly, it is considered more comprehensive and flexible than the term equality. As such, the terms gender equality, gender equitable and gender equity are often used interchangeably. For these reasons, the interchangeable usage of the gender related terms will be employed in this study.

Gender equity is defined as “attaining parity between men and women in the quality of life, academic and work outcomes valued by our society, without limitations associated with gender stereotypes, gender roles or prejudices” (Klein, Richardson, Grayson, Fox, Kramarae, Pollard & Dwyer, 2007, p.2). It is also defined as fairness of treatment for women and men according to their respective needs. This may entail equal or differential treatment. However, it must be equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities.
Given this, the development and intervention policies directed at achieving gender equity ensure that women have a fair share of the benefits. They are also directed towards achieving parity among women and men, both economically and in terms of social responsibility. In addition, gender equity legislations ensure that women have equal treatment before the law, equal access to social provisions, education and equal pay for the same work.

Furthermore, gender equity outcomes are attained when differentiation by gender in jobs, roles, expectations and achievements are minimized and/or eliminated. Both men and women acquire and/or are presented with equitable opportunity to attain the most socially valued characteristics and skills. Hence, it is important to mention that the outcomes of gender equity can only be fully realized when gender stereotypes and sex segregation in decision making, education and society are reduced or eliminated.

Gender equality, on the other hand, eliminates discrimination on the grounds of a person’s sex in the allocation of resources, benefits or access to services. It is defined as “insuring that different behaviors, aspirations and needs of men and women are considered, valued and favored equally” (Klein et al., 2007, p.2). However, this does not imply that women and men need to become the same. Rather, women’s rights, responsibilities and opportunities should be the same and must not be discriminated against on the basis of their sex. Given this, gender equality may be measured in terms of equality of opportunity or equality of outcomes.

Feminist scholarship asserts that the presence of women in educational leadership is critical in creating socially just, sustainable and democratic societies. They further argue that the presence of women will provide a gendered perspective on educational change and development. However, it is important to note that there is a need for increasing women leaders who understand and contribute to the empowerment of women and girls rather than just increasing numbers to attain parity.
In addition, achieving equality between men and women is central to human development and progress. Gender equality is thus, desirable in and of it and has intrinsic value. This has been clearly articulated in the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) mission statement:

“...the principle of shared power and responsibility should be established between women and men at home, in the workplace and in the wider national and international communities. Equality between women and men is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and is also a necessary and fundamental prerequisite for equality, development and peace. A transformed partnership based on equality between women and men is a condition for people-centered sustainable development.”

(BPFA 1995, p.6)

Furthermore, it is important to note that the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) advocate the elimination of occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination through “promoting the equal participation of women in highly skilled jobs and senior management positions” (BPFA 1995, p.71). It has also proposed supplementary measures such as counseling and placement for women in order to stimulate their on-the-job career development and upward mobility in the labor market.

Given all these, it implicates the need for gender equitable educational leadership so that both genders are actively involved in leading educational change. As Sperandio and Kagoda (2010) argue, women need to effectively participate in the change and development process. Accordingly, they must be provided with the necessary skills and knowledge for educational leadership and policy making, both at school and national levels.

Conversely, research and related global reports (Razvi and Roth, 2004; MDG Report, 2008, 2010) indicate that although, several policies and initiatives have been launched by various governments, they have not been adequately reinforced and lack
commitment. Hence, this necessitates a greater need for aligning the national policies and programmes to the gender related treaties and conventions. In addition, there is also a need to foster greater commitment to government policies and programs in order to redress gender inequities.

In advancing the discussion on gender equity, it is important to draw attention to the three distinctive strategic objectives articulated in the landmark Beijing Platform for Action (1995):

- Ensuring women’s equal access and full participation in power structures and decision making
- Increasing women’s capacity to participate in decision making and leadership and
- Generating and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation.

*(BPFA 1995, p. 75, 78, 81)*

In addition, the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) has outlined strategic actions that need to be implemented in order to achieve gender equality. These include the:

“Establishment of the goal of gender balance in government bodies and committees .......setting specific targets and implementing structures to substantially increase the number of women with a view to achieve equal representation of women and men, if necessary through positive action, in all government and public administration positions”

*(BPFA 1995, p. 76)*

In the tradition of drawing up strategic interventions for achieving gender equity, another milestone was achieved when, in the year 2000, all the 189 United Nations member states adopted the Millennium Declaration- a blueprint for a better world. Member countries reiterated their commitment to the Millennium Development Goal three (MDG
which is to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Millennium Development Goal three is pivotal to attaining social justice and human rights. In addition, it is increasingly recognized as an indispensable goal for achieving all the other Millennium Development Goals. Nonetheless, as reported elsewhere, progress in achieving gender equality has been sluggish and uneven in many countries, including Fiji (BPFA +15 Report 2010, MDGs Report 2010). Men are still concentrated at the higher echelons of leadership and management.

In retrospect, gender mainstreaming was adopted as a major strategy for promoting gender equality at the Fourth World Conference in 1995. While it is increasingly becoming the buzz word in the global development agendas, gender mainstreaming still arouses a lot of ambiguity and remains elusive. This necessitates the need for greater conceptual understanding of gender mainstreaming. The following section will discuss gender mainstreaming as an all-encompassing strategy for achieving gender equality.

**Gender Mainstreaming**

Gender mainstreaming is now increasingly recognized as a critical global and local strategy for promoting gender equality. It encompasses all aspects of planning, implementing and monitoring the social, political or economic action. It must be noted that gender mainstreaming is not an end in itself but a means and a strategy for achieving gender equality.

Hence, at the focus of gender mainstreaming is the interplay between the goals, strategies, resource allocations, planning and implementation. The United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) provides a comprehensive definition of gender mainstreaming which is explicated as:

".....the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns
and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.”

(UN ECOSOC Report 1997, p.2)

It is important to note that this definition is universally accepted and most extensively used. Clearly, gender mainstreaming entails a transformative process of eradicating inequality. It was adopted to elevate women’s status by making gender equality issues central to the development activities and facilitating more egalitarian workplaces (Mehra and Gupta, 2008).

However, the mainstreaming of a gender perspective also implicates potential risks. As Hannan (2003) argued, it has the potential to undermine the transformative process for promoting equality between men and women. Proponents assert that the risk of merely using gender mainstreaming as a strategy to achieve other developmental goals is high. Rather, the focus should be on gender equality as a developmental goal in itself.

In addition, Hannan (2003) argued that two important and pervasive misconceptions of gender mainstreaming may have crippling effects on the authentic translation of gender equity. The first being that gender mainstreaming is about gender balance within organizations and secondly, gender mainstreaming entails separate, specially targeted activities for women. Gender mainstreaming is not exclusively about integrating or including women into development agendas. Neither is it about merely increasing the number of women, although it is an essential element in mainstreaming. Rather, it involves a transformative process of “linking the goal of gender equality to other developmental goals, in the context of “mainstream” development policies and programmes” (p.14).

Withstanding these, relevant changes in structures, procedures and cultures ought to be facilitated in order to include men and women’s influence, participation and benefits.
Significantly, the process of the mainstreaming of gender will procure the inclusion of the perspectives of both men and women in policy and programme design, implementation and outcomes. Given these, the analyses of gender perspective in every sector of development become prudent. This is because it will unearth the discrepancies and trends of the current gender status. As Rhode (2003) posited, it is important to remember that the “absence of information masks the true costs of gender equality” (p. 17).

Conversely, gender mainstreaming does not eliminate the need for or replace targeted activities such as women-specific policies and programmes or positive legislation. Neither does it “substitute the gender units or focal points” (UN ECOSOC, 1997, p. 3). As Hannan (2003) asserted, targeted activities are a necessary complement to gender mainstreaming. She further argued that women-specific programmes have not outgrown their usefulness in addressing serious gaps. They are useful in addressing the past inequalities and promoting the advancement of women and gender equality.

Nonetheless, reports indicated that previous equity intervention strategies, such as the women-specific projects, were not successful in bringing about significant changes to women’s status. For instance, women-specific projects in the 1970s and 1980s failed due to marginalization. Henceforth, in 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UNECOSOC) reinforced gender mainstreaming as an effective implementation of the strategic objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA).

In addition, the Economic and Social Council reiterated that an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective should be promoted. It further outlined specific recommendations and provided directions for gender mainstreaming at all the levels of the sectors.

As a result, the UN Millennium Project Task Force on gender equality and empowerment reinforced the importance of investing in gender mainstreaming as a tool. They reiterated the need to expedite the process of gender mainstreaming (UN
Millennium Task Force 3, 2005). Notwithstanding these, various gender mainstreaming instrumental stakeholder reports such as, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2003), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development/World Bank (2008), the Beijing Platform for Action +15 and the MDGs 2009/2010 illustrate that gender mainstreaming has yet to be fully implemented anywhere.

Given these, it is important to note that gender equality can primarily be achieved by modifying gender infrastructure and making organizational and institutional changes. It is to be noted that changes to gender infrastructure involves the:

- Formulation and implementation of gender policies
- Establishment of gender units and
- Allocation of additional resources for women’s programs
- Increasing female staff and managers (through the appointment of a particular percentage of women to leadership positions)

(UN ECOSOC Report 1997)

Mehra and Gupta (2008) asserted that the “implementation involved change in both “internal” organizational and “external” operational procedures” (p. 313). Organizational changes involve improving work-family balance and equalizing power relations within organizations. Institutional changes call for broader societal changes in families, communities, markets and the state. Significantly, changes within the organization systems should embrace the goals and values of gender mainstreaming and modify systems and procedures to meet goals.

Furthermore, feminist scholarship argues that sex disaggregated data on leadership in most third world countries are not prioritized. For instance, Shakeshaft and colleagues (2007) claimed that there was inconsistency in the routine documentation and publication of sex disaggregated data in many countries. Strachan (2009) also reported
similar discrepancies and thus contended that the strangely inaccessible data on educational leadership by gender left room for much speculation. One could assume that the absence of data had been intentional. This is because most countries have data on salary and other information pertaining to school administration but, ironically, have failed to generate database on gender. The significance of sex disaggregated data cannot be understated. Essentially, documentation and systematic analyses of sex disaggregated data is useful in identifying and managing the compounding issues relating to gender.

Mehra and Gupta (2008) also drew attention to the shortfalls of gender mainstreaming. They pinpointed that policy commitments to gender mainstreaming evaporated and became invisible in planning and implementation. Thus, it resulted in the huge gap between policy commitments and the actual implementation. It is important to note that the most crucial and foremost step of using gender analyses to inform policies and programs is often ignored. Hence, attempts to facilitate gender mainstreaming fall short of meeting its agenda.

In addition, Hijab and Lewis (2003) argued that some development practitioners were reluctant to discuss women, women’s rights, affirmative action or women-only initiatives. This was because of the ingrained fear of being ignorant or politically incorrect. Also, the negative impacts of development on men are seldom addressed. Besides this, men are not empowered with capacities and resources in order to level the playing field. Thus, the lack of confidence in bringing gender issues to the frontier places undue constraints on the implementation of gender mainstreaming.

Nonetheless, reports also illuminated success stories on gender mainstreaming. For instance, some typical successful interventions included the violence preventing initiative for Latin America and the Caribbean, the community based poverty eradication programs in Africa and the infrastructure development project at the Asian Development Bank (Mehra and Gupta, 2008). However, the success of gender mainstreaming in these countries was attributed to six elements: relevance, leadership, grant financing, expertise, research and innovation (Buvinic, 2004, cited in Mehra and Gupta, 2008).
In addition to these six decisive elements, four key dimensions were critical to promoting change:

- the political will
- technical capacity
- accountability and
- Organizational culture (such as the adoption of a gender policy).

Presumably, these elements and dimensions can translate into greater success if replicated elsewhere and applied to suit different sectoral contexts.

It is also important to mention that the United Nation Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC) has acknowledged the outcome of the work on gender mainstreaming by the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Therefore, it has called for greater commitment in ensuring that all programmes explicitly mainstream a gender perspective. One must note that commitment to gender mainstreaming will ensue if:

- Assumptions of gender neutrality are not be made.
- Gender mainstreaming is significantly guided by the principles and specific recommendations outlined by the UN ECOSOC.
- Gender mainstreaming is institutionalized through concrete steps, mechanism and processes which include the formulation of specific strategies for sectoral areas, institutional directives, tools such as gender analysis, sex disaggregated data and sector specific surveys.
- Evaluation and accountability mechanisms are created
- Gender focal units/points in all policy making and programming is established.

Finally, it is important that support from the highest echelons of decision making is solicited. Inarguably, the earnest political will and the allocation of adequate human and
financial resources is critical to the success of translating the concept of gender mainstreaming into reality.

**Gender Mainstreaming in Fiji**

The Government of Fiji is committed to gender equality and empowerment of women. This is reflected in its planning and strategy documents such as the Opportunities for Growth 1993 and the Development Strategy 1997. The objectives stipulated in the Opportunities for Growth Document 1993 include efforts to involve men and women as equal partners at the national level, improve employment opportunities for women and to collect data on gender bias for the formulation of policies.

In addition, the state recognizes the need for ensuring gender-balanced partnership at all levels of decision making, equal partnership in political, economic and social development, promoting equal opportunity in employment and integrating women’s concern’s into all planning and policy areas. However, like elsewhere, Fiji falls short of achieving gender equality in the workforce (Kaumaitotoya, 2003). Notwithstanding this, Fiji’s ranking on the global indicators illustrates some progress in generating gender equality.

Furthermore, it is important to note that the Government of Fiji has ratified International and regional treaties and conventions such as the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Jakarta Declaration for the Advancement of Women in Asia and the Pacific and the 1994 Pacific Platform for Action. It was the commitment to these treaties that led to the formulation of The Women’s Plan of Action, which is premised on five significant commitment areas (detailed in Chapter 1).

Given this, the two significant commitments which directly relate to this research will be mentioned briefly in this section. First, is the commitment to “the mainstreaming of gender and women’s concerns in the planning process and second, is to ensure that “all policy areas and gender balance partnership at all levels of government recruit women.
on merit as appropriate and encourage the same in the private sector” (WPA 1999-2008). These commitments are further reinforced in the most recent Women’s Plan of Action (2010-2019) concern areas mentioned in the latter section of Chapter two.

Notably, the Women’s Plan of Action was instrumental in the establishment of several institutional mechanisms to promote gender equality and mainstreaming in Fiji. This was spearheaded by the Ministry of Women, Social Welfare and Poverty Alleviation (MOW). These mechanisms included the National Women’s Advisory Council (NWAC), the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Women (IMCW), Gender Focal Points (GFPs) at the deputy secretary levels in all the Ministries and Departments in 1998, five Taskforce to oversee the five areas of the Women’s Plan of Action commitments, a Gender training Unit for the Ministry of Women and the Human Rights Commission.

As Kaumaitotoya (2003) pinpointed, the Ministry of Women only monitors and regulates gender mainstreaming. Hence, the ultimate responsibility of implementing gender mainstreaming lies with the line ministries. The prerogative is theirs to encourage positive action in order to increase the participation of women in decision making and to ensure the promotion of gender equality in all its institutions and sectors.

Given all these, it is important to mention that gender mainstreaming has barely permeated the echelons of the Ministry of Education. The notable absence of gender policy, gender focal unit, and gender disaggregated data and tools such as gender analysis at both the national and local levels point to the fact that apparently, gender mainstreaming remains an invisible strategy. Nonetheless, women have been added to the higher echelons of the Ministry of Education administrative cadre. However, merely “adding women” (Harding, 2004, p.20) diminishes the underlying transformative agendas of gender mainstreaming. Evidently, more delineated and sustained efforts are needed to embrace strategies recommended by the Economic and Social Council and the Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio Economic Development 2009-2014 (RDSSD).
On the other hand, it is worthwhile to draw attention to the fact that gender mainstreaming has been engraved into higher education such as the University of the South Pacific (USP) which has successfully embarked on gender mainstreaming. This is evident in the formulation and implementation of a gender policy which explicitly outlines the roadmap to achieving gender equality at the University. A prominent feature of the USP gender policy is the incremental quota of 50% new, senior academic and comparable women staff. In addition, it articulates strategies to establish and maintain gender disaggregated data as well as to provide the training and assistance to advance women into the higher echelons of administration and leadership (USP Gender Policy, 2002, p.50).

One could only hope that the Ministry of Education draws from this exemplary organizational change to embark on the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all its policies and programmes. This is because gender equality is a human right and a mechanism for ensuring social justice to the other half of humanity, which are the women.

Finally, while the conceptual understanding of gender mainstreaming and how to make it happen is critical to its successful implementation it is important to note that it is perceivably difficult because it involves the usage of specific mechanisms and tools. These demand an increase in the capacity to use these mechanisms. It is anticipated that the conceptual understanding will dispel myths surrounding the incorporation of gender mainstreaming into technical policy and programming.

The next chapter submits the research methodology.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides a brief review of qualitative research methodology and phenomenological study, a branch of qualitative research. It includes the rationale followed by the reflexivity of the researcher and the explication of research tools which comprise the researcher, in-depth interviews, supplementary resources and a participatory learning and action workshop. A brief explanation of the phenomenological process of data analysis follows. Other inclusions in this chapter are: research participant data, data triangulation, authenticity and trustworthiness concluding with ethical considerations.

The terms ‘methodology’ and ‘methods’ sometimes create confusion as they are often used interchangeably. ‘Methodology’ refers to research design; the general approach to conducting an investigation. ‘Methods’ refer to tools or specific strategies to collect, manipulate or interpret data (Cohen et al., 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Methodology determines relevant methods or tools needed to extricate and analyse data. The following section explicates the qualitative research design adopted for this study.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is the study of a phenomenon in its natural setting with all its complex and multifaceted dimensions (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). The researcher studies real world issues in its actual context with an open, creative and critical mindset. H/she recognizes issues cannot be solely understood at face-value because they are complicated and multi-dimensional.

Qualitative research is subjective and predominantly inductive in nature. This means that the researcher begins with an observation and pursues this to unravel the realities. H/she explores a social or human problem as experienced by individuals in the real world and in doing so, captures the individual perspectives. Then h/she strives for meanings and
understandings in the face-to-face encounters with friends and strangers. Consequently, these specific occurrences are used to draw conclusions about a population (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

Since qualitative research is subjective in nature, interpersonal attachment and data embedded in context are critical to qualitative research. The researcher provides an “extensive, thick description of phenomena” (Klenke, 2008, p.12). S/He incorporates expressive language depicting reality and emotions central to human existence.

There are many variants of qualitative approach. Three significant traditions are phenomenology, ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism (Cohen et al., 2007). For this research, phenomenological study was selected because it was most appropriate for optimizing the meaningful interpretation of *Women in Educational Leadership: Challenges faced by a Selection of Women Head teachers in Ba, Fiji*. This study is underpinned by feminist theories, engaging women in an attempt to understand reasons for their subjugation.

The following section presents a brief review of literature on phenomenological study:

**The Phenomenological Study**

A phenomenological study “attempts to understand people’s perceptions, perspectives and understandings of particular situation” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p.141). It is also described as a type of qualitative research which advocates the study of direct experience (Cohen et al., 2007; Merriam, 2009). In such a study, the researcher may also have had some personal experience with the phenomena. The insider perspective is useful in generating a greater understanding of the phenomenon. Multiple perspectives of the situation enable the researcher to make some generalizations from an insider’s perspective.
A critical characteristic of phenomenological study is the “assumption of the essence” (Merriam, 2009, p. 24). In this study: *Women in Educational Leadership: Challenges faced by a Selection of Women Head teachers in Ba, Fiji*, the assumption of the essence was women’s underrepresentation.

Phenomenological studies rely on lengthy interviews (1-2 hours) with a carefully selected, typical sample size of five to twenty five individuals (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Hence, for this study, the best interview technique was the semi-structured interview modelled on unstructured questioning. This is further explicated in the *Interviews* section.

A phenomenological study is implemented in three phases including epoche, phenomenological reduction and horizontalization (Trumbell, 2005; Cohen et al., 2007 and Merriam, 2009). The researcher engaged in *epoche* prior to the interviews. *Epoche* means to “refrain from judgement” (Merriam, 2009, p.25). The researcher recognizes and suppresses personal bias to reduce its impact on presentation and interpretation of data. While this can be done by having conversations with one’s supervisors and peers and/or by documenting prejudices in a journal, entirely refraining from judgements is difficult (Trumbell, 2005; Leedy and Ormrod, 2010), especially if the researcher has had some personal experience of the phenomenon.

In this case, the researcher engaged in self-analysis to determine the dimensions of personal experience brought to the study. She recorded personal prejudices, viewpoints and assumptions in a journal. These everyday understandings, judgements and knowing were then “bracketed” (Merriam, 2009, p. 25) as the researcher revisited the phenomena.

The second and the third stages of the phenomenological study denote significant phases of data analysis covered in the section *Data Analysis*. 
Justification of Research Methodology

This study is underpinned by principles of feminist research. It attempts to discern and comprehend experiences of women through their feelings, reflections and perceptions. Feminist research studies social conditions of women by exploring contexts and reasons of women’s experiences. Therefore, this study is best justified by a phenomenological approach which deeply resonates with feminist research and provides the researcher with optimum opportunity to delve into experiences of women head teachers. It best justifies the need to represent women’s authentic voices and attempts to improve the status of women by “understanding why” (Weedon, 1987, p.8).

The researcher had some experience with the phenomenon, therefore played an insider role. As an insider, it enabled her to pursue underlying assumptions to unearth and interpret reasons for their experiences and perceptions. This was facilitated by in-depth interviews, supplementary resources and the participatory and learning workshop which were adopted as the tools of research.

Reflexivity

Initial impetus for this research came from the realization there were very few women head teachers in Ba and elsewhere in Fiji despite women outnumbering male teachers in primary schools. Being an educator for the past twenty-two years, the researcher observed women teachers barely progressed into leadership positions. This had the researcher questioning underrepresentation of women in educational leadership.

Teaching experience is a predictor of securing leadership appointments in Fiji schools. However, it appears that equally experienced and competent women teachers are often marginalized. Male teachers advance rapidly and assume school leadership. This occurs in spite of the Equal Opportunity legislation.

Some mixed reactions and veiled animosity was affirmed during the researcher’s field work. One of the workshop male participants expressed what was interpreted as veiled
frustration coupled with fear when he asked, “What is it that women want? Do they want to dominate men?” It also appeared that a few of the male participants were slightly unnerved and perhaps subtly defensive as the researcher was asking too many questions. Asking too many questions to males is considered culturally inappropriate for women. While they responded openly to the questions their subtle quizzical expressions and in a few instances sly smiles hinted that the topic chosen for the study was not worthy of deliberation. One could only assume that they were plagued by numerous silent questions such as “what is she trying to prove, why choose women, what does she know about leadership and why equality?”

On the other hand, the women head teachers were at ease in relaying experiences, probably because they were interviewed in isolation. They were often generous and forthright with their responses. The researcher being one of them elicited candid in-depth responses. Their emphatic and forthright responses entwined with reminiscences of regret and sadness distinctly reminded the researcher of Brunner’s (1999) analogy of “crawling through the window of a dream and surveying the terrain” (p.7).

The interest for this study was fuelled by the intrinsic desire to understand “why” women are underrepresented in educational leadership and “how” the pervasive inequities can be reduced. Feminist scholarship has predominantly expounded issues affecting women. Without feminist research and politics many women would remain in a generally deplorable state. Equality and equitable benefits would remain unattainable. Largely, the onus is on women to unearth experiences issues pertaining to them.

Methods/Research Tools

Methods are defined as specific strategies, techniques or tools of collecting data. These are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction (Cohen, et al., 2007; Klenke, 2008 and Merriam, 2009). Qualitative research methods are diverse strategies which emphasize processes and shared meanings not measured in terms of quantity, amount or frequency. They produce rich in-depth data through direct
quotation and judicious description of situations, events, interactions and observed behaviours.

Some examples of specific qualitative data collection tools are case studies, focus groups, life histories, structured, semi-structured or unstructured interviews. Also included are content analysis of a variety of texts such as personal diaries, photographs, video clips and official reports, surveys, conversation analysis and direct observations (Latherby, 2003; Trumbell, 2005; Cohen et al., 2007; Klenke, 2008; Merriam, 2009 and Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). However, the researcher’s theoretical orientation, the problem and purpose of the study and the selected sample determine the data collection techniques as well as the information considered to be data.

This study utilized research tools which included the researcher, in-depth interviews, supplementary resources and a participatory learning and appraisal workshop to collect data. They were selected because they best justified both the feminist underpinnings and the phenomenological approach adopted in this study. It is important to note that in-depth interviews informed the major part of the research. This was obligatory because the researcher could not otherwise observe behaviour, feelings or deduce how these women and other participants interpreted their experiences. The researcher was also significantly interested in the past events that could not be reproduced (Merriam, 2009). The various research tools are explicated in the following sections:

**The Researcher as a Tool**

In qualitative interviewing, the primary data collection tool is the researcher. The researcher as a tool has aptly been coined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), cited in Klenke (2008) as the “human-as-instrument” (p.136). This means that the researcher as an individual adopts the role of an instrument. The coined phrase also implies the dualistic roles executed by the researcher. On one hand, the researcher is an individual with an active and subjective role and on the other h/she acts like a gadget which is impersonal and passive.
Significantly, the researcher was the “only instrument flexible enough to capture the complex, subtle and the ever changing human experiences” (Klenke, 2008, p.136). One must note that the notion of the researcher as a tool unequivocally includes the human mind. Leedy & Ormrod (2010) posit that “the human mind is undoubtedly the most important tool on the researcher’s workbench” (p.31). The researcher utilized the key strategies of critical thinking, inductive reasoning and collaboration with others to arrive at generalizations and emergent theories.

Qualitative researchers are allowed to be flexible in the application of their knowledge, expertise and interpersonal skills (Klenke, 2008). It is the researcher who facilitated openness and collaboration in the decoding process so that meanings were constantly negotiated and agreed upon.

In addition to the researcher, interviews were the most important data extricating tools. The following section details the type of interview and questions adopted for this study.

**Interviews**

Interviews are special forms of guided or dialogical conversations that are interactional in nature. “Qualitative interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world of the informants by asking them to talk about their lives” (Klenke, 2008, p.120). By talking about their lives in a given context, participants reveal rich, valuable information on facts, beliefs, feelings, motives, present and past behaviours, and standards for behaviour.

However, when researchers interrogate about past experiences, they must be mindful that the recollection may not always represent what actually happened. This is because “people’s memories are subject to considerable distortion” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p.148). Hence, the researcher has to select from the various interviewing techniques
ranging from the structured, unstructured (open-ended), semi-structured, telephone, internet and focus group interviews.

Essentially, in phenomenology and feminist research, the researcher analyses and discloses subjectivities. H/she “strives to generate the kind of conversation that is intimate and self-revealing” (Merriam, 2009, p.92). Since this study adopts both feminist and phenomenological approaches, semi-structured interviews were considered the most appropriate. All interviews were conducted “face-to-face” (Klenke, 2008, p. 120). *Face-to-face* encounters often optimize interaction with the interviewee because it narrows the gap between them. The researcher has access to behaviours displayed by the interviewees that may extend, enrich and/or validate the attitudes and feelings of the interviewees. Thus, the researcher has the opportunity to derive meanings of particular behaviours.

Semi-structured interviews most often replicate unstructured interviews. This means that the researcher is guided by the research questions but the mode of asking closely resembles unstructured interviewing. It is essential to draw one’s attention to the usefulness of the *unstructured* mode. A salient feature of unstructured interviewing is that it allows the researcher to “delve deep beneath the surface of superficial responses” (Klenke, 2008, p. 125). Therefore, it enhanced the researcher’s capacity to assign true meanings to participant experiences, attitudes and behaviours. This was possible because the researcher was at a liberty to, on the basis of the responses and flow of conversation, conduct the interrogation using “who, what, where, why, when and how” (Klenke, 2008, p. 127) questions in order to extricate relevant data.

It was also important to adopt the semi-structured interview because comparatively, although unstructured interviews elicit a lot of information, the researcher could possibly lose track of the essence and “may feel lost in a sea of divergent viewpoints and the seemingly unconnected pieces of information” (Merriam, 2009, p. 91). On a similar note, Leedy and Ormrod (2010) assert that the divergent viewpoints may be problematic because it limits comparisons among interviewees.
“Productive interviews” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p.149) are not easy to execute. Therefore, prior to the interview, it is essential to establish a guideline that is premised on the research questions. The researcher used the following salient features of productive interviews as a guideline:

- Identification of several interview questions in advance
- Consideration of interviewees’ cultural background and its effect on their responses
- Ensuring that the interviewees represented the phenomenon under investigation. (identify extremist or exceptional interviewees)
- Identifying a suitable time and distraction-free location through consensus.
- Getting written permission through a consent form (see appendix B1)
- Establishing and maintaining rapport
- Allowing freedom of expression while recognizing inconsistencies in their recollection
- Keeping reactions to self
- Being mindful that all responses may not necessarily be factual
- Recording responses verbatim.

(Adapted from Leedy & Ormrod, 2010)

At the end of the first few interviews, interviewees were given the opportunity to suggest some questions they perceived essential to this study. This was done to include questions that initially may have been overlooked by the researcher.

In addition, other inclusions that eased transition into the actual interview and generated a comfort zone were:

- *Usage of meaningful ice-breakers*
These included descriptions of nature of the research, the interview schedule, the interviewer’s interest in the study, inviting the respondent to seek clarifications, offering additional information about the study and asking the interviewees to talk about themselves.

- **Establishment of a good rapport**

Klenke (2008) and Merriam (2009) assert that the establishment of a good rapport is crucial to permeating the other person’s perspectives. This enhanced cooperation and collaboration and opened doors for delving deeper.

- **Adoption of a critically non-judgemental, sensitive and respectful stance**

The researcher adopted a non-argumentative stance while listening emphatically (Klenke, 2008; Merriam, 2009). This was essential in developing mutual trust and maintaining neutrality.

- **Identification of socio-demographic data (age, ethnicity, marital status, formal qualifications and positions held).**

An initial questionnaire with open-ended questions was designed to get the basic information on their personal, professional and cultural background. This helped the researcher to ascertain any influence it might have had on their responses.

The table on the following page illustrates the alignment of the interview questions to the research questions:
Table 8: The Research and Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESEARCH QUESTION</th>
<th>INTERVIEW QUESTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do female head teachers in Fiji perceive educational leadership?</td>
<td>• What would be your ideal definition of leadership?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The concept of leadership has changed over the years. What do you have to say about this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• What do you think are some of the most important qualities of a good school leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Women cannot be effective school leaders. What would you tell people who say this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Suppose you were asked to lead a larger school. What would be your reaction?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• How is leadership different from what you have expected?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General:</strong></td>
<td>What do you think of the research topic? Any other general comments? Any other question you think needs to be included?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. What challenges do women teachers encounter in advancing to primary school leadership in Fiji?</td>
<td>Can you tell me about your experiences of working with:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a. Male head teachers/leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b. Female heads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you describe some of the challenges/difficulties you faced in getting into the headship/leadership position?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do you think are some ways women can overcome these challenges/difficulties?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you tell me your husband’s comments/reaction on your appointment?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What factors support the advancement of women into educational leadership in Fiji?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Why do we need to promote more women teachers into educational leadership?</td>
<td>What qualities do you think makes you successful as an educational leader?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do you think are some advantages of being a woman in the leadership position?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What do you think are some of the values women bring to leadership?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can you tell me some of the changes you have done as a leader?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interview Questions continued from the previous page:

| 5. *What are some ways in which we can achieve gender equality in educational leadership?* | • What do you think about the number of women in educational leadership positions in primary schools Ba/Fiji?  
• What do you think are some of the ways in which the MoE can promote more women in educational leadership in Fiji?  
• What some ways you think the perceptions of people in the society can be changed to encourage women into leadership?  
• Any other comments you want to make regarding women in leadership? |

The same interview questions were utilized for participant observations with minor word/phrase substitutions for the male participants. Interviews were conducted in the English language because it was the preferred medium of communication.

While the interviews provided rich data it also provided the women with a novel opportunity to validate their experiences and learning. They illuminated issues such as childhood and family experiences, parental influence and nature of early and higher education, reasons for seeking leadership positions, experiences within schools and perceptions of barriers, if any. The next section details the type of questions utilized for this study.

**Questioning**

A productive interview is essentially dependent on the mode of questioning and the type of questions asked. The researcher was able to maintain a great degree of flexibility in extricating data because the mode of questioning was unstructured. Topic-initiating and
follow-up questions enrich and deepen the texture of data as the interview unfolds (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, it was important for the researcher to be well versed with the phenomena in order to formulate exploratory questions in advance. These questions were aligned to the research questions underpinning the study (illustrated in Table 8, p. 84).

The researcher utilized both open-ended and close-ended questions. While open-ended questions dominated the interviews, the researcher integrated it with some close-ended questions. Close-ended questions were mostly utilized to confirm or negate experiences. Essentially, open-ended questions emerged from the immediate context and the natural course of conversation becoming the cornerstone of eliciting descriptive and effective data. This enabled the interviewees to “delve into their innermost emotional lives to the levels they choose and they do so with their emotional voice” (Denzin and Giardina, 2009, p. 81).

Merriam (2009) identified four types of questions critical to interviewing. They include the hypothetical, devil’s advocate, ideal position and interpretative questions. The researcher took great care to include these in order to optimize responses from the interviewees (see Appendix C1 for the examples and brief explanations).

In order to elicit greater detail, the researcher also utilized probes which are questions or comments that follow up something already asked. Probing becomes an essential tool when one’s intention is to clarify and elicit more information (Klenke, 2008). Examples of probes utilized in this study included silence, interjections and single words such as yes to complete sentences.

Conversely, the researcher was cautious that silence could be interpreted as a cultural protocol, respect and/or attempts to withhold information. In the context of the Fijian women the silences were interpreted as attempts to withhold information that would generate embarrassment. Therefore, the researcher gently probed with questions such as “can you give me an example, what did h/she say and/or could you say a little more?” to
elicit more information. She encouraged the interviewee to elaborate on something that was important by listening to and exploring the key words and themes. Most importantly, she was mindful not to “press too hard or too fast” (Merriam, 2009, p.101) on the interviewees.

Recording Interview Data

Recording data for analyses is essentially critical to in-depth interviewing. Merriam (2009) has identified three basic ways of recording interview data: tape recording, note taking during interview and recalling and writing after interview. However, tape recording has often been found to be the most popular and effective.

For this study, interviews were recorded using an “unobtrusive digital recorder” (Merriam, 2009, p.109). Although an expensive gadget, it enabled the researcher to record interviews discreetly without having to worry about the nagging disruptions like malfunctioning, changing discs/tapes during the interviewing process, being anxious about the durability of the batteries and/or data storage capacity or having to bring the equipment up-close. Therefore, the researcher was able to access first-hand data accurately and effortlessly from the face-to-face interviews. Given the smallness and unobtrusive nature of the recorder, there was no anxiety amongst interviewees (after the anticipated initial nervousness).

After the interviews, the often wearisome and time consuming task of transcribing interviews followed. These are explicated in the sections that follow:

Transcribing Interview Data

The researcher transcribed the recorded data verbatim, that is, word-for-word, immediately after each interview. According to Merriam (2009), verbatim or word-for-word transcriptions of recorded interviews provide the best database for analyses. The transcript was handwritten and analysed manually.
In addition, the researcher transcribed all the interviews personally in order to maximise confidentiality and anonymity. Although transcribing is a wearisome and time consuming task, it is most ideal because “on-going analysis and understandings occur during transcription” (Klenke, 2008: 136). Extreme care was taken to safeguard the integrity of the interviews during the verbatim transcription as well as in the interpretation of data. Any bias arising from the researcher’s own ethnic and educational background during the interpretation was unintended.

**The Women in this Study:**

The five women head teachers at the crux of this study are head teachers of primary schools in Ba. They hail from different provinces of Fiji and all except one are originally from Viti Levu. Two of the women are from the Ba province, one from the Ra province and the fourth one from the Nadroga/Navosa province. The fifth woman originates from the Bua/Macuata province in Vanua Levu.

The women, whose ages range from the mid-thirties to early-fifties, have never participated in any research. They felt very privileged to be able to contribute to this path-breaking study on Women head teachers.

The women have teaching experiences ranging from eighteen to thirty five years. All have been recently appointed as head teachers. This is their first formal leadership position. They are also full time classroom teachers. Two of them were confirmed as deputy head teachers and executive teachers. Two have served as executive teachers for a period spanning twelve to fourteen years. However, the other three women have acted as executive teachers with periods spanning from two to five years. One of the women who acted as a deputy head teacher for a year is the only one currently pursuing a degree in primary education.
All the women began their career in teaching with the primary teacher’s certificate. Except for one, all have upgraded their qualifications. Two have a Diploma in Hindi and Early Childhood Certificate respectively. One has also done a few courses from the University of the South Pacific. All except one have undergone the Future Leaders Training initiated by the PDU arm of the Ministry of Education. The women have been described as “the best and most outstanding among the head teachers in Ba; better than the male head teachers. Their work is up-to-date and always on time” (Ba District Education Office, 2010).

All the women except one were catapulted into headship when the State Services Decree on compulsory retirement came into effect on 30th April 2009. Only eighteen percent (18%) of the head teachers in Ba were females at the time of the study. Some of them had acquired acting positions when the compulsory retirement was effected. Apparently, they were lucky enough to be situated in the first line in order to get promoted.

Despite coming from different provinces, all except one have similar geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds. Four of the women come from rural and large patriarchal families with poor socioeconomic backgrounds. All are married with children except one who is divorced with no children.

**Supplementary Resources**

Data from the lead women was supplemented by fourteen other participants. Eight females and six males became the supplementary resources. Females dominated the representation because of the feminist research underpinnings. Four women head teachers from the neighbouring district, Lautoka (2 Fijians of indigenous descent) were included. This was a worthwhile inclusion because it enabled the researcher to gain valuable insights on how other Fijian women of indigenous descent experienced and explained the causes and meanings of similar events and actions.
Although, this study is underpinned by feminist research, the perspectives of the male gender complemented this study. These were considered useful in eliminating biasness which otherwise could have contaminated the data from the women. Although, some of the participants were unknown to the researcher, they were chosen as informants because their voices and perspectives represented alternative contexts and were useful in triangulating data, for example, information from the bank manager and the Women’s Interest officer. The researcher contacted most of them over the telephone to obtain oral consent, negotiate time as well as to inform them about the purpose of the research. The following table is a summary of supplementary resource participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>Qualification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director (Tertiary)</td>
<td>IF</td>
<td>PhD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coordinator (Tertiary)</td>
<td>IF</td>
<td>M.Ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Officer</td>
<td>1 IF 1 IT</td>
<td>M.Ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school teacher</td>
<td>2 IF 1 IT</td>
<td>M.Ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Manager</td>
<td>IF</td>
<td>B.Com</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Interest Officer</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>B.A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher</td>
<td>2 IF 2 IT</td>
<td>1 M.Ed/ 3Cert.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Head teacher</td>
<td>IF</td>
<td>M.Ed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>IF: Indo-Fijian    PhD: Doctor of philosophy    M.Ed: Master of Education    B.A: Bachelor of Arts IT: iTaukei Cert.: Certificate in Primary Teaching    B.Com: Bachelor of Commerce</td>
<td>6 8 14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Participatory Learning and Appraisal (PLA) Workshop

The PLA workshop is a visionary and transformative approach underpinned by ideologies of interactive learning, shared knowledge, usefulness and significance. PLA is premised on transcending values of empowerment, social justice and full participation in decision-making, the new developmental buzz words (Cornwell, 2000). Therefore, it has become a significant vehicle for transmission of essential initiatives such as gender development and advocacy, citizenship and rights, children’s participation and critical reflection from practice.

The primary aim of the PLA is the transformation of “conventional development into a process of engagement with and by local people, rather than to use expert knowledge to dictate interventions” (Cornwell, 2000, p.7). Therefore, PLA recognizes people as valuable and active actors who need to be empowered collectively to transform their lives. PLA can be modified to suit the context and cultures of the participants. Underpinning this people-oriented approach, is the fundamental belief that people can and must overcome the subjugating forces and power differentials that marginalize the underprivileged. PLA echoes feminist concerns for representation, agency and voice and resonates deeply with critical feminist research because it strives for equal representation through participatory approaches. Given these, PLA approaches augment feminist research methodologies in that they share a number of common epistemological, ethical and political principles.

The significance of the PLA workshop for this study cannot be understated because participatory approaches challenged the educational leaders’ perceptions on why women are underrepresented and provided them with the opportunity to realize the stark realities of women’s oppression and marginalization. Notably, the PLA workshop identified new frontiers, challenges and envisioned opportunities for transforming inequalities. These are explicated in the Discussion Chapter 6. The PLA workshop for this study is detailed in the following section.
A two-day participatory learning and appraisal workshop on gender mainstreaming in the Ba District was organised. The researcher was the sole organizer and facilitator of the workshop. Both genders were included in order to increase the authenticity and trustworthiness of the workshop. Two major themes underpinned the workshop: challenges faced by the women head teachers and the appraisal of gender mainstreaming (see appendix D2 for workshop details).

The researcher engaged in the following prior to the workshop:

- Seeking approval from the Permanent Secretary for Education (see AppendixD1).
- A proposal detailing the background, aims and objectives of the workshop and participant names was submitted in order to seek approval and secure the release of the selected school leaders.
- Issuing invitations to the school leaders via the Ba District Education Office (see Appendix D3).
- Arranging for venue, data projector, tea and lunch and other resources such as markers and newsprint.
- Drawing up the workshop programme.
- Preparation of folders containing notes on gender mainstreaming.
- Designing and printing certificates of participation.
- Arranging for chief guests to officially open and close the workshop.

The Principal Education Officer, Ba/Tavua District, officially opened the workshop. Participants were also accorded the rare privilege of the presence of the Permanent Secretary for Education, who, while on an official visit to the Ba Education Office, graced the occasion, despite his heavy schedule. The workshop was officially closed by the Senior Education Officer, who also awarded the certificates of participation.
The Workshop Participants

Fourteen primary sector educational leaders from the Ba Education District comprising both genders participated in this workshop. They were aged between forty and fifty one; except for one who was a twenty seven year old head teacher. The following table summarises the workshop participants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Sample</th>
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<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Education Officer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Head teacher</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Head teacher</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Researcher on 24/11/2010

Group Processes

The workshop was underpinned by group learning processes. Thus, a forum for shared and interactive learning was facilitated. The general subject matter was predetermined by the researcher. In addition, the researcher used an ice breaker for introductions and established some basic ground rules in order to maintain semblance of order and the smooth transition of the various activities (see Appendix D4).
Various group strategies such as the *placemat*, *gallery walk*, *Plus/Minus/Interesting (PMI)*, *problem tree* and *group discussion* were included and are explicated below. These strategies addressed the major themes emanating from the research questions underpinning this study: *Challenges primary school women teachers/ leaders face* and *achieving gender equity*.

In addition, the participants ranked their responses using the simple numerical order (1-5) in certain activities. This was done because the researcher wanted to understand the participants’ preferences for different items. She also wanted to identify the most/least contributing factors and to relate these to the key characteristics of those items. It is noteworthy that all group responses were recorded on newsprints and displayed prior to group presentations and further discussions.

Group strategies utilized are briefly explicated in the following sections:

**The Placemat Strategy:**

Participants:

- Individually thought about a question and wrote their responses in the allocated portion of the newsprint
- Shared ideas to discover common elements
- Summarized common concepts and wrote it at the center of the newsprint (see Appendix D5.1).

**Plus /Minus /Interesting (PMI):**

This was utilized to evaluate and critically analyse a sample gender policy; principles, goals and strategies. Participants discussed these in small groups and recorded their perceptions of the strengths, weaknesses and concepts they found interesting (see Appendix D5.2 for template).
**Gallery Walk**

The gallery walk follows a group discussion and the wall display of the findings. While there are variations of the gallery walk, the participants engaged in the following:

- *Walked* and viewed other groups’ work.
- One person from each group remained at the display to explain and/or justify their group’s work.

**Group Discussion:**

This encouraged participants to share ideas about selected issues such as *Gender Roles: Identification and Implications*. The researcher adopted the following in order to generate the full and worthwhile participation of all the members as well as to elicit collective gender perspectives:

- Revisited the ground rules established prior to the workshop
- Ensured that each group had a reasonable level of understanding to ensure a relevant and smooth flow of ideas
- Allocated group member roles such as the facilitator, recorder, timekeeper, and reporter, through consensus.
- Established gender-based groups for selected activities such as *the problem tree* which is explicated later in this section.

**The Problem Tree:**

The *Problem Tree* was utilized to draw out participants’ perceptions and experiences to explain the causes of underrepresentation of women in educational leadership and its effects. Following their discussions, the participants:

- Drew a tree of their choice
• Wrote the Problem: *Underrepresentation of Women in Educational Leadership* along the stem

• Listed the causes at the root

• Listed the effects at the branches

• Ranked the causes from numbers 1-5 with number 1 being the most common cause of the problem.

**Workshop Evaluation/ Participant Reflections:**

At the end of the two-day’s workshop, the participants completed the evaluation forms (see Appendix D6) prepared by the researcher and submitted their one-page reflections which were analysed.

**Data Analysis**

The purpose of data analyses in this study was to identify common themes in people’s description of their experiences. The researcher was mindful of the fact that data analysis in a qualitative research involves the “non-numerical” (Klenke, 2008, p. 32) organization of data. Critically, data analysis and interpretation are closely interwoven and often integrated with data collection.

It is significant to note that in a phenomenological study, data analysis is characterized by the processes of phenomenological reduction, horizontalization and imaginative variation (Trumbell, 2005; Merriam, 2009). These essentially involve the identification of relevant statements and clustering them into “meaning units”, seeking “divergent perspectives” and constructing a “composite” (Leedy and Ormrod, 2010, p. 142). The phenomenological data analysis processes are briefly explicated on the next page.
1. Phenomenological Reduction:

Bracketing important information for analysis from pure data.

Relevant statements separated from irrelevant.

2. Horizontalization:

Inspection of relevant data. Each data accorded equal value.

Data bracketed once again. Organized into clusters and themes. Irrelevant, repetitions or overlapping data eliminated.

“Textual descriptions” (Trumbell, 2000, p. 109), that is, what the participants actually said, were word processed.

From clusters, data broken into manageable themes further delineated into categories. Often, thematic coding and categorizing occurred simultaneously with clustering.
Data Triangulation

Triangulation of data is a powerful way of enhancing authenticity and trustworthiness of qualitative research. The researcher enriches the phenomenon and attempts to explain it more completely by incorporating other viewpoints which are obtained by utilizing two or more research tools.

There are different types of triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007). The researcher employed both the combined levels and the methodological triangulation. The combined levels involved the analysis from three different levels, that is, at the individual, interactive (groups) and the level of collectivities (workshop).
The methodological triangulation involved the identification of common themes emerging from the in-depth interviews of all the women and the supplementary resources. It is significant to mention that the methodological type uses “either the same method on different occasions, or different methods on the same object of study” (Denzin, 1970b, cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 142).

**Research Participants**

Participants were selected by purposive sampling involving the intentional, non-random selection of individuals or objects that represent the topic under investigation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). However, the selection of the lead participants, although unintentional, was restricted by ethnicity. This was because the chosen area of the study was limited by the number of women head teachers. There were only eighteen percent female head teachers in Ba district at the time of the study.

The five who consented to participate were selected of which one was indigenous Fijian. These women led primary schools of various levels ranging from the smallest to the medium school levels which were located in the urban and peri urban areas of the district except for one. She was from a remote rural school. The head teachers in the study comprised three very senior and two younger females with ages ranging from thirty six to fifty three.

These women were selected because they directly experienced the phenomenon under study. They were in the leadership positions and have been in the primary teaching for a period ranging from eighteen to thirty five years. The selected sample demonstrated the potential, confidence, competency and openness to actively engage as co-researchers in this study.

In addition, twenty eight (28) other participants (already mentioned under supplementary resources and workshop participants) were included in the study. These participants became the ‘voice from the field’ (Kenton and Ashley, 2004). They were selected
because it was important to provide multiple perspectives through collaborative and shared processes. It also enabled the researcher to triangulate data.

Therefore, in totality, thirty three (33) participants informed this study. It is worthwhile to mention that the inclusion of the education officers in the workshop stems from the political agenda underpinning this study. Because these officers represent the power houses of political influence, it was important to empower them. A summary of the research participants follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Participants</th>
<th>Methods</th>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>LEAD PARTICIPANTS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplementary Resource:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Director (Tertiary)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coordinator (Tertiary)</td>
<td>Semi-structured Interview</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education Officer</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secondary school teacher</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bank Manager</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s Interest Officer</td>
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<td>Deputy head teacher</td>
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<td>Workshop Participants</td>
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<td>TOTAL</td>
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<td>14</td>
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</table>
Authenticity and Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, authenticity and trustworthiness are synonymously used to denote the conventional issues related to reliability and validity. Essentially, the utilization of these two terms in qualitative research is parallel to those in quantitative researches. However, Klenke (2008) posits that the quantitative criteria of determining reliability and validity may be misleading in qualitative research. Hence, it is important to draw one’s attention to the four core elements: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Klenke, 2008) which corresponds intimately to the concerns of reliability and validity (see Appendix C2 for definitions). While these terms do not represent a one-one correspondence to the conventional terms, they provide significant guidelines for enhancing authenticity and trustworthiness in qualitative research. Great care was taken to enhance the authenticity and trustworthiness of this study by engaging in the following:

- **Respondent Validation/Member Checking**

This entails the process of continuously verifying data and meanings with the participants. Given this, the researcher confirmed what the participants said or meant during the interviews and after the verbatim transcriptions and initial analysis. The participants were allowed to hear their recorded responses immediately after the interview which gave them time to modify and/or extend anything they wished to. Transcripts were also given to the lead participants for checking.

- **Prolonged Engagement**

The researcher prolonged her interactions with the participants basically during the in-depth interviews (1-2 hours) and through informal conversations during member checking. The face-face briefing session, telephone conversations prior to the interviews and the informal conversations during and after the workshop also enabled the researcher to remain *in-touch* with some, if not all, the participants.
• **Reflexivity**

As mentioned earlier, the researcher engaged in reflexivity. In this way she was able to bracket her personal values, assumptions and prejudices through critical self-reflection which was recorded in a journal. It is essential to mention that while she adopted an insider role, she was continuously conscious of her standpoint and managed to monitor her bias.

• **Data Triangulation**

Data was triangulated through the verification of facts among the participant responses as well as through data gathered at the workshop and via supplementary resources.

**Ethical Considerations**

Ethics in qualitative research revolves around the issues of honesty and lying, power and privilege and the overall quality of the relationship between the researcher and the participants. The fundamental role of ethics is to “hold researchers responsible and accountable for ethical conduct and the strictest adherence to ethical principles in research with human participants” Klenke (2008, p. 49). On one hand, the researcher is guided against fabrication, falsification of data, research procedures, data analysis, plagiarism and abuse of confidentiality in proposing, performing and reporting the results of a research. On the other, the participants are safeguarded against any possible exploitation and harm.

Given that ethical considerations permeate the research process (Cohen et al., 2007) the researcher took extreme care in maintaining the highest ethical standards. Hence, this research was guided by the highest level of integrity, responsible conduct and was undertaken in accordance with the ethical guidance of the Public Service Commission, the University of the South Pacific and AusAid (the dominant sponsor). In addition, ethics of respective schools and individual cultures were upheld.
Furthermore, the following ethical considerations guided this study:

- **Seeking Informed Consent**
  Prior to the study, the researcher sought oral and written informed consents from the participants and her employer, the Ministry of Education and its Research Development Unit. It is essential to mention that the informed consent is the premise for structuring ethical considerations (Cohen et al., 2007) because it acts as an implicit contractual relationship between the researcher and the participants. It details the nature of research and its procedures, privacy rights and respect for human freedom ensuing voluntary participation and confidentiality.

  The sensitive nature of the study prompted the researcher to seek oral consent. Participants were allowed to ask questions before giving consent. For the other participants, oral consent was elicited either through telephone or by calling upon them personally to explain the nature of the study.

- **The Right to Privacy**
  Dignity, privacy and interests of the participants were paramount to this study. Hence, the researcher kept the nature and quality of participant responses strictly confidential. Various pseudonyms were assigned to different participants, both during data collection and the final research report to ensure confidentiality. This was essential because confidentiality issues are particularly significant at the time of publication since the results of a qualitative research are interlaced with lengthy quotations from participants (Klenke, 2008).

- **Minimizing the Risk of Harm**
  Greatest care was taken to minimise the risk of harm to the participants (Cohen et al., 2007; Klenke, 2008; Leedy and Ormrod, 2010). Hence, when the researcher felt that the interview process had created minor psychological discomfort or evoked emotional reactions and responses, the psychological well-being of the participants was paramount. The knowledge that certain issues were sensitive and personal took precedence in creating a balance between the risks and benefits. Essentially, the researcher also
safeguarded against her emotional response during data collection and the entire research process.

- **Ownership and Dissemination of data**
This was negotiated with relevant participants/ stakeholders prior to undertaking field work. Hence, this ensured the appropriate and full utilization of findings without undue exploitation of the content (which may contain sensitive issues), the participants and the researcher. It also sealed the researcher’s right to publish accordingly. While the publication is the intellectual property of the researcher, the rights between the researchers, the participants, the institution (USP), the employer (Ministry of Education and the sponsor AusAid) was negotiated prior to undertaking the study.

- **Reciprocation**
The researcher ensured that the participants were reciprocated for sharing their experiences, their invaluable insights and time. The researcher provided incentives in the form of refreshments and lunch to the workshop participants. In addition, they were rewarded with certificates of participation for their disclosure of personal and sensitive issues.

Undeniably the “traditional and exploitive nature of much research” (Jayaratne & Stewart, 1991, cited in Cohen et al., 2007, p.35) is contentious because while the researchers receive all the accolades, those researched remain in their undisrupted situations. Hence, it is envisaged that this research will disrupt inequality in educational leadership and accrue benefits to all women educational leaders and the general female teacher population.

- **Integrity in Reporting**
The researcher was obligated to uphold complete honesty (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) in reporting her findings. As a responsible and ethical researcher, she was under obligation to her professional colleagues not to intentionally mislead them or other readers about
the nature of her findings. Data was not fabricated to support any conclusion that may have preceded this study elsewhere.

The next chapter presents the findings from the fieldwork conducted among the women head teachers.
CHAPTER FIVE
PRESENTATION OF DATA

INTRODUCTION

This chapter submits the findings of the fieldwork that was conducted in Ba, in the western province of Fiji. The research questions guiding the fieldwork of this study are listed in Chapter 1.

Data was elicited from five women head teachers from the Ba province, supplementary resources and workshop participants. Data collection methods involved:

- Semi-structured in-depth interviews and
- A participatory learning and appraisal workshop.

The interviews, conducted from the nineteenth (19) October, 2010 to the eleventh (11) January, 2011, illuminated findings which included the women’s childhood and family experiences, parental influence and nature of early and higher education, reasons for seeking leadership positions, experiences within schools and perceptions of barriers and challenges encountered in advancing to school leadership.

The textual descriptions (exact participant quotes) are italicized. Textual descriptions from participants have been categorized using the following codes:

- IP - interview participant (the five women head teachers)
- FSR - female supplementary resource
- FWP - female workshop participant
- MWP - male workshop participant

The thematic presentations of the findings are:

- Perceptions of Women Head teachers
- The Challenges
- Factors that Support the Advancement of women teachers
- The Female Advantage
Achieving Gender equity in Educational Leadership

The Perceptions of the Women Headteachers

The women head teachers’ perceptions of leadership and leading styles increasingly denote the paradigm of share and empower. They indicated their preference for cultivating teamwork and practising shared leadership. As one of the women head teachers elaborated:

...leadership means being fair, listening to everybody’s views, working together as a team and making everyone feel at home

(IP, p. 262)

In illuminating the differences between the past and recurrent leadership practices, one of the women head teachers wryly noted:

We have gone through certain leaders, most leaders were males, who just tell you to do this and that or otherwise face this. We would hardly see them doing it but they would just tell, not even guide you through. But, now we show the way; we get together with our colleagues and guide them.

(IP, p. 145-146)

The above recount illustrates leadership (mostly male stream) was authoritative and dictatorial. Change and innovation was mostly stifled by the strong culture of adhering to traditional practices and norms established by the male predecessors.

In recalling her experience of dictatorial and bureaucratic leadership styles, another woman head teacher elaborated on the gap that existed between the teachers and head teachers. According to her, staff could not be on friendly terms with head teachers. Duties were delegated without consultation and staff had to comply. Most women recalled the fear they experienced if they had to ask for instructions because of the “dictatorship days and hard leadership” (IP, p. 263). However, the women head
teachers asserted they did not practise dictatorship because they firmly believed leadership entailed working with and for others.

The women head teachers were explicit in their preference for democratic leadership, as illustrated in this recount:

> Mostly democratic now...give and take; no dictatorship and I believe in this...in democratic leadership. My teachers are always given time to make suggestions and ask questions. Sometimes their suggestions are better than mine...

*(IP, p. 70)*

Similar sentiments were echoed by other women head teachers who reported that commitment, being good listeners, dedication, receptivity to change and innovation were important qualities of good leaders. In addition, they reiterated that women were helpful, honest, and hardworking and managed time well.

The women head teachers strongly believed that women were either equally or more effective as leaders. They attributed women’s effectiveness to caring, understanding and empathy. The following recount further endorses women as facilitators of good communication, teamwork and network of relationships:

> If I say ‘good’, that’ll be an understatement. The thing is what we have seen from evidence because now there is a big change. There is good communication, everyone is working together and there is good relationship...the females encourage parental participation

*(IP, p. 245)*

When asked about their views on women’s representation in school leadership, one of the women aptly stated:

> I think it’s very unfair. Whenever you go to workshops or whenever you go anywhere, you can see more men than women head teachers

*(IP, p 283)*
The women head teachers strongly pointed out that headteachership was male dominated. They also drew attention to the promotion of male teachers when positions became vacant.

The Challenges

Patriarchy

In illustrating how patriarchy runs across both the Indian and Fijian societies, the women drew attention to male dominance and female subordination. Familial ideologies projected women as assistants, not leaders. The women stressed that men’s ways of thinking, doing things and making decisions were regarded as correct. Women were brought up to be submissive and obedient.

The women also drew attention to the role of older women in reinforcing and maintaining male superiority. Grandmothers and mothers-in-law ensured that the women in their families did not question the authority of men by exercising control over them and acting on their behalf.

Patriarchal societies were blamed for the culture of silence among most women. It was emphasized from an early age that men were the decision makers and women were to keep silent, even if men were wrong. One of the Fijian women of Indian descent pointed out “When girls are getting married we are told that ‘pati parmehwar hai’ (meaning husband is God) and we have to listen to him.” The Fijian woman head teacher also explained how women maintained silence in their culture. “... I see that women remain quiet; they just listen to the men. Whatever the men say, women say yes, yes, yes and yes, they hardly say no...” In addition, the women reported that even if they voiced their rights their “voice is not heard.” They elaborated that they maintained silence because of the fear of being a female and did not want to invoke wrath among men.

In drawing from their familial ideologies and cultures, the women reported that men were regarded as keepers, providers and leaders of the home. Women were not allowed
to speak against decisions made by men or voice out their opinion. Hence, most of these women equated workplaces with the traditional home situation where women did whatever they were told. The natural expectation was that women will take the back-seat and male perspectives will be given prominence.

The women head teachers pointed out that men were gripped by fear of powerlessness and ridicule (from men and some women) when a woman took up leadership. This fear was particularly more pronounced when wives were in leadership positions:

...so if men are there and the women take up leadership, many negative comments start coming up from the community. For example, the men will say, 'see the man, he’s home, he’s washing the dishes. Maybe he’s under petticoat government.'

(IP, p. 193)

The notion of being under petticoat government was echoed by most male as well as female participants. In addition, the male participants reported of rebukes such as “oh, you can’t control your wife; your wife is the boss” from family, friends and peers if their spouses held leadership positions. They further pinpointed that such rebukes challenged their ego and became a slur on their integrity. Thus men were compelled to exert control over women.

Looking back at the history of their schools, the women head teachers highlighted that there had been no female leaders. They expressed remorse at the male domination of school leadership. The powerful domination of males in school leadership and management committees subordinated their aspirations and interests:

School managements are dominated by males therefore females have no voice; males do not understand female voice, problems and perspectives

(IP, p.1)
They reported that the male stream management committees found it difficult to accept female leaders. This was further endorsed by the male participants who bluntly stated that the superiors at the helm of decision making were male dominated. Hence, “this poses problems for the females to advance...” (MSR, p.33).

Patriarchal culture was increasingly cited as the major reason for women not being readily accepted as head teachers/leaders and keeping “females always at the lower level” (IP, p. 225). On a similar note, the women head teachers lamented the observable fact they did not “have the same status as the males; they (the males) see us as second....” (IP, p.206).They also pinpointed women’s lack of will to overcome suppression. As one woman head teacher remorsefully explained “....Most of the time when we are suppressed, we just cry over a bit and forget it...”(IP, p. 97).

Furthermore, the women reported that the notion of the real man attitude was strongly prevalent among the male teachers, head teachers and the school management committee members. In recalling her experience at a meeting with the school management committee, one of the women head teachers emphasized that it was “hard for them (management committees) to respect and accept females as head teachers” (IP, p. 226). They enforced their own perspectives and would not listen to her. One of the committee members told her “… it was not in them (men) to accept any female telling them to do things; not even their wives, ‘if our wives tell us what to do, they will run’....” (IP, p. 226).

Moreover, the women head teachers indicated that women were constrained by the patriarchal cultures because it was unacceptable for them to go and openly talk to men. This was somewhat ironically emphasized by one of them, “women don’t go and lobby around because our culture is such; If I don’t know a person, how can I go and talk and say, accept me and give me this position” (IP, p. 60). According to the women headteachers men were not constrained by culture. Therefore most male teachers lobbied for and colluded with school managements for leadership positions.
Androcentrism

In recalling their childhood experiences, the women reported that the privileging of males began very early in life. Although the women expressed that they were lucky to be sent to school, they reiterated that in most families the first priority was given to male siblings. Educating girls was not regarded as important because they would eventually be married. Girls were considered to be “better looking after families and cooking” (IP, p. 206). Hence, they could not pursue higher education.

The women also highlighted that the privileging of males continued after marriage. The needs and wants of husbands and other males in the family always come first. For instance, men were always served food first. The privileging of males also extends to social gatherings. Prominent seats are reserved for men at meetings and social gatherings (both in the villages and at work).

The women vividly expressed their anguish over the many stolen opportunities because of androcentrism. They said this often occurred in spite of being initially accepted for leadership. Most of the female head teachers highlighted they were displaced on the verge of promotion because the male stream management committees preferred males. They endured the pain of coming to terms with last minute rejections due to snap decisions in favour of male teachers:

*The SEO had already discussed with the management for my posting and was about to give me the letter. Then the response from the manager was that ‘Ma’am, I’ve changed my views on that; we would prefer to have a male’.*

(IP, p. 86, 87)

Most women head teachers in the study also attributed their negative gendered experiences to androcentrism. Many felt very embarrassed, sad and lost hope when they were denied opportunities for promotion which arose after prolonged pursuit of leadership (as much as twenty five or thirty years). According to the women, what hurt
most was the promotion of males who were very junior. Even with the compulsory retirement in 2008, the women felt unjustly left out despite many years of experience. The following recount illustrates one such incident:

*The officer (male) who went there had twenty years’ experience and I had thirty years of experience. Some males, less than fifteen years of experience were promoted.*

(IP, p. 29)

This was endorsed by another woman head teacher who recalled her bitter experience as an executive teacher. In the middle of the year, she was compelled to accept a transfer because her head teacher (male) asked for her removal. Reportedly, the transfer was instigated by another junior male teacher who would qualify for the first line position upon her removal. Eventually she agreed to swap with another executive teacher from a neighbouring school because remaining in that school did not appear conducive.

**Sex Stereotyping**

The women head teachers reported that sex and gender-based stereotyping caused barriers to the advancement of women teachers and perpetuated the androcentricity of educational leadership.

Women were generally perceived unworthy of leadership. Males perceived women as incapable of handling leadership roles and related stress. This was evident when women teachers were delegated duties such as organizing in-house events. Other preconceived ideas were that women could not talk to a crowd and discipline students. It was also believed that people would not listen to her. As one of the women head teachers elaborated:

*For example, if I was given the duty to run a show, they (male teachers) would say, “she’s a lady, she won’t be able to go and do the show the right way.”*
For them the right way was giving it to a male. They would say, “No! No! Don’t give it to her; you know she’s a woman. Poor thing, she’ll be running here and there, poor thing!”

(IP, p. 265,267)

Two important categories of findings also emerged from the analysis of stereotyping. These underpin and complement the stereotype that males are better. One category highlighted the set of typical adjectives used to describe women as deficient in leadership attributes while the other category suggested that leadership is perceived to be male in sex-type.

Different adjectives are used by men and women to describe each other. What clearly emerged from the responses of the women head teachers was that men generally ascribed negative stereotypes to women and depicted the feminine traits as leadership-deficient. This was clearly evident at the workshop and among supplementary male participants who described females as weak, incompetent, poor things, emotional, too soft to control people, indecisive and they cannot lead. On the other hand, most of the women head teachers conceived males to be powerful, strong, natural (born) leaders, and better leaders.

Furthermore, the women reported that the predominant usage of the traditional term headmaster had been problematic. According to them, the term headmaster has accorded exclusive advantages to the male teachers by automatically assigning them to primary school leadership. This was clearly pointed out by one of the women head teachers who explained that:

….it has been there for a long time. Mostly if we look back at our history, there were no female head teachers. It has just come like that; males; males all the time...

(IP, p.134)
When the women head teachers were asked, “What do you think are some important qualities of a good leader?” most of them instinctively began their responses with he, for instance, “he can be a role model to other teachers; he’s got to be honest.” However, it is worthwhile to mention that some of the women corrected themselves (with he or she and they) when they realized their predisposition towards the male gender.

**Gender Stereotypes**

One of the most pervasive gender-based stereotypes that still appear to run deeply in many societies in Fiji is *woman’s place is in the kitchen*. This was echoed by the Fijian woman head teacher of Indigenous descent as well as those of the Indian descent. The male and female participants from the workshop and supplementary resources also endorsed the prevalence of this stereotype.

Nonetheless, according to the women in this study, the most formidable gender-based stereotype emanated from the typical question that appeared to nag most male stream school communities, that is, *how can the one who scours the pots run a school* (translated from the Fiji-Hindi version of *handi manje wala school kaise chalai?*) In the context of these findings, *the one who scours the pot* specifically refers to women. The women asserted that this stereotype generally governed men’s thinking and inhibited their opportunities to lead.

Furthermore, both women and male participants reported of double binds imposed on the linguistic styles of women teachers. In illustrating the double bind, it was highlighted that “we male teachers, we present things in a manner that is sometimes aggressive” (MWP, p. 63). Thus the views and proposals of the males generally got accepted. On the other hand, female teachers were reported to use soft voice which mostly acted against them and rendered them incompetent.

The women head teachers also reported of having to deal with the well-entrenched double standards in behavior and expectations. These compelled them into working
twice as hard to prove their worth. They had to endure hostility and negativity when they became vocal. It was strongly emphasized that women must not talk too much or loudly or be argumentative, especially in the presence of males. Being vocal was construed negatively for women. It was regarded unlady-like and dishonorable. Conversely, it was viewed with positivity for the males. One of the women head teachers wryly commented:

\[
\text{Many people don’t like a vocal woman because she will come out with the truth, whether good or bad. The men will say, ‘Oh, No!’.... Yeah, many people think that this woman talks too much.....} \]

\[(IP, p. 14)\]

What also emerged was that the women teachers have had to speak louder and fight more for their rights to be appointed as (school) leaders. In doing so, as one senior woman head teacher reported, she was compelled to seek legal redress to ensure that her rights for promotion was not subjugated in favour of a less meritorious male teacher.

Furthermore, the women head teachers reported they often were compelled to prove that they were not only qualified but unusually better qualified. This was vividly expressed by one of the women head teachers who cited that male teachers employed interrogative tactics at meetings only to establish whether she was knowledgeable and competent enough:

\[
\text{When I used to hold executive teacher meetings, these two male teachers used to ask me a lot of questions, like putting me to a test. Because I had been a pioneer executive teacher and had had a lot of experience, I never felt crippled or afraid to answer them. Gradually, they realized that I knew things and they just could not ask questions to put me off} \]

\[(IP, p. 90-91)\]

The women as well as most male participants endorsed double standard behaviors and gendered expectations that societies mete out to women in leadership. Men were seen as
correct because they were “the leader figures. Women, on the other hand, are not seen as leaders. So she has to prove herself that she is able to lead…”(MSR, p. 199).

**Sex Discrimination**

The women head teachers’ responses suggested that sex discrimination existed and operated in different forms and at various levels of selection and appointment to school management and leadership. The women cited instances of indirect, direct and overt sex discrimination in their teaching careers. Sex discrimination was attributed to the strong culture of promoting males. Male teachers were nominated for headteachership because the male stream management committees felt “working with males was easier...”(IP, p. 50). The preference for males was also often justified by their ability to lead sports. However, the women did not report of sexual harassment.

The women reported they became victims of sex discrimination from the commencement of their teaching career. One of the participants related her disappointment and helplessness when:

…..the head teacher (male) combined the classes (two streams of class eight) and gave it to the male teacher. I was told that because I was a female, I could take class two

(IP, p.148)

In addition, the women pinpointed that sexist attitudes and remarks were rife among the male stream school management committees and many male teachers. For instance, the school managers often justified their rejection of female candidates by sexist remarks such as “females won’t be able to attend meetings at night” (IP, p.50).Reportedly, some male teachers resented female leadership and blatantly ignored women head teachers’ authority by “creating some problems everyday” (IP, p.130). Other women headteachers encountered subtle forms of male insubordination such as neglect of assigned duties, frequent late arrivals and/or lack of participation in school-based events.
When the women became persistent in their pursuit of school leadership, they experienced discrimination by being offered very remote schools. This occurred in spite of having served rural remote schools for a considerable number of years. One of the women head teachers explained:

_I was offered once, that was back in 2004. That school was a very remote school so I declined. The district office offered that same school again after two years or so. I told them that I had declined the offer previously because of remoteness and I said that I couldn’t take it up again._

(IP, p.34)

The women felt that being offered remote schools was a political ploy to keep them away from leadership. This was because many junior male teachers were promoted within urban schools.

Furthermore, one of the women head teachers drew attention to sex discrimination during the processing of formal applications to school leadership. She had personally submitted her application to the District Education office and was confident of being appointed as the assistant head teacher. However, another male teacher got appointed. Reportedly, when she sought submission to appeal against the appointment, she discovered that important supporting documents had mysteriously disappeared from her application. Although she had attached her higher education (USP) certificates and documents indicating years of service, the submission only had the teacher’s certificate:

... _I had attached my USP certificates, both of them certified correct by the SEO. I asked her how this had happened because I had placed all the certificates in a brown envelope right in front of her. She remembered but told me that she had gone on leave when the write-up was done. So I just went ahead and appealed. After five days I got the results; I got it! I just won it. The write-up was done at the District office and it didn’t have all my qualifications._

(IP, p.93-97)
**Old Boys’ Networks**

The women head teachers’ responses and experiences indicate that the old boys’ networks exist and operate as clusters which include membership from the male representatives of teacher unions, school management committees and board members, head teachers, members from the higher echelons of educational leadership and affiliated professional and religious organizations.

At the school level, the old boys’ network strongly existed and comprised members of the school management committee, especially “the managers who are often very old men” *(IP, p.113)*, members of the male staff (often lobbying for positions), influential teacher union male members and/or other influential community and religious members.

The women drew attention to how the old boys’ network discreetly operated to displace the female teachers. The women explained that many male teachers (in some instances very junior) were able to convince school managements to secure their appointment for headteachership. These male teachers often socialized with the management committees after school hours. Understandings were often bargained by the male teachers during drinking sessions which ultimately led to their promotions.

Male candidates obtained written requests for their appointment when:

> They (the male teachers) sit with the management, who are very uneducated in most cases, especially the managers. They just make them write a letter, sign and send to the education office. So they just get the posts. They sit and drink with the management. The females won’t do that…

*(IP, p. 113)*

In return, the prospective candidate negotiated ways of reciprocating the favour upon securing promotion. Reportedly, gifts of liquor (Gin, Rum), cash, livestock and seafood were exchanged among the prospective male candidates, school management committee members, teacher union members and even some higher echelon educational leaders.
The women head teachers believed that such Boys Networks discriminated against them because women would not be reciprocating in form of socialization and/or gifts and money.

**The Women**

The women teachers in this study did not suffer from the internal barrier of negative self-perceptions such as poor self-image and lack of confidence. This finding emerged despite the fact that it was the women’s first formal school leadership. The following is but one recount that justifies this:

*I think I was always outgoing. I would take up sports and athletics. During the year when nobody used to take the role of the Master of Ceremony, I did. It has given me a lot of confidence to speak; maybe I can stand up and speak anywhere, I can also talk on one to-one basis*

*(IP, p. 273)*

These women also emerged remarkably self-reliant and exhibited high levels of motivation, self-esteem, self-confidence and personable appearance. This was elaborated by one of the women head teachers who emphatically remarked that:

*I wanted to be the head teacher. I wanted to lead*

*(IP, p. 31)*

Most of the women head teachers evaluated their leadership skills very highly. They were highly conscientious and regretted not being offered the opportunity earlier to lead schools. They reiterated that women needed opportunities to prove their worth as leaders.

The women head teachers cited intrinsic motivation as one of the major reasons for taking up leadership. These included the desire to fulfil the holistic needs of children as
well as procuring benefits for the community. The following recount illustrates what steered one of the women towards headteachership:

\[
I \text{ was not looking at it for myself. I was looking at it as a whole; more of the needs of the children, the community and that's why I accepted it} \\
(IP, p. 209)
\]

Familial Responsibilities

Familial responsibilities were not regarded as a major challenge to these women’s aspirations to advance to school leadership. This was because they were fortunate enough to have had in-laws who assisted in child care and domestic chores. Their children also assisted in simple household chores. Reportedly, these women head teachers had to juggle between the home, school and familial responsibilities. This was because they were solely responsible for the home; as a mother and wife and in many cases their responsibilities included the extended family members. As one of the women head teachers candidly admitted:

\[
I \text{ am the leader all by myself at home, ever since I got married....everything was done by me....I am the one who has full responsibility at home} \\
(IP, p. 1)
\]

The women head teachers strongly emphasized that women were doing more work at the home front. They asserted when males/their spouses returned from school/work, they did not do much work at home. Conversely, the women reported the need to immediately attend to household chores because they were housewives as well as mothers. Many of them pointed out that in spite of having helping hands in the form of extended family members, motherhood was very challenging and demanding.

The women aptly drew attention to the lead roles women undertook at home as well as the sacrifices they continuously made. For instance, many women cited being left alone at home with in-laws and children while men socialized with peers, engaged in sports
and social activities. This often meant their spouse coming late into the nights. Hence, these women undertook sole responsibility of upbringing their children and caring for the elderly. They also reported that men developed a nonchalant attitude towards child care and domestic responsibilities and mostly disassociated themselves from domestic chores.

**Factors That Support Women’s Advancement to School Leadership:**

The women head teachers’ reported that spouse and family were the most significant supportive factors in their advancement to school leadership. From their recollections, it was evident that spousal as well as parental encouragement, acknowledgement and happiness were the key contributing factors to these women’s progression into leadership. As one of the women stated:

> He (husband) even encourages me, I have a very supportive family and that’s very important. You see I go everywhere, to Union meetings and Dinners, sports and any functions because my family is supportive.  
> (IP, p. 53)

The women also reported that there was gradual acceptance and appreciation of women in school leadership. There was a change in mindset amongst a few school management committee members and parents who were important stakeholders. They pointed out that it was only recently that some management committees were changing tune from “nai, woh kya karegi” meaning “No, what will she do!” to “women perform better” (IP, p. 109).

In addition, the women recalled the emergent high regard and respect they received when school managers introduced them as, “the first female head teacher” (SR, p. 93). They also emphasized that they were further encouraged by the support received from parents and the community at large.
Furthermore, the women reported that support in the form of informal mentoring from notably senior female colleagues reinforced their confidence to pursue school leadership. However, the women head teachers expressed their disappointment in the lack of mentoring opportunities for women.

The Female Advantage

The women’s responses and experiences also illuminated a kaleidoscope of advantages that women brought to (school) leadership. The women head teachers’ asserted that women have the advantage of being leaders at home, as emphasized in this recount:

\[
A \text{ woman’s leadership starts from the home. She is the very first leader at home; if she can manage everything at home then why can’t she manage outside} \\
(IP, \ p. \ 10)
\]

The women head teachers appeared to employ a host of feminine communal attributes and behaviors which included emotions, expressiveness, empathy, cooperation and low control and receptivity to ideas. Their recounts also reflected that they were sensitive, made connections, were caring and cultivated the art of listening, engaged in conflict resolution and negotiation, were creative and engaged in intuitive problem solving, strategic thinking, team building and possessed influencing skills.

The natural affinity for emotions and empathy was a common thread that ran across these women head teachers’ responses. They pointed out that when staff became sick or encountered problems, they could “….\textit{really feel it}” (IP, p. 157). In justifying women’s propensity for empathy, the head teachers explained that generally women’s experiences as mothers and daughters generated deeper understanding of problems faced by most women and men. They strongly felt that being emotional and empathetic was an advantage because schools were people-oriented organizations. Most male participants
also echoed the advantage “women’s motherly qualities” brought to leadership because “the subordinates felt comfortable working with women…” (MSR, p. 61).

In drawing comparison to the male head teachers, one of the women drew attention to the indifference displayed by her male head teacher when she was pregnant and as a result vomited excessively in school. His comments like “What’s wrong, I have never seen anyone like this” (IP, p. 158) often left her embarrassed and requesting for leaves became burdensome. Other women head teachers as well as some male participants endorsed the apathetic attitude that many male head teachers often adopted towards women’s issues.

The findings also illustrated that women strongly adopted collaborative and democratic leadership styles. They were effective communicators, displayed successful time management and organizational skills and possessed intrinsic motivation for improving school instruction and making a difference in the lives of the people they affected. The women felt that they were very good listeners and did not hesitate to consult others when the need arose. From their experiences and recounts it was also clear that they were more than capable of handling finances prudently.

The women greatly capitalized on their personal power to establish connections and nurture relationships with staff and the community. This was evident in their experiences which depicted consistent hard work, their innate capacity to influence, interpersonal skills and the evolving fact that women were able to command greater appreciation for their gender in spite of the male stream school leadership. They also emphasized that they observed higher commitment levels amongst staff when consultative and participatory approaches were utilized.

The findings also illustrated that women leaders were highly influential. This was evident in their ability to facilitate greater community and parental participation at school meetings and programmes. The following recount illustrates one woman head teachers’ ability to foster greater participation from parents at meetings:
I am the first woman; I mean the first female head teacher since this school was established in 1937. I told them that our funds are not released if we don’t have AGM’s. Then I could see that if the fathers could not come then the ladies turned up last year and even this year on the first call we had the AGM. Even when the former head teacher had the Community and Parental Support (CAPS) programmes only one, two or three parents turned up. Nothing was successful; now mothers, if the fathers are on the farm, they come.

(IP, p.163)

The women head teachers attached a lot of significance to establishing and promoting flexible and multidirectional channels of communication as opposed to the autocratic top-down approaches that were typically common to schools. They did by this by facilitating informal discussions with staff which encouraged the free flow of opinions. They emphasized that it was equally important to value staff contributions. As one woman head teacher explained:

We usually have informal discussions whenever we get together. I think this one works because when we get together and discuss informally we get others’ views as well. This is very important. Sometimes maybe I am not right; we can get ideas from them (staff) and things may be done in a better way.

(IP, p. 151)

The women head teachers strongly echoed that women were easier and comfortable to communicate with because they “are not harsh and you can go and tell them anything” (IP, p. 271).

The women head teachers were not governed by the stereotypic image of being always right and/or taking sole credit for achievements. They were receptive to suggestions from staff and did not feel belittled if they were not right.
The women head teachers were also instrumental in initiating long overdue physical and structural changes in their schools. The women explained that by adopting greater measures of transparency and accountability in resource management they were able to facilitate stagnated projects. Prosperity was powerfully associated with women leaders:

"... a former manager who has passed away recently had told me that ‘teacher we can see the difference since you came in, prosperity has been noted. He said that. ‘All proper records are there, we don’t have any problems and we don’t get any complaints. Before, we used to get complaints from parents. I can see the difference now’"  

(IP, p.164-165)

Moreover, the women head teachers responses indicated that they were not motivated by any selfish desire or rewards to make a difference in the lives of the children and communities they served. Their desire to make a difference was intrinsic. Reportedly, they were able to facilitate productive changes by readily synchronizing into the role of change agents:

"...we can make changes; women can make changes"  

(IP, p. 21)

They also wanted to prove that they could be better head teachers in comparison to the male head teachers they had worked with. They strongly believed that they could "show other people that things could be done differently; there were other ways of doing things" (IP, p. 111).

The findings also revealed that once established as head teachers, the women increasingly engaged in improving instruction and learning. They initiated, implemented and supported innovative instructional approaches and programmes. They were eager to lift the school culture out of the often complacent, mundane classroom activities by providing opportunities for intellectual stimulation of both staff and students. They were
instrumental in facilitating quizzes, literacy and numeracy competitions and creative talent activities in their schools.

Achieving Gender Equity in Educational Leadership

The women head teachers strongly expressed the need for equal representation and affirmative action. They strongly felt that “leadership is mostly male dominated” (IP, p. 63). They were of the view that both men and women were capable of leading; hence they advocated equal representation of both genders, as illustrated in the following recount:

> All men and women can do any work and I think that they should be given equal opportunity; 1:1 in any profession. They should have a policy so that more females are promoted to headteachership. I have suffered and I don’t want others to suffer

(IP, p.63)

In reiterating the need for more women in school leadership, one of the women head teachers explained that fewer women in educational leadership meant an imbalance in the representation of female perspectives in educational development, curriculum and reform as well as meetings and professional development. As one of them commented, “It’s good to have the views of ladies as well” (IP, p. 196).

Participants also echoed the need for gender policies and gender sensitizing programmes:

> There is a need for policies to have equal representation and promote gender equality that will gradually break the barriers such as the patriarchy and culture

(FSR, p59)

While the women echoed the need for equal representation, they also drew attention to the need for the importance of gender-sensitizing programmes for men. They believed that it would help to gradually disintegrate the patriarchal cultures and foster greater empathy for women’s issues and the barriers they encounter.
The appraisal of gender mainstreaming which was examined as roadmap for achieving gender equity in educational leadership through a PLA workshop for educational leaders in the district of Ba, in the western province of Fiji illuminated gender mainstreaming as the potential for generating gender equality. Figure 6 further illustrates the findings:

Figure 6: Appraisal of Gender Mainstreaming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Strengths of Gender mainstreaming:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Compels the focus on women and their status.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Makes gender equality issues central to the development activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Procure equal benefits for both men and women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Proffers an excellent, timeless strategic intervention for generating gender equality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Compels the influence, perspectives and participation of both men and women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Necessitates the equal representation of both men and women as actors in policy and programme design, implementation and outcomes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Will gradually disintegrate patriarchal norms and cultures at workplaces.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceived Limitations/Risks of Gender Mainstreaming:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>* Can be used as a strategy to merely achieve other developmental goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Misconceptions that gender mainstreaming implies the creation of gender balanced workplaces and the increment in the number of women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* The lack of political will and commitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Gender mainstreaming remains virtually a mysterious concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* It is another one of the Eurocentric propositions imposed by the United Nations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gender mainstreaming provides Opportunities for:

- Gradually disarming the potent effects of the manifestations of patriarchy.
- Procuring the much needed institutional and organizational support for women.
- Aligning Ministry of Education’s developmental plans and polices to government’s commitment to international treaties such as the Beijing Platform for Action (1995).
- Evaluating and addressing the negative impacts of development on men.

Proposed intervention strategies for achieving equity in educational leadership:

- The formulation and implementation of gender mainstreaming policy.
- The establishment of gender focal units.
- Sex disaggregated data.
- Situational surveys.
- Affirmative action policies.
- Gender sensitizing programmes.
- Specific women-targeted empowerment programmes.
- Gender policies.

The next chapter submits discussion of the findings.
CHAPTER SIX
DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This study explores the challenges five women head teachers encountered in advancing to primary school leadership. It also examines gender mainstreaming as a roadmap to achieving gender equity in educational leadership.

This chapter presents a thematic discussion of the findings presented in chapter five in light of relevant literature. Discussion on the perceptions of the women head teachers is followed by the challenges women teachers encountered. These include patriarchy, the pervasive culture of androcentrism, sex stereotyping, gender-based stereotyping, Old Boys’ Networks and sex discrimination.

The factors that support the advancement of women are presented next and this is followed by discussion on the female advantage. It is to be noted that the perceived advantages may not be exclusive to the female gender and is not generalizable to all women. In elucidating female advantage, the intention is not to romanticize women and/or their leadership styles but to submit a rationale for achieving gender parity in educational leadership. It is envisaged discussions will abate misconceptions about leadership deficiencies among women.

The chapter concludes with propositions for achieving gender equity in educational leadership in light of the findings and also provides a critical analysis of gender mainstreaming.

The Perceptions of Women Headteachers

The women head teachers strongly espouse collaborative, democratic leadership styles (Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Fondas, 1997; Eagly & Carli, 2003). The following statement,
“...listening to everybody’s views, working together as a team and making everyone feel at home” (IP, p.262) confirms this. The women head teachers’ perceptions on leadership illuminate the embedded feminine ethos of listening, teamwork, caring, connecting and cultivating a sense of belonging (Fondas, 1995). These are critical to leadership in contemporary times. As illuminated in the review of literature, the women head teachers increasingly facilitated open and multidirectional communication (Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Shakeshaft, 2010).

The findings imply women head teachers’ leading styles increasingly denote the paradigm of share and empower. While it is not definitive, it could be concluded that women leaders capitalize on their feminine communal values of collaboration, interpersonal, participatory and relationship-oriented approaches to lead successfully by empowering others and sharing leadership (Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Eagly & Carli, 2003).

What also emerged from the perceptions of the women head teachers was that women are perceived to be more or equally effective as school leaders (Shakeshaft, 2010). A possible reason for this could be that they increasingly possess the soft skills (Fondas, 1997) and high emotional competence (Daft, 2008) among a host of other attributes and skills. These are further elaborated under the section The Female Advantage.

However, the women head teachers’ lamented the gross underrepresentation of women in school leadership (Coleman, 2002; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Oplatka, 2006; Shakeshaft et al., 2007; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010). The gross underrepresentation of women is unjust considering that teaching is highly feminized in Fiji. It also implies the underrepresentation of female perspectives in school leadership, curriculum, policy making and professional development initiatives.
The Challenges:

Patriarchy

The rare insight into the career trajectories and perceptions of the five women head teachers unveiled patriarchy (Beechey, 1979; Weedon, 1987; Razvi & Roth, 2004; Kariuki, 2006; Oplatka, 2006; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010) as the underlying common barrier to women’s advancement to school leadership. These findings are consistent with previous studies (Nath, 2000; Razvi & Roth, 2004; Kariuki, 2006 and Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010) which reveal that women continue to be subjugated by the formidable patriarchal societies, even in the twenty first century.

Patriarchal cultures have granted men control over culture, knowledge, religion, leadership and social affairs. Hence, men continue to relish in the notion that leadership is their legitimate right. School leadership clearly replicates this. It is highly likely that male control of school committees and higher echelons of leadership have ignored and devalued women teachers' experiences and knowledge (Kariuki, 2006). Thus, women’s voices and attempts to advance have been stifled. This has led to the subjugation of women’s interests and perspectives. On the other hand, it has led to the advancement of male interests.

Patriarchy appears to manifest in all the challenges that women encounter both at home and the workplace. In doing so, it accords men superior status while relegating women as inferior. Patriarchal societies and familial ideologies have perpetuated the inferiority status and traditionally conditioned men as well as women into believing that subjugation is women’s natural and unrelenting fate. Men are idolized as kings, chiefs and pati parmeshwar hai, meaning the husband is God. Thus, male superiority and female subordination is reinforced and consolidated within families and societies of both Fijians of Indigenous and Indian descent.
Paradoxically, the women (mostly elderly) in the family are culture-driven to transmit the superior status of men as a legacy from one generation to the next. From as early as a girl’s infancy, the notion that men are superior begins to resound. This continues throughout adolescence until marriage which establishes and reinforces that legitimate authority (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010) lies with men. In many instances, the older women legitimize male leadership and exercise authority on their behalf (Lateef, 1990; Varani-Norton, 2004) by exerting power and control over daughters-in-law and younger women in the family. In doing so, they reinforce male supremacy and protect the status quo of men.

The notion that men are superior is problematic. This is because the ideologies of male supremacy and female subordination are reproduced at workplaces. Such taken-for-granted assumptions perpetuate the culture of silence, passivity and the fear of femaleness among women. Hence women, particularly from conservative backgrounds, may become unconsciously apprehensive of men and take a back-seat (Tavola, 2000). Others may succumb to silence and subservience. It could be assumed that silence and subservience reinforces the inferiority status of women. Consequently, women are subjected to unjust practices, inequalities and discrimination. These ultimately lead to the subordination of women’s interests and aspirations. Hence, they are further pushed into invisibility and immobility.

Silence in the Fijian indigenous culture is equated with respect. This was very aptly pointed out by the Fijian indigenous woman head teacher who stated that “When women are silent, it is showing respect” (IP, p. 259). For the Fijian women of Indian descent, silence represents deference, respect, tolerance and subservience. It could be argued the culture of silence operates like a double bind (Oakley, 2000) which is troublesome for women. While projecting respectfulness, cultural appropriateness and femininity, it also portrays women as incompetent and deficient in knowledge or being dumb.

The responses of the women head teachers imply that most men are constantly gripped by the unconscious fear of powerlessness (Oakley, 2000) and ridicule (from men and
some women) when women take up leadership. Consistent with Oakley (2000) and Coleman (2002), these recollections indicate men in patriarchal societies feel challenged, experience discomfort and the unconscious fear of emasculation when women have authority over them. This could be because in many patriarchal societies men are the decision makers and authority is men’s prerogative (Lateef, 1990; Varani-Norton, 2004; Kariuki, 2006; Jalal, 2007, as cited in Nicholl, 2008). As such, men may become defensive and patronizing in their efforts to maintain their status quo. They may even resent sharing power and collaborating with women, especially on leadership and management issues.

Hence, it is fairly reasonable to assume that in reproducing the traditional construct of controlling women, men will not concede easily to women who aspire to become leaders. In addition, it is also reasonable to assume that attempts to soften the patriarchal attitudes/societies are bound to meet stony defiance. This may be particularly hold true in remote, rural contexts where negative attitudes and resentment are more pronounced because cultures are deeply entrenched in patriarchy.

The findings also imply that the notion of the real man attitude (Court, 1997) is strongly prevalent among the male teachers, head teachers and the school management committee members. Because males continue to legitimize authority (Court, 1997), taking instructions from women is considered unmanly. Hence, when women exercise authority men often become resentful, mete out the stony silent behaviour and resort to insubordination. It could be assumed that such negative attitudes and actions are manifestations of their veiled efforts to sabotage women’s leadership and devalue female knowledge and perspectives.

The recollections of the women head teachers also indicate that patriarchal cultures accord men certain privileges such as lobbying for leadership positions. Reportedly, most male teachers lobby for and collude with school managements for leadership positions. Ironically, when men engage in such practices, it is justified. Local culture projects men as protagonists and leaders (Kedrimate and Schulz, 1996). Hence, it is
reasonable to assume that because of this men are almost always given the leeway. Conversely, such practices among women would subject them to stern condemnation and character defamation.

The responses unearthed the *for-so-long* buried emotions linked to the women head teachers’ struggle for leadership. However, large scale phenomenological studies on women head teachers in other geographical areas, education levels and broader leadership contexts are needed to further extend this preliminary finding. In addition, one needs to further investigate the existence of the different forms of patriarchy in social institutions and how it affects women.

It is worth noting that patriarchy is not a simple concept (Beechey, 1979). It manifests in a variety of ways at multiple levels of school organization. As predicted, male stream school leadership perpetuates the glass ceiling effect (Oakley, 2002; Rhode, 2003; Draulans, 2003, Weyer, 2007). The glass ceilings which include both the organizational and cultural factors (Oakley, 2000) are imposed and reinforced by patriarchal norms and practices which manifest themselves in educational organization, leadership and management.

In the tradition of feminist research, the discussions that follow will discern the various ways in which patriarchy occurred at the different stages of the women’s lives and teaching career and impeded their advancement to school leadership.

**Androcentrism**

The findings suggest that the strong culture of privileging males has discriminated against women teachers. This resonates with Bem’s (1996) concept of androcentrism. It is evident that some equally qualified and experienced women teachers have been effectively displaced in school leadership because the male stream management committees prefer males. Conversely, androcentrism has advantaged many (younger) male teachers by carefully positioning them in first line positions. This has also often left women teachers demoralized and shattered their self-esteem.
Senior aspiring women teachers have been subtly transferred from schools in order to create the right positioning for males. Reportedly, some senior women teachers were also transferred prior to the regularization of acting positions. Such calculated moves deprive women of political savvy, career positioning and equal opportunities for advancement. Hence, women are eventually pushed out of school leadership.

This finding, which deeply resonates with Hill and Ragland (1995), has important implications for policy formulation and praxis. It calls for greater transparency and justification of the transfer of (women) teachers. Greater precautionary measures should be undertaken to ensure that sideways transfers do not displace prospective women leaders. In addition, it calls for greater commitment to the translation of equal opportunity for advancement.

Moreover, the findings imply that it takes women almost their entire teaching career to advance to school leadership. They attributed their sluggish advancement to the blatant androcentric behaviors of school managements and male head teachers. This finding is consistent with previous research (Coleman, 2002; Shakeshaft et al., 2007) which illuminated that comparably it takes women longer to access leadership. Hence, the role of school managements in the appointment of head teachers should be reviewed and clearly articulated. Outdated policy and practices should not compromise the advancement of women teachers to school leadership.

The exclusive privileging of male teachers into first line positions perpetuate sex discrimination and further reproduces androcentricity in school leadership. This was clearly pinpointed by one of the participants who said that “male leaders favour other male colleagues to take up leadership” (MWP, p. 66). It is fair to assume that the androcentrically defined male stream leadership will continue to privilege men. Conversely, gender equity will continue to evade educational leadership.
Sex Stereotyping

The most pervasive sex stereotypes that emerged from the findings were that *males are better* and *the right way was giving it to a male*. It appears this stereotype manifests in all challenges women encounter in their pursuit of leadership. It perpetuates the preconceived notion that females are unworthy of leadership because they are portrayed as deficient in attributes and skills needed for (school) leadership. Coleman’s (2002) study also demonstrated that preconceived ideas stereotyped females as less worthy and qualified to lead and manage.

The findings implied two important categories of sex stereotyping. These underpin and complement the stereotype that *males are better*. One category highlighted the set of typical adjectives used to describe women as deficient in leadership attributes (Heilman, 1997; Oakley, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Shah, 2009) while the other category suggested that leadership is perceived to be male in sex-type (Heilman, 1997). The following sections further explicate these two categories with relevant examples.

The responses of the women head teachers indicated that men generally ascribe negative stereotypes to women and depict feminine traits as leadership-deficient. This finding supports previous research that men and women use adjectives that are polar opposites (Oakley, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Rhode, 2003 and Shah, 2009) to describe each other.

A proposed explanation for the difference in adjectives could be that men invariably equate leadership with male traits and styles. Therefore, they negatively project the female attributes and nurture the notion that only “*males should be the leaders*” (IP, p. 135). Another possible justification for the negative adjectives ascribed to women could be the strong influence of the stereotypic *woman’s place is in the kitchen* and socialization into the feminine communal roles (Fondas, 1997).
Furthermore, the findings illustrated the predominant usage of the traditional term *headmaster* as problematic. Because it is *male* in sex-type (Heilman, 1997), it exclusively assigns males to primary school leadership. Given the term *headmaster* signifies male, it is fairly reasonable to assume that the sexist terminology has reinforced the patriarchal ideology that leadership is legitimately the prerogative of men.

It appears that the historical culture of male school leadership did not leave much choice except for the predominant use of the term *headmaster*. It is important to note the term *headmaster* is still in use in some parts of Fiji (remote, rural) and probably among the lesser literate communities. This calls for gender sensitization programmes in rural areas and the abolishment of sexist terminologies that stereotype school leadership. While the term *head teacher* is now being commonly used to refer to primary school leaders, a more gender-friendly and encompassing term would be *principal*.

The male sex-typing of leadership further emerged when the women head teachers were asked, “What do you think are some important qualities of a good leader?” Most of them instinctively began their responses with *he*, for instance, “*he can be a role model to other teachers; he’s got to be honest.*” It is reasonable to assume that even today professional women presume leaders should be males. One probable explanation for this could be that women in themselves still have not come to terms with the fact that a leader can be a *she*.

Finally, it is also fairly reasonable to assume that local educational leadership preparatory, training programmes and theoretical frameworks lack the worldviews and experiences of women leaders as well as feminine conceptualizations of leadership. For these reasons, it is possible that stereotypes continue to persist and undermine women’s leadership potentials. Hence, this calls for the deliberate inclusion of women’s worldviews, experiences and leadership conceptualizations in the leadership training and preparatory programs. In addition, gender-neutral terms such as *person, people, staff* and/or *personnel* should be used in leadership training and preparatory programmes as opposed to the generic term *man/men* or *he/him* to refer to leaders.
Gender Stereotypes

The findings also suggest that gender-based stereotypes operate at unconscious levels (Rhode, 2003) in the school communities. As predicted, one of the most pervasive gender-based stereotypes that still appear to run deeply in many societies in Fiji is woman’s place is in the kitchen, synonymous with Strachan’s (2009) example of woman’s place is in the home.

The most formidable gender-based stereotype that acts as a powerful gatekeeper (Oakley, 2000; Coleman, 2002) to women teachers’ advancement to school leadership has been interpreted as the one who scours the pot cannot run the school. The analogy of scouring pots to justify the perceived women’s poor leadership skills and unworthiness is absurd. It submits a shallow justification that projects women as unworthy of leadership. Because women have been traditionally socialized into domestic roles, it should not imply they have poor leadership skills.

In contrast to previous studies, the women head teachers in this study did not experience the typical femininity/competency double binds (Oakley, 2000) in their leadership. In addition, while women educational leaders in studies elsewhere have been labelled cold, hard, single-minded and stubborn (Coleman, 2002; Kariuki, 2006), the findings of this study did not demonstrate the use of discriminatory language against women head teachers.

However, the findings suggest that women’s linguistic styles are prone to double binds. When women use soft and courteous tones (Oakley, 2000; Coleman, 2002), they are perceived to be lacking in self-confidence and considered too soft to become effective leaders. On the other hand, adopting the machismo (aggressive and strong) styles render them unfeminine.

It could be assumed that because the women strongly espoused collaborative and democratic leadership styles, they were not compelled to emulate the traditional masculine leadership traits. Hence, they were not subjected to the typical leadership
behavioural double binds. In addition, women in previous studies, for example, Nath (2000) and Oakley (2000), were from higher echelons of the corporate sector. Arguably, varying roles, responsibilities, outcomes and institution sizes demand context-specific leadership styles. Hence, these may have produced different reactions and interpretations.

Given these, the findings or rather lack of it, calls for large-scale phenomenological studies on women in educational leadership, supplemented by staff and other important stakeholder interviews as well as research questions explicitly formulated to unearth behavioural double binds and language discrimination. In addition, the research methodology could adopt a mixed approach where the phenomenological interviews are supplemented with quantitative research tools such as questionnaires and surveys (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

Nonetheless, the women head teachers reported of having to deal with the well-entrenched double standard behaviour and expectations. These compelled them into working twice as hard (Coleman, 2002) to prove their worth, speaking louder and fighting a little more for their rights to be heard (Nath, 2000; Coleman, 2002) and enduring hostility and negativity (Hill & Ragland, 1995; Kariuki, 2006)) when they become vocal. Conversely, the findings indicate that when professional women do not voice out, they become victims of their own passivity and consequently suffer greater risks of marginalization.

The findings suggest that vocal women are often derogatively labelled as *this woman talks too much*. This is because it is considered culturally inappropriate and unfeminine for women to be vocal. Hence, vocal women are prone to encounter hostility and are usually shunned by men. Conversely, being vocal is considered a positive trait among men. This double standard behaviour is apparently problematic for women aspiring to advance to leadership.

Furthermore, the women head teachers reported they were often compelled to prove they were unusually better qualified (Coleman, 2002). Males usually employed interrogative
tactics in meetings to undermine women’s knowledge and potentials. The interrogative tactics employed by the male teachers can be interpreted as veiled hostility towards women leaders as well as subtle efforts to sabotage women leadership.

It is therefore reasonable to suggest that double standard behaviours are perpetuated by the stereotypical characterizations such as women are unsuitable for leadership, have limited stress-resistance (Oakley, 2000) and probably delusions that women will surrender school leadership or change schools. Such double standard behaviours are unjustified because school leadership roles and responsibilities are gender neutral. Hence, raising the bar further institutes powerful gatekeepers for women candidates and school leaders.

Given all these, it is reasonable to conclude that sex and gender-based stereotypes reinforce the stereotypical feminine leadership deficiency traits and further negate opportunities for women to access leadership positions. While it may still be premature to determine the actual extent of the impact of these stereotypes, the findings strongly suggest that it operates at unconscious levels (Rhode, 2003) and perpetuates the glass ceiling effect.

**Sex discrimination**

The findings strongly suggest that direct, indirect and overt sex discrimination (Coleman, 2002) operates at various levels of recruitment and appointment to school leadership. Sexism in the selection of school leaders is rife among the patriarchal school management committees. This is because between equally qualified and experienced male and female candidates, the selection and the propensity for male teachers to advance to school leadership have been blatantly higher. Women teachers, on the other hand, are not even considered worthy of leading and thus are outrightly rejected for school leadership.

However, the findings did not indicate sexual harassment. A proposed explanation for this could be that appropriate legislations such as the Public Service Code of Conduct,
the Code of Ethics, the Education Act and the recurrent knowledge explosion on
women’s rights and relevant legislations curb sexual harassment of women in schools.

The findings also suggest that indirect sex discrimination begins from the time women
commence their teaching career. Women teachers are generally delegated classes in the
lower primary. While females stereotypically possess greater nurturance skills (Lipman-
Blumen, 1992; Fondas, 1997; Eagly & Carli, 2003), this should not be the justification
for confining women teachers to the lower end of the primary school spectrum.

This is because teacher training colleges prepare primary school teachers to implement
the school curriculum irrespective of their gender. Therefore, such discriminatory
practices can only be interpreted as overt attempts to inhibit women’s opportunities to
advance to higher echelons because according to common practice, teachers (male in
majority) in the upper primary are given more prominence. They mostly get groomed for
the first and second line leadership positions which eventually lead to their
appointments. Women have conspicuously remained confined to the lower primary for
most of their teaching careers.

Furthermore, the findings indicate a strong prevalence of sexist attitudes among the male
teachers and managers. The subtle forms of male insubordination and resentment by
male teachers confirm this. Some male teachers blatantly ignore women head teachers’
authority by “creating some problems everyday” (IP, p.130). One could assume that by
adopting sexist attitudes men not only attempt to dampen the morale and efforts of
women but vent their anger and frustration at having to concede to the authority vested
in women leaders. In addition, the women pinpointed that sexist attitudes and remarks
are rife among the school predominant male school management committees. For
instance, the school managers often justified their rejection of female candidates by
sexist remarks such as “females won’t be able to attend meetings at night” and
“working with the males is easier” (IP, p.50).
Arguably, the precedence of convening meetings late in the evenings denotes indirect discrimination against women teachers. In retrospect, women are constrained by culture, time, family obligations and mode of socialization. It also appears that some women are reluctant to attend meetings at night because of how it may be perceived by others. Most women reportedly are consumed by the fear of character defamation. Generally, when a woman leaves home at night “people attach other meanings” (FSR, p.1). These include promiscuous character, illicit liaison with one of the committee or board members and/or the most common one, her spouse being kept under petticoat government. Such insinuations are particularly rife in the conservative societies where these women head teachers lead.

In addition, the findings indicated other instances of indirect discrimination such as being offered very remote schools when the women became persistent in their pursuit of school leadership. One could assume that offering school leadership in remote schools while “promoting all the junior males within the urban schools” (IP, p. 34) was a ploy to dampen their interest. This ultimately deters women from accessing leadership positions. Hence, equally qualified and competent women have been marginalized.

The findings also imply that some higher authorities have engaged in direct sex discriminatory practices. This is because comparably males have been purposefully positioned to act as head teachers. Reportedly, the popular argument for not positioning women teachers is that female teachers lack the initiative and interest to lead schools. In contrast, written expressions of interest for school leadership had been given by some of the women head teachers.

Moreover, the findings unveil some instances of sex discrimination during the processing of formal applications to school leadership. Higher education certificates have mysteriously disappeared from application packages of some women candidates at the district office. This came to light only when legal redress was sought. One could assume that such unethical practices occurring at the preliminary phase of selection and at one of the most trustworthy and reliable echelons of leadership have marginalized
women. Although it is difficult to establish the extent of sex discrimination at the different levels of post processing, the interpretation of this finding provides reasonable scope for speculation and raises several important questions on the selectors and the selection process.

Firstly, one could assume that women candidates’ applications are trivialized in favour of the male teacher applicants, especially at the district levels. Secondly, such unethical acts raise questions on the ethics and professional conduct of the personnel authorized to write and forward submissions for the candidates. Thirdly, one could only assume that the male domination at the higher echelons of educational leadership is blind to such practices and/or reduce such occurrences to a one-off insignificant incident. Hence, this finding calls for gender-balanced selection committees at all the levels of post processing.

The next section advances the discussion on another formidable barrier, that is, the Old Boy Networks which perpetuate sex discrimination by operating as powerful gatekeepers to school leadership.

**Old Boys’ Networks**

The findings support previous research which illustrated that the informal male social systems commonly referred to as the “boys clubs” or “old boys’ network” (Hill & Ragland, 1995; Oakley, 2000; Coleman, 2002; Rhode, 2003) impede women’s advancement into leadership positions. Old boys’ networks exist and operate as clusters which include membership from the male representatives of teacher unions, school management committees and board members, head teachers, members from the higher echelons of educational leadership and affiliated professional and religious organizations.

The findings imply that men’s ways of socialization within the old boys’ network has effectively displaced women teachers and impeded their advancement to school
leadership. Reportedly, male teachers have used old boys’ networks to instigate androcentric practices. They have colluded with the school managers (management committee members) and thus secured provisional appointments to school leadership. While this has accelerated the promotion of many male teachers, it has negated the career positioning of competent and equally qualified women. Apparently, women have been deprived of informal contacts, advice and support which often left them with no option other than to voluntarily exit. It must be noted that such premature exits further stagnate women’s opportunities for advancement to school leadership.

The pervasive culture of old boys’ network is reinforced and maintained by yaqona drinking which is very popular at meetings, informal gatherings and school functions, particularly in rural schools where many of these women head teachers have served. Understandings had been bargained (Hill & Ragland, 1995) by some male teachers during drinking sessions which ultimately led to their promotion. One could only assume that pacts regarding potential leadership positions in schools have often been negotiated with management committees in advance through such alliances. Therefore, school management committees have unduly marginalized women teachers through these informal social systems.

It is essential to note that women are not usually privy to such forms of exclusive male social networking. This is because sitting around the tanoa with men is culturally inappropriate and unacceptable for women in Fiji (Tavola, 2000). Inarguably, this serves as a poignant reminder of the powerlessness of being a woman in an androcentrically defined world. As a few of the participants pointed out, even if the (professional) women do occasionally drink grog, they are consumed by the ingrained fear of how it might be perceived if they were found sitting around the tanoa with men in the odd hours of the night. Thus, they are compelled to remain alienated. This further perpetuates accusations of self-seclusion. However, accusing women of seeking self-seclusion is unjustified because with the strong culture of old boys’ networks, women are naturally left with no other option but to seek self-seclusion.
Furthermore, the women head teachers justified that they did not become members of other informal networks because *men gather to suit their timing; women have family obligations*. It is obvious that after a day’s work, many men head for the usual *tanoa* sessions while women are left to attend to the family. Hence, participation in informal networks is particularly difficult for women with demanding family commitments (Rhode, 2003). For this reason, women lack time for social activities that could generate collegial support and influential contacts. Consequently, they fail to secure contacts that would possibly pave way for future advancement. On the other hand, informal social systems afford men the exclusive advantage of cultivating friendship and alliances.

It appears that old boys’ networks have been functioning as a distribution system of obligations and reciprocity (Hill & Ragland, 1995). Apparently, the school managers and/or influential committee members update their network members about imminent positions. Male candidates then obtain written requests for their appointment from the school managers and forward this to the district education offices. In return, the prospective candidate negotiates ways of reciprocating the favour when promoted. Reportedly, gifts of liquor (Gin, Rum), cash, livestock and seafood have been exchanged among the prospective male candidates, school management committee members, teacher union members and even some higher echelon educational leaders. Although it is not conclusive, it appears that a considerable number of male candidates have benefitted from this system of obligation and reciprocity.

On the other hand, these systems of obligation and reciprocation can be interpreted as veiled practices of bribery and corruption. This is because firstly, formal recruitment procedures are stipulated by the Public Service Commission and it does not endorse such practices. Hence, it could be argued that indulging in such reciprocal behaviours is corruptive and unjustified. Secondly, negotiations have apparently been done *under the table* in advance by the male candidates who “are always running after posts, even though they are very juniors” (FSR, p.88). So one could only assume that some male candidates (comparably less meritorious than the prospective women) have indulged in
some (perhaps trivial) forms of bribery in order to advance to school leadership. In doing so, they have marginalized opportunities for women.

However, although the implications are grave, this interpretation needs to be treated with caution. This is because the magnitude of such practices cannot be ascertained by this study. In addition, it is fairly reasonable to assume that such practices were more rampant a few decades ago when the enforcement of legislations may not have been fully and firmly established.

Nonetheless, it is to be noted that the system of obligation and reciprocity underpins many cultural practices in Fiji. However, these conform to the norms and rites of different cultures. One could only assume that the cultural notion of reciprocity has been misappropriated to suit the personal agendas of some male teachers. The concept of reciprocity is derived predominantly from the indigenous Fijian culture. It is generally confined to providing general helpfulness to family members in times of need. These may include food, mats and any other type of article that may be short in supply. In return assurance is given to the provider that a similar request made in future will be granted. Given these, it could be assumed that the cultural notion of reciprocity has been exploited to access leadership positions in schools.

Finally, one could only conclude that old boy networks act as powerful gatekeepers for women while it serves as opportunities for informal mentoring and promotions for men through collegial support and contacts. Women teachers in this study have been grossly disadvantaged by the existence and functions of old boys’ networks because it has exclusively conferred privileges to the male teachers.

It must be noted that consuming yaqona during school hours and in the school premises is now prohibited (The Fiji Times- Online, June 08, 2010).

Given all these barriers it is appropriate to advance the discussion to the women and their familial responsibilities in order to further illuminate the challenges they encounter.
The Women

Contrary to the findings of some previous studies (Oplatka, 2006; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010), this phenomenological study suggests that the women teachers do not suffer from the internal barrier of negative self-perceptions such as poor self-image and lack of confidence. This finding emerged despite the fact that it was the women’s first formal school leadership.

Similar to the women teachers in Cubillo & Brown’s (2003) study these women also emerged remarkably self-reliant and exhibited high levels of motivation, self-esteem, self-confidence and personable appearance. Hence, these preliminary findings are encouraging because they dispel the myths that the underrepresentation of women in school leadership is largely due to women’s lack of initiative, confidence and motivation. The women head teachers in this study had supportive families and were personally committed to enhancing their potentials by purposeful engagement in various activities throughout their teaching career. Conversely, the findings of negative self-perceptions among women teachers in studies elsewhere emerged because comparably they were subjected to more stringent and traditional patriarchal societies (Kariuki, 2006; Oplatka, 2006; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010)).

Furthermore, contrary to the many preconceived beliefs this study clearly indicates that despite the often burdensome family commitments (Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010), women teachers nurture ardent aspirations to lead and are often intrinsically motivated to make a difference (Coleman, 20002; Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Shakeshaft, et al., 2007; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010).

While these are a few reminders of women teacher aspirations and confidence, their significance should not be understated. This is because they are useful in abating the misconceptions that women don’t nurture aspirations and lack self-motivation for school leadership. However, it is appropriate to mention that like elsewhere family and home responsibilities influence women teachers’ choices (Shakeshaft, et al., 2007).
Not surprisingly, the findings strongly indicate that it is the *males* who construe and reinforce the notion that women teachers lack motivation and aspiration to lead schools. This was clearly evident when the male participants in reporting on the perceived barriers postulated that women readily conformed to the inferior/weaker sex script, they were not interested and appropriately motivated and they were non-risk takers. In addition, they claimed that women teachers often became complacent in their roles as teachers. Arguably, these insinuations unfairly project women and further attempt to reinforce the stereotype leadership deficient theory. One only has to delve deeper into the women teachers’ lives and career trajectories to shatter such misconceptions.

Given all these, it can be assumed that the insinuation that women lack leadership career aspirations originates from patriarchal cultures which perpetuate the gendered assumptions of what is best and what is right for the school (Coleman & Fitzgerald, 2008). One could only assume that such gendered perceptions establish and reinforce the misconception that women lack career motivation and/or aspirations to advance. Finally, these findings implicate the need for more studies to establish and analyze the extent of negative self-perceptions among women (teachers) and determine how they are perpetuated.

**Familial Responsibilities**

Contrary to some studies (Nath, 2000; Razvi & Roth, 2004; Oplatka, 2006; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010), the women head teachers in this study did not attribute familial responsibilities as a major challenge in advancing to school leadership. This was because they came from extended families where their in-laws assisted in child care and domestic chores. Their children also occasionally engaged in menial chores around the houses.

Nonetheless, another probable explanation for the contradictory findings could be that like elsewhere these women head teachers were not subjected to the stringent and harsher patriarchal traditions and spousal resistance (Kariuki, 2004; Oplatka, 2006; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010). It could also be assumed that the familial responsibilities did not emerge as a major barrier because the career trajectories of these women head
teachers illustrate a very late advancement to school leadership (also mentioned elsewhere). Most of their children were grown up with a few even married off at the time of their promotion. Apparently, domestic chores become less with grown up and/or married children.

However, the career trajectories of these women imply that they often functioned like the proverbial superwomen (Coleman, 2002) by engaging in a double day of work (Harding, 2004). While they effectively managed to create a balance between their professional and personal lives, it was not without the similar tensions that professional women across cultures and continents experience (Court, 1997; Nath, 2000; Razvi & Roth, 2004; Coleman, 2002; Harding, 2004)). Reportedly, these women head teachers had to juggle between the home, school and familial responsibilities. This was because they were solely responsible for the home; as a mother and wife and in many cases their responsibilities included the extended family members.

What also emerged is that men develop a nonchalant attitude towards child care and domestic responsibilities and continue to disassociate themselves from domestic chores. This is because they perceive it as women’s work. Hence, it is also reasonable to assume that women invariably concede to the gender battles fought at home because the gender power relationships work against women (Court, 1997).

A proposed reason for the gender battles could be that historically men have been the sole breadwinners, the ones going out to work, while the women have been historically and culturally socialized into staying home and minding the children and family. This has probably reinforced the assumption that women are only suited for caring and nurturing. Hence, women naturally adopt a lead role at home and child care. Men virtually do not assume any responsibility for domestic chores and child care (Coleman, 2002). Ironically, such pervasive beliefs and practices continue to manifest in the lives of many women in spite of the increasingly feminized workforces. In contrast, women offer a whole gamut of support ranging from moral, child care, domestic, familial and
financial for the career advancement of their spouses. It is therefore, fairly reasonable to assume that women are alone in their endeavor for career advancement.

Nonetheless, while these findings are a stark reminder of the multiple roles women engage in, it also raises questions on the quality of life they lead. As the findings suggest, women are often compelled to relentlessly and silently endure the role stress, work overload and role conflict. In doing so, they compromise the quality of their lives.

The following section discusses the findings on the factors that support the advancement of women teachers into school leadership.

Factors That Support the Advancement of Women into School Leadership:

The findings suggest that support for women’s advancement to school leadership is minimal. Although spouse and family appeared to be the most significant supportive factors, it is obvious that women generally are alone in their pursuit of leadership positions in terms of organizational and domestic support.

Nonetheless, the findings provocatively suggest that there is a gradual acceptance of women in school leadership. It appears that there is a change of mindset amongst a few school management committee members and parents who are important stakeholders.

One could only assume it was the change in mindset that ultimately placed these women into positions of leadership. It is also important to note that support for the women teachers was evident where school management committees had at least one woman membership. It appears that the presence of women in school management committees is responsible for the perceived change in mindset.

In addition, the findings imply there is a growing appreciation and acknowledgement for women school leaders. This was particularly evident at functions where school managers
publicly acknowledged and praised women head teachers for their effectiveness. Such accolades obviously are useful reminders that when women are provided with opportunities they not only establish themselves as competent and outstanding leaders but foster appreciation in the real essence. It appears that because these women have proved themselves to be good role models, it has increased acceptance and confidence levels among male dominated school managements. It is important to note that acceptance from the school managements is the most fundamental stepping stone for advancement of women into school leadership. This is because school managers are the mediators of the school communities and the communities at large.

Furthermore, the findings emphasize the importance of having supportive families and spouse. Spousal and family support is critical to the advancement of women into school leadership. The women attributed their advancement to supportive, encouraging and understanding husbands. Parents also remarkably had a greater influence on the career aspirations of these women.

The women also noted that informal mentoring from senior female colleagues reinforced their confidence and determination to pursue leadership. However, formal mentoring opportunities for women are obviously lacking.

These preliminary findings suggest that the recognition and support that women have begun to receive has the potential to gradually increase their representation in school. The findings also implicate the urgent need for more proactive intervention strategies to alleviate the barriers that women encounter in their pursuit of school leadership. This is because the underlying pervasive barriers that women encounter in their pursuit of leadership cannot be shattered overnight.

**The Female Advantage**

The phenomenological study of women head teachers also illuminated a kaleidoscope of advantages that women bring to (school) leadership. In illuminating perhaps one of the most prominent female advantages, it is important to draw attention to the following
simple yet assertive comments “A woman’s leadership starts from the home. She is the very first leader at home; if she can manage everything at home then why can’t she manage outside” (IP, p. 10). These fascinating comments hold great significance because not only does it capture the origin of women leadership, that is, the home but it also serves as a provocative reminder that women are leaders. Perhaps their greatest legacy to leadership is the set of feminine communal attributes (Fondas, 1997). While it is inevitable that these may evoke some dissent in the professional context, one cannot ignore the fact that women in Fiji like elsewhere effectively and almost single-handedly shoulder innumerable responsibilities at home.

It is needless to mention that the home increasingly denotes a complex web of relationships and establishes the unwavering foundation for informal learning and basic life skills. The women head teachers’ recounts overtly imply that women cultivate leadership skills and attributes through the process of enculturation and socialization into the rich and diverse array of the feminine communal and domestic roles. Hence, it is justified to presume that women are adept in multi-tasking and naturally synchronize into the humane roles that (school) leadership in contemporary times demand. These submit perhaps one of the most intrinsic female advantages women bring to leadership.

Arguably, women only need to emerge out of the cocoon of the domestic-oriented leadership roles and assert themselves as leaders in the formal contexts. The feminine communal and domestic roles accord women and potential women leaders certain unparalleled advantages not accorded previously (Fondas, 1997; Eagly & Carli, 2003). These are further elaborated in the following paragraphs.

The findings illustrated that women tend to employ a host of feminine communal attributes and behaviors which exemplify the ethics of care and emotional intelligence (Moore, 2007; Daft, 2008). These may include emotions, expressiveness, empathy, cooperation and low control, receptivity to ideas, sensitivity, making connections, caring and nurturing, listening effectively, conflict resolution and negotiation, personal effectiveness, creative and intuitive problem solving, strategic thinking, team building
and influencing skills. It is important to note that these attributes encapsulate the universal values of love, trust, caring, empathy, compassion, respect, tolerance and sharing. Being emotional and empathetic has also been perceived to be an endearing quality among women.

Given all these, it can be concluded that women may possess the increasingly sought-after soft skills (Fondas, 1997), also known as people or interpersonal skills. Hence, the female gender attributes reinforce and distinctly elevate the female advantage. This is because apart from standard qualifications soft skills are unequivocally the most important part of individual contribution to successful leadership. This particularly holds true in the context of school leadership. Schools exemplify learning communities where face-to-face interactions with staff, students and (sometimes other notable stakeholders) occur on daily basis. Leadership in contemporary times demands people with high emotional competencies (Daft, 2008). People with high emotional competencies reportedly enhance the quality of participation, commitment, ownership levels and (educational) performances and outcomes.

However, this finding does not imply that men do not possess soft skills or that the perceived high emotional competencies among women should exclusively preside over the essential occupational skills. In retrospect, human resource development initiatives by the Professional Development Unit often attempt to promote and cultivate soft skills among school leaders through its leadership and management training programmes.

The findings illuminated other distinct female advantages which included collaborative and democratic leadership styles, effective communication, time management, multitasking and organizational skills, financial literacy, intrinsic motivation for improving school instruction and making a difference in the lives of the people. These are delineated in the following sections to highlight the distinct advantages. It is to be noted that women’s ways of perceiving and conceptualizing things are entwined into their attributes and leading styles.
As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the women head teachers’ leadership styles increasingly embody the share and empower paradigm. This submits specific female advantage because the share and empower worldview is considered to be more consistent with today’s flexible and modern (school) organizations confronted with competing demands. Reportedly, when leadership styles are underpinned by creating emotional bonds, empowering others and sharing leadership, it enhances the leader’s capacity to influence and transform individuals and schools (Lipman-Blumen, 1992; Eagly & Carli, 2003; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Daft, 2008). However, this should not be taken to imply that women do not exert control when the situation demands.

Furthermore, the women head teachers’ worldview and experiences reasonably suggest that women exert more personal power (Fondas, 1997) as opposed to position power. This was apparent from the recollections which depicted consistent hard work, their innate capacity to influence, interpersonal skills and the evolving fact that these women were able to command greater appreciation for their gender in spite of the male stream school leadership. This submits strength because when personal power is capitalized, connections are established and relationships with staff and the community are nurtured.

The findings implied that women leaders were highly influential. For this reason, it appears that the women were able to effectively facilitate attitudinal and behavioral changes among students and staff. The women were also instrumental in initiating long overdue physical and structural changes in their schools. Women were also perceived to be more effective in improving the discipline of students through counseling, coaching and mentoring. It is to be noted that leadership embodies influence (Northouse, 2010) and effective communication is the prerequisite for exerting influence. Hence, this finding further advances the discussion to yet another significant advantage that women bring to school leadership, that is, effective and multidirectional communication (Shakeshaft, 2010).

The women capitalized on their female gender attributes of flexibility, inclusivity and receptivity to ideas in order to facilitate multidirectional communication (Shakeshaft,
The intrinsic desire to foster democratic school climates was embedded in the women’s communication styles. They encouraged transparency, collective action and empowered staff. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that women lead by nurturing the human spirit and enhancing the value of self-worth. Apparently, the interactive and relational styles of women nurture the kind of relationships that define success through linking and making connections as opposed to ranking and isolation. It seems that for this reason women effectively engage in informal discussions and professional conversations with their subordinates. These findings also strongly imply that women are easier and comfortable to communicate with because they “are not harsh and you can go and tell them anything” (IP, p. 271).

These emerge as strength firstly, because school leaders cannot operate in a vacuum and secondly, the changing face of leadership appears to favor the flexible and multidirectional communication styles (Lipman-Blumen, 1992). Presumably, effective and multidirectional communication has the propensity to generate non-threatening, risk-free school climates that enhance opportunities for harnessing staff potential, elicit higher commitment levels and ultimately raise school standards. It is also important to mention that in the wake of escalating child abuse, substance abuse and related sexual offences, schools need leaders/teachers that facilitate open and non-judgmental communication.

Given that the perceived leadership styles of these women deeply embody influence, individual consideration and inspirational motivation (Eagly & Carli, 2003; Kark, 2004), it could also be assumed that women’s leadership deeply exemplify transformational leadership. However, in order to validate this preliminary finding, more systemic research on the leadership styles of women needs to be undertaken.

What also emerged is that although the women were leaders, they were not governed by the stereotypic image of being always perceived correct and/or taking sole credit for achievements. A proposed explanation for this could be that women have the propensity to accept divergent viewpoints with humility and dignity. This can be conceived as
strength because humility in a leader is a virtue that keeps arrogance at bay and encourages dispersed leadership, empowerment and progress. Most often when leaders conform to the notion that the boss is always right they stifle the diverse perspectives and inhibit professional and personal growth of the subordinates as well as the institutions.

The recollections also imply that prosperity is powerfully associated with women leaders. While it could be argued that the notion of prosperity depicts a strong cultural perspective, it is important to note that these women have reportedly salvaged their schools from finance and resource mismanagement by employing greater accountability, prudence and transparency under their headship. Conversely, schools have often suffered financial misappropriation under male leadership. This finding notably submits strength because financial literacy in contemporary times is also one of the most endearing attributes a leader can possess. In addition, it further justifies the proposition for increasing the number of women in educational leadership.

Moreover, the findings indicate that women are often altruistically motivated to make a difference (Cubillo & Brown, 2003; Sperandio & Kagoda, 2010; Shakeshaft, 2010) in the lives of the children and communities they serve. Reportedly, the women accomplished this by readily synchronizing into the role of change agents. The following assertion that “...we can make changes; women can make changes” (IP, p. 21) can be interpreted as an implicit reminder of women’s desire and confidence to make a difference. In addition, it draws attention to the fact that when women permeate (school) leadership, they in themselves are the change (Shakeshaft, 2010). For this reason, the findings provocatively suggest that women seek educational leadership to make a difference, not for competitive, egoistic or political purposes.

Another definitive advantage that emerged was that women leaders have a strong focus on improving instruction and learning (Shakeshaft, et al., 2007). They are apt to initiate, implement and support innovative instructional approaches and programmes. Hence, they lift the school culture out of the often complacent, mundane classroom activities by
providing opportunities for the intellectual stimulation of both staff and students. For instance, these women introduced literacy and numeracy games, quizzes and supplementary programmes to inject enthusiasm for learning and apparently the subsequent improvement of student outcomes. They were increasingly motivated to provide students and staff with creative opportunities for unleashing their talents and complemented these with positive reinforcement such as special awards and professional development.

Finally, it could be concluded that the kaleidoscope of cascading female attributes accord women the ultimate female advantage, which is, *making a difference by being different* (Rhode, 2003; Shakeshaft, 2010). This was increasingly justified by the diverse feminine skill set and the divergent perspectives enshrined in these women’s leadership, management and organizational styles. Apparently, women by the virtue of their sex use different perceptual lens to conceptualize things; hence they exemplify a different worldview. However, it appears that this difference is often perceived as deficiency and incompetency. Inarguably, women’s stunted progress to formal leadership has subjugated the true worth of being different.

Notwithstanding this, the evocative findings submit a legacy of female advantages to both school leadership and leadership in the broader context. Conversely, these findings diminish the stereotype deficient theory which projects women as leadership deficient. Studies have demonstrated that comparably women are more effective leaders. For instance, the Goldberg paradigm experiments illustrated that women were “modestly more effective than men in educational, government and social service organizations” (Eagly & Carli, 2003, p. 821). It is to be noted that schools are increasingly confronted with conflicting and competing demands. This implicates the need for women’s dispersed, pluralistic and humanistic styles (Fondas, 1997; Irby et al., 2002; Pounder & Coleman, 2002; Eagly & Carli, 2003) of leading. Given all these and that women proffer a legacy of kaleidoscopic female advantages, it could be argued that this necessitates the strategic inclusion of more women into school leadership.
The next section submits the discussions on the findings of the analysis of the proposed strategies of achieving gender equity in educational leadership.

**Achieving Gender Equity in Educational Leadership**

The analyses of the findings and the gender mainstreaming appraisal workshop submit several proposed intervention strategies for achieving equity in educational leadership. These include the formulation and implementation of gender policy; sex disaggregated data, situational surveys, affirmative action, gender sensitizing programmes and specific women-targeted empowerment programmes. Given the combinations of all these, the findings deeply exemplify and provide support for the conceptual premise of the mainstreaming of gender. In retrospect, gender mainstreaming is conceived to be a highly acclaimed universal strategy which proffers the ultimate panacea for achieving and promoting gender equality in the workforces.

As highlighted in the review of literature, gender mainstreaming basically involves the “process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, legislation, policies and programmes, in all areas and at all levels” (UN ECOSOC Report 1997, p.2). Consequently, gender equality becomes central to all the mainstream development plans and activities. This submits strength firstly, because gender mainstreaming is a transformative process of promoting gender equality that involves the systemic modification of gender infrastructure. Subsequently, this compels organizational and institutional changes which include the formulation and implementation of gender policies, establishment of gender focal units, allocation of supplementary resources for women’s programs and increment in the number of female staff and managers.

The establishment of gender focal units was perceived to be the most essential step in translating gender mainstreaming into practice. This is because the roles of gender focal units encapsulate all that is crucial to the designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming. These include the collection and dissemination of sex disaggregated data and information on gender issues, development of gender-
sensitive policies and programmes, development of gender mainstreaming tools and methodologies and monitoring and evaluating progress of gender mainstreaming as well as budgetary allocations.

Secondly, the eloquent process of gender mainstreaming compels the focus on women and their status. It is to be noted that by making gender equality issues central to the development activities, gender mainstreaming automates the inclusion of more women and women perspectives. In retrospect, women continue to bear the historical legacy of subordination and the repercussions of patriarchal cultures as well as the many women-excluded development programmes.

Thirdly, gender mainstreaming can subsequently procure equal benefits for both men and women. This is because it embodies a just and sustainable approach to achieving gender parity in all political, economic and societal spheres. It compels the influence, perspectives and participation of both men and women. Hence, it necessitates the equal representation of both men and women as actors in policy and programme design, implementation and outcomes. Presumably, the process of gender mainstreaming also serves as an evocative reminder that men and women are meant to complement each other.

Gender mainstreaming also proffers the opportunity to evaluate and address the negative impacts of development on men. This is important because men are often overwhelmed by gender equality propagandas and ironically feel threatened that women may surpass them in advancing to higher echelons. Therefore, one could only assume that the elaborate inclusion of both men and women can abate misconceptions regarding the terms gender and gender equality and further alleviate the perpetuation of inequalities.

Conversely, it was pointed that gender mainstreaming implicates potential risks. Firstly, gender mainstreaming could be used only as a strategy to achieve other developmental goals (Hannan, 2003). This is problematic because when the focus deviates from the goal of promoting gender equality to merely accomplishing development, it will
undermine the transformative process of gender mainstreaming. For this reason, linking the goal of gender equality in the context of mainstream development policies and programmes is perennially important.

Secondly, gender mainstreaming could merely imply the creation of gender balanced workplaces and the increment in the number of women. Hence, this misconception may diminish the real meaning of gender mainstreaming and jeopardize its full institutionalization. As a result, appropriate recruitment and training of specific personnel, formation of evaluation and accountability mechanisms and establishment of gender focal units at sectoral areas may altogether be eliminated. This is problematic because as mentioned elsewhere, lack of appropriate gender infrastructure will impede productive change and further aggravate inequalities. Hence, it is important that the ultimate goal of promoting gender equality is not compromised at the expense of the misconceptions.

Thirdly, lack of political will and commitment may become the overarching risk to gender mainstreaming. Hence, it will eventually result in the evaporation of gender mainstreaming policies and programmes. In retrospect, gender mainstreaming is perceived to be an underlying threat to the rigid patriarchal norms and only another one of the Eurocentric propositions imposed by the United Nations. Such pervasive mindsets can further hinder earnest political will and commitment. It is to be noted that political will and commitment is the bright red line between rhetoric and action. Hence, a clear political will is needed for the successful translation of gender mainstreaming into practice. Arguably, the allocation of additional human and financial resources will only ensue if these two pertinent qualities are visible.

Nonetheless, the adoption of gender mainstreaming will enable the Ministry of Education to further align its developmental plans and polices to government’s commitment to international treaties such as the Beijing Platform for Action (1995). It is essential to note that such conventions strongly espouse the mainstreaming of gender perspective in all policies and programmes to ensure gender equality and empowerment.
of women. It also provides the opportunity for supporting and reinforcing the Department of Women’s efforts in prioritizing women development in Fiji.

Given these, it is appropriate to pinpoint that equal participation in decision making emerges as one of the major areas of concerns that is outlined in the National Women’s Plan of Action (2010-2019). In retrospect, the government of Fiji is embracing a stronger political will and commitment to the empowerment of women which is justified by the modification of the Women’s Plan of Action (2010-2019) and greater commitment to the development of women as highlighted in recent media reports. However, one only hopes that the rhetoric effectively translates into practice and benefits are accrued across a rich diversity of women population.

Furthermore, the presence of women in educational leadership is critical to fostering socially just, sustainable and democratic societies. Not only women are needed to be actively involved in leading educational change but they need to effectively participate in the change and development process. Accordingly, as Sperandio and Kagoda (2008) have argued, women must be provided with the necessary skills and knowledge for educational leadership and policy making, at both the micro and macro levels.

In the context of the education sector, the process of gender mainstreaming largely remains as elusive as its conceptual premise. This is apparently justified by the lack of a visible policy on gender mainstreaming as well as the lack of the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the leadership and training programmes and other planning documents and programmes.

This was further confirmed at the appraisal workshop where initially gender mainstreaming was considered a mysterious concept. It could be argued that the lack of knowledge on the conceptual premise may be the ultimate reason for the non-formulation of a relevant, visible policy. It further justifies questions raised on the role and the capacity of the Ministry of Women (in chapter 2) in disseminating knowledge on strategic interventions for women representation/gender equality across all levels.
The next and final chapter submits the implications of the study and draws conclusions based on the findings and discussions.
CHAPTER SEVEN
IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This chapter submits the key findings based on the phenomenological study on *Women in Educational Leadership: Challenges faced by a selection of Women Head teachers in Ba, Fiji*. The key findings are summarized in Figure 7. The implications of the study for policy and practice, educational leadership development and training programmes, the Department of Women in Fiji as well as further research are presented. Conclusions are also drawn in light of relevant literature and research findings.

**Key Findings of the Study**

This phenomenological study attempted to explore challenges faced by a selection of women head teachers in Ba, Fiji. It also examined gender mainstreaming as a roadmap for achieving gender equity in educational leadership. The five major research questions that shaped the focus of this study are:

1. How do women Head teachers in Fiji perceive educational leadership?
2. What are the challenges faced by the women head teachers in primary schools in Fiji?
3. What are the factors that support the advancement of women into educational leadership?
4. What are the advantages of promoting more women into educational leadership?
5. What are some ways in which we can achieve gender equity in educational leadership?

Figure 7 on the next page illustrates the key findings of the study.
Figure 7: The Key Findings of the Study

Women Head teacher Perceptions of Educational Leadership

- Definitions of leadership resonate deeply with the collaborative, democratic and transformative leadership paradigms.
- They advocate and espouse the *share* and *empower* paradigm of leadership as opposed to the traditional masculine command and control styles.
- They strongly feel that women make equally or even more effective and influential school leaders.

The Challenges

- Patriarchy is the most formidable, underlying pervasive barrier that impeded the advancement of women teachers into school leadership.
- The strong culture of privileging males (androcentrism) for school leadership discriminated against many qualified and competent women teachers.
- Sex and gender-based stereotypes acted as powerful gatekeepers to school leadership by devaluing feminine leadership attributes and perpetuating double standard behaviours and expectations of women teachers.
- Women teachers encountered different forms of sex discrimination at the different levels of school organization, management and leadership.
- Old Boys’ networks existed and discreetly operated in distinct ways that perpetuate androcentric behaviours and sex discrimination.

The Support Factors

- Lack of institutional and organizational support.
- Family and spousal support are considered integral to women’s advancement to school leadership.
- Evolving support among a tiny fraction of the male stream school management committees who are slowly accepting and equating effective leadership with women head teachers.

The Female Advantage

- Possess set of feminine communal attributes such as cooperation and collaboration, soft skills, teamwork, empathy, and receptivity to ideas.
- Adept in multitasking and naturally synchronize into the humane roles that leadership demands in contemporary times.
- High emotional competence.
- Multidirectional communication styles.
- Collaborative and democratic leadership styles.
- Strong focus on improving instruction and learning.
- Intrinsically motivated to make a difference.

Achieving Gender Equity in Educational Leadership

- Formulation and implementation of Gender mainstreaming policy.
- Affirmative action policy to fast-track women’s representation.
- Gender-sensitizing programmes.
- Specific women-targeted empowerment programmes.
- Gender policy with special quotas for women representation.
Implications of the Study

In light of the formidable barriers women (teachers) encountered and the provocative analyses of gender mainstreaming, the findings submit profound implications for the MOE in terms of policy and practice as well as for further research. In addition, the findings impose subtle implications for educational leadership development programmes and training and for the development of women in Fiji. The following section outlines the implications of the study.

Implications for Policy and Practice- Ministry of Education

The findings of this phenomenological study strongly implicate the need for a visible and active gender mainstreaming policy at the Ministry of Education. Given that gender mainstreaming arouses a lot of ambiguity, largely remains an invisible strategy and implies a complex and comprehensive process of promoting gender equality, it necessitates the need for conceptual understanding at all levels. It is also highly likely that greater conceptual understanding will foster a clearer political will and commitment at the macro levels.

One of the proposed ways of facilitating deeper conceptual understanding would be through a series of Participatory Learning and Appraisal Workshops (PLA) for policy and decision makers at the macro level, similar to the one in this study. These could be conducted in collaboration with the Ministry of Women who could also provide the necessary training for the selected Ministry of Education personnel. The PLA workshops could later trickle down to the micro levels of educational leadership. In retrospect, the need for more PLA workshops on gender mainstreaming was echoed by participants in this study. It is important to note that PLA workshops will not only increase the conceptual understanding of gender mainstreaming among the educational leaders but it also proffers opportunity for gender-sensitizing the male stream population.
Assumptions of gender neutrality generally preside in the echelons of educational leadership. Hence, it is only prudent that the Ministry of Education adopts an active and a visible gender mainstreaming policy which takes its premise on the principles and recommendations outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action (1995) and the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC). This means that the Ministry of Education needs to modify its gender infrastructure by facilitating institutional and organizational changes outlined below:

- formulation and implementation of gender policy,
- establishment of gender focal points/units,
- allocation of additional resources for women’s programs and
- increment in the number of female educational leaders (through the appointment of a particular percentage of women to educational leadership at all the sectors and levels).

The establishment of a gender focal unit is most crucial in translating gender mainstreaming to reality. Hence, the Ministry of Education should establish a Gender Focal Unit (GFU) and further complement it with the establishment of gender focal points at the district education offices. To further strengthen this proposition, it is prudent that the responsibilities of the gender focal units:

- support the development of and formulate culture and gender-sensitive policies, programmes and strategies,
- facilitate professional development for staff in applying a gender perspective in all educational forums, leadership training and reports,
- develop tools and methodologies for gender mainstreaming,
- collect and disseminate sex disaggregated data and information on gender issues and best practices,
- provide assistance in monitoring and evaluating progress of gender mainstreaming in policy, programming and budgetary allocations,
• network with national machinery and non-governmental organizations for the advancement of women,
• monitor and evaluate progress on the representation of women in educational leadership through the regular collection, analysis and dissemination of quantitative and qualitative data on women and men,
• provide culture-sensitive gender sensitizing training for women and men to promote non-discriminatory working relationships and respect for diversity of work and leadership styles and
• establish database (with consistent data protection) on women and their qualifications for use in appointing women to senior leadership and management positions.


The findings strongly implicate the formulation of a gender policy that stipulates specific strategies and special quotas for the advancement of women into educational leadership. The most favorable quota emanating from this study was a fifty percent representation of women in educational leadership. It is to be noted that special quotas ensure the representation of women. Hence, it provides an excellent opportunity for increasing the number of female role models in educational leadership.

The findings also propose the implementation of an affirmative action policy to fast-track the advancement of women into educational leadership. Gender mainstreaming cannot miraculously alleviate the current gross underrepresentation of women in educational leadership. Therefore, assuming that the implementation and institutionalization of gender mainstreaming may not immediately eventuate, it justifies the implementation of an affirmative action that will put women teachers on equal pedestal in terms of educational leadership.
Justifiably, at this point numbers are important in creating a balance in educational leadership and opening more spaces for women. In this way women can contribute the same way as men have. Then only one can truly proclaim that the dynamics of gender are being addressed appropriately and hopefully one can witness changes that have occurred elsewhere.

Moreover, it only seems appropriate that the Ministry of Education formulates a Women’s Plan of Action to complement gender mainstreaming. A Women’s Plan of Action will complement the proactive and strategic approach to addressing women teachers’ development. In addition, it would also reaffirm the political will, secure budgetary, technical and resource allocations and facilitate deeper and specific commitment to enhancing equity in educational leadership and related areas.

Arguably, the proposition for a Women’s Plan of Action indicates a significant predisposition towards the female gender. However, the persistent trend of blatant gender disparity in educational leadership is equally contentious and as such it compels the implementation of proactive strategies. It is further envisaged that the proactive measures will manage the existing gender disparities and alleviate the reproduction of future discrepancies. Needless to mention the absence of proactive strategies mask the true cost of future anomalies.

It is important to note that the ultimate success and continuity of gender mainstreaming rests on the extent to which it is institutionalized. Therefore, it is prudent that the Ministry of Education institutionalizes gender mainstreaming through concrete steps that include the:

- adoption of gender mainstreaming policies and the formation of specific gender mainstreaming strategies,
- use of institutional directives which include incorporating gender perspective in report writing,
• improvement of tools for gender mainstreaming such as gender analysis, the use of gender disaggregated data by sex and age and sector-specific gender surveys,
• establishment of instruments and mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation such as gender-impact analysis methodologies and the
• creation of accountability mechanisms for gender mainstreaming.

(Adapted from the UNECOSOC Report, 1997)

Finally, it is important to note that the conceptual understanding of gender mainstreaming is a significant precursor to its implementation and success. Gender mainstreaming entails a comprehensive and complex process of a transformative agenda. For this reason it necessitates the implementation of specific tools and mechanisms. Nonetheless, it also demands greater political will and solemn commitment to fully realize the gender equality goals enshrined in its conceptualization and principles. Notwithstanding these, it is important to note that one cannot expect change to arrive miraculously. It takes a decision and it takes action, not wishful thinking!

**Implications for Educational Leadership Development Programmes and Training:**

In light of the findings of this study and the review of literature, it is probably sensible that leadership development programmes and training undergo critical and periodical reviews, both at the Professional Development Unit (PDU) and Higher Education institutes. At the PDU, it calls for reviewing the leadership theoretical content, gender sensitizing training (for the school managements and educational leaders) and the review of the criteria for the selection of trainees. In addition, the establishment of a gender disaggregated *Future Leaders* database at the PDU is deemed appropriate to facilitate gender equitable and informed promotions to educational leadership.

In a similar vein, it is prudent that educational leadership development and training programmes at the Higher Education institutes undergo critical and periodical reviews in order to ensure that equity issues are appropriately addressed, women are represented in
curricula materials and case studies and that the curriculum is not underpinned by gender deficit theories (Shakeshaft et al., 2007). This will ensure gender equity in leadership preparatory programs as well as illuminate female leaders’ experiences and elevate their status. In addition, it is envisioned that this will gradually disintegrate stereotypical norms and diminish discriminatory practices in organizations.

**Implications for the Development of Women**

Given that gender mainstreaming remains an invisible strategy and arouses a lot of ambiguity, it is only prudent that the Department of Women reconsiders its capacity to generate and support gender analyses and the mainstreaming of gender in all the government policies and programmes. Withstanding this, it is only appropriate that the Department of Women establishes a national gender focal unit which spearheads awareness and conceptual understandings of gender mainstreaming among the line ministries and provides the necessary training and support. It is also deemed appropriate that the Department of Women monitors the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all the policies, programmes and budgetary allocations of the line ministries.

**Implications for Future Researches:**

The findings of this study prompt the need for larger-scale phenomenological studies/feminist research on women head teachers around the country to extend the insights and further validate both the challenges and positive influences women teachers encounter in advancing to school leadership. It would also be interesting to document the career trajectories of both the younger and older generation of women school leaders for comparative data.

In addition, further research could include comparative studies to identify commonalities and differences in the experiences and worldviews of women educational leaders from different ethnic groups, geographical locations and leadership contexts (secondary schools and higher education, school management committees and education boards).
addition, research is needed on women in the private sectors such as corporate, health politics to provide a different backdrop for the experience of women leaders and managers.

Furthermore, research documenting the perceptions of male educational leaders and recruiters at different echelons of leadership will also be useful in providing an alternative worldview on the challenges women encounter as well as facilitating greater inclusivity and sensitivity to gender equity and related issues.

It would also be prudent to further investigate the challenges of women educational leaders by delineating the barriers that were illuminated in this study. Some areas for further investigation could include:

- investigating the different/changing forms of patriarchy in social institutions and its impact on women,
- the effects of sex and gender stereotypes on the provisional selection and retention of school leaders,
- the effects of sex and gender on the recruitment process,
- the different types of sex discrimination women encounter as teachers/educational leaders and its effects,
- the examination of androcentric behaviours at the different echelons of the male stream educational leadership and
- the identification and examination of the types of old boys’ networks in different organizational, geographical and cultural contexts, their functions and effect on professional women.

Conversely, further studies could be conducted to examine the factors that influence and support women’s advancement to school leadership at various levels. In addition, it would be appropriate to conduct studies to determine the factors that influence or negate women teachers’ aspirations, confidence and self-esteem in schools.
Specific studies are also needed to analyze the type and degree of spousal support women teachers receive in terms of advancing their careers. These could be further extended to investigate the spousal impact on and the rate of women’s advancement to school leadership if their spouses belong to the teaching profession and/or are educational leaders. These investigations would further provide greater insights as well as induce the development of meaningful intervention strategies.

Investigations on the types of women-targeted leadership development and mentoring programmes that are available for women teachers and how it impacts their aspirations and advancement are also important. It would also be equally fascinating to examine how women in educational leadership are striking a balance between the personal and professional and how they define their success.

Another promising direction for future introspection would be the systemic study of female leadership attributes, leadership and management styles and female advantages. In addition, it would be interesting to collate perceptions from school management committees, parents and students on women leadership styles and the difference they make by being different. This will be useful in providing contextualized feminine leadership conceptualizations. It will also be valuable in further abating misconceptions and generating more receptivity to women as school leaders.

It will also be interesting to track and document the career pathways of the current cohort of women teachers who are in the first and second line leadership positions (including women from both the contractual and confirmed status). This will be useful in further analyzing the rate of women’s advancement to school leadership. In a similar vein, investigations could be conducted to track and analyze the advancement of women teachers who completed the Future Leaders Training programmes.

Because equality issues are contentious per se, it would be prudent to explore the cultural/religious definitions of equality and equity. This would provide the essential
compromise as well as proffer a culture-sensitive premise for contextualized development and implementation of intervention strategies and programmes.

Furthermore, another potential area for directing future research would be the critical examination of educational leadership curriculum at higher education institutes. This could illuminate the extent to which equity issues are addressed, determine whether women are represented in curricula materials and case studies and proffer critical analyses of the curriculum for gender deficit theories. In a similar vein, studies can be conducted to investigate the extent of gender mainstreaming at the Ministry of Education and its impact on the development and advancement of women teachers.

Given all these areas for further research, it implicates the adoption of perhaps more engaging and overt feminist methodologies to understand gender related issues and expose the inconsistencies. It would further be prudent to complement these with other qualitative and mixed research methodologies. Alternative methodologies would be useful in further enhancing authenticity and trustworthiness of feminist research.

Finally, more feminist educational researches are needed to empower women as well as promote collective, qualitative, reflective and introspective biographical research methods. Critical feminist research will be useful in contextualizing feminist research and ideologies and consequently will enrich the barely visible local feminist knowledge bases. These would also be useful in informing and shaping future research developments and conceptualizations. Only then one could truly proclaim that educational leadership knowledge bases and researches are gender equitable.
Conclusion

In summary, this study adequately addressed the five research questions which guided this phenomenological study of women head teachers. However, the findings may not be generalizable to all women.

Firstly, the findings reveal that women increasingly espouse the share and empower leadership paradigms. They strongly believe that leadership should be a collaborative and a democratic process of influence and empowerment. Their worldviews and experiences also strongly suggest that women head teachers have a very strong sense of transformative agenda. This is complemented by their altruistic motivation to make a difference in the lives of the children and the communities they serve.

The women also believe in creating bonds and facilitating multidirectional channels of communication. They increasingly associate success in school leadership with linking and making connections, teamwork, humility and empowering and enhancing the values of self-worth of their staff and students.

Furthermore, women head teachers’ nurture aspirations to lead larger diversely populated schools. This is despite the fact that educational leadership submits a challenge in terms of its androcentricity.

Secondly, the findings reveal that patriarchy is the most formidable barrier to the women teachers’ advancement to school leadership. Women leaders are conceived to be a threat to the status quo of males. In addition, the findings indicate that patriarchy perpetuates the real man attitude (Court, 1999) and the unconscious fear of emasculation among male teachers. The male domination of educational leadership subordinates women’s aspirations and manifests itself in various ways at the different levels of school organization, management and leadership. Hence, women encounter various forms of glass ceilings which impede advancement to school leadership. These include androcentrism, stereotyping and sex discrimination and old boys’ networks.
The findings indicate that androcentrism has led to discrimination against women teachers and caused barriers to their advancement to school leadership. It has eliminated opportunities for career positioning and political savvy (Oakley, 2000). In addition, androcentrism has been responsible for the negative gendered experiences (Coleman, 2002) such as the fluctuating levels of confidence and self-esteem among women teachers. Androcentric behaviours have also ignored and devalued the potentials of women teachers and reinforced the stereotypical notion that *males are better*. Conversely, androcentrism has advantaged male teachers by carefully positioning them in the first lines and providing pathways for faster access to school leadership at a much younger age.

The findings also expose that societies are entrenched in stereotypes (Heilman, 1997, Coleman, 2002) which perpetuate the androcentric behaviours of the male stream school leaders and management committees and eventually lead to sex discrimination. The most pervasive sex stereotypes illuminated in this study were that *males are better* and that the *right way is giving it to a male*. In addition, it was found that leadership is perceived to be *male* in sex type and men generally ascribe negative stereotypes to women. Thus, they cause barriers by stereotyping women as leadership deficient. Sex stereotypes influence and reinforce gender-based stereotypes. The most pervasive gender-based stereotype that imposes barriers to women teachers’ advancement to school leadership is *the one who scours the pots cannot run a school*.

Furthermore, the findings exposed that women teachers encounter different forms of sex discrimination at various phases of their careers as well as advancement to school leadership. These include overt, direct and indirect discrimination (Coleman, 2002). Overt discrimination included objections to the selection and appointment of female head teachers. Direct sex discrimination included prioritizing male teachers for school leadership while indirect discrimination included questioning the ability of women to run schools. Hence, sexist attitudes and sexism in the selection and appointment of male
teachers have caused formidable barriers to women teachers’ advancement and has perpetuated their underrepresentation in school leadership.

Moreover, it was found that old boys’ networks exist and operate to disadvantage women teachers. These exclusive male informal social systems provide men with collegial support, mentorship and influential contacts that pave the way for career advancement. Women, on the other hand, are constrained by culture, time and familial obligations. In addition, the findings suggest that old boys’ networks reinforce androcentric practices and often function as systems of obligations and reciprocity. Hence, old boys’ networks also act as powerful gatekeepers for women teachers to advance to school leadership.

Thirdly, the research findings indicate that there is lack of support for women’s advancement to educational leadership in terms of organizational policies, women-targeted leadership training, mentorship and career positioning. However, family and spousal support were perceived to be significant factors that influenced and supported women’s career advancement. But, women head teachers still had to solely contend with familial and domestic responsibilities. The findings also suggest support in the form of change in mindset among the tiny fraction of the male stream school management committees who have accepted and acknowledged women head teachers as effective school leaders.

The fourth finding of the study illuminates numerous inherent feminine attributes which submit the advantages of promoting more women into educational leadership. Women bring to educational leadership the unparalled female advantage of being leaders at home as well as a rich diversity of leadership attributes and skills embedded in their feminine communal roles. These include the increasingly valuable soft skills (Fondas, 1997), high emotional competence, multidirectional communication and organizational, management and multitasking skills. The findings also suggest that women strongly espouse the participatory, collaborative and democratic leadership.
In addition, women nurture a strong and intrinsic motivation for improving school instruction (Shakeshaft et al., 2007). Women are the change in themselves and they strive to make a difference by being different. These female advantages submit strength to school leadership, management and organization in contemporary times because it fosters the establishment of interactive and meaningful relationships among staff, parents and students, encourages innovation and creativity, raises commitment levels, enhances school outcomes and is useful in negotiation and conflict resolution. These justify the ultimate advantage for promoting more women into school leadership.

Finally, the findings submit several propositions for achieving gender equity in educational leadership. These include the formulation and implementation of affirmative action and gender policies, gender sensitizing programmes and women-oriented development and empowerment programmes. Given these, it implicates the need for a visible and active gender mainstreaming policy as a tool for facilitating gender equity in educational leadership and the broader (education) context.

The critical analyses demonstrated that the mainstreaming of a gender perspective will compel women representation as well as the formulation and implementation of gender policies, the modification of organizational and institutional structures. It will also compel the allocation of additional resources for women development and empowerment. In addition, it will facilitate the increment of the number of females in decision making. Hence, socially just, sustainable and democratic communities will be cultivated. The transformative agenda of gender mainstreaming will also necessitate the establishment of gender focal units which are critical to the collection, analyses and dissemination of sex disaggregated data and the development of relevant policies and programmes as well as their implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

To conclude, the findings of this study are beneficial because it has illuminated certain long standing issues pertaining to and emerging from the female head teachers. It has also provided an important context for increasing our understanding of women school leaders and their experiences and understanding why they experience what they
experience. It is further envisaged that the findings will abate the preconceived notions of women’s underrepresentation in school leadership and possibly culminate in the legacy of significant breakthrough in gender policy and practice at both the national and regional education sectors.


File Format: PDF/Adobe Acrobat.


File Format: PDF/Adobe Acrobat.


Appendix A Map of Fiji Islands illustrating the geographical location of the study and the schools (shown by the arrow)

Key:
- The schools in the study

Source: online
**INFORMED CONSENT**

I am currently conducting a research for my Master’s thesis titled *Women in Educational Leadership: Challenges faced by a selection of female head teachers in Ba, Fiji* at the University of the South Pacific under AusAid sponsorship. Approval has been granted by the Ministry of Education.

You are being requested to participate in a study investigating the challenges female head teachers encounter in educational leadership. I am interested in understanding the lived experiences and career pathways of female head teachers in accessing and retaining leadership positions. It is hoped that the results of this study will generate greater understanding of the lived experiences of female head teachers and can be useful in identifying strategies in achieving gender equity in educational leadership. In addition it is envisaged that the results will not only inform the Ministries of Education in Fiji and the Pacific but provide a significant breakthrough in policy and practice. Moreover this study could indicate potential areas for further research.

Headteachership is a respected, powerful, hotly contested and political leadership position in Fiji and is assumed the privilege of the male population. This study has great significance because it will be one of its first kinds in Fiji examining women in educational leadership in Primary schools. As a female educational leader, you will most likely have encountered various challenges in accessing the leadership position. However, relatively nothing is known about the lived experiences and career trajectories of female head teachers in Fiji. Although you may not directly benefit from this research, your participation may help to illuminate certain long standing issues pertaining to women in educational leadership and provide opportunities to increase gender equity in educational leadership. While providing a feminine perspective and adding to the knowledge base of leadership, this study also hopes to provide encouragement and possibly a direction to other female teachers aspiring to this position.
The research will consist of audio-recorded in-depth interviews with the participants. Transcribed interview scripts will be available to the participants for amendments and review. The researcher will clarify issues as and when deemed necessary.

Although all studies have some degree of risk, utmost care will be taken to minimize unnecessary physical and psychological harm. Should the research process create psychological discomfort, the well-being of the participant will take precedence. In addition, all responses/performances will be treated as anonymous and raw data will be kept strictly confidential. Various pseudonyms will be assigned to participants both during data collection and the final research report. At the end of the study each participant will be given a token of appreciation and gratitude.

Your participation is voluntary. If, at any time you wish to withdraw your participation, you are free to do so without prejudice.

If you have any questions prior to your participation or at any time during the study please do not hesitate to contact me at the contacts listed below.

**AUTHORIZATION:**

I have read the above and understand the nature of the study. I agree to participate in this study. I understand that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time during the research without prejudice. I understand that I will be given a chance to listen to my interview replay and make amendments in the transcription if I perceive a need to do so. I also understand that the data will be confidential and anonymity will be preserved.

**Participant’s Name** ___________________________ Signature: ______________

Date: ____________

**Researcher’s Name:** Jasmine Mohammed Signature: ______________

Date: ______________ Contacts: P. O. Box, 3387, Ba. Fiji. Ph.: 9279504/6258058

Email: jsmn_mhmmmd@yahoo.com
Appendix B2  Letter of Request for Research Approval

P.O. Box, 3387

Ba

11 March 2010.

The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education
Marela House
Suva.

Re: MA in Education: Research Approval Request

I am a qualified primary school civil servant currently on study leave pursuing a Master of Arts in Education on a full time basis under the AusAid Scholarship at the University of the South Pacific. I intend to write a thesis on Women in Educational Leadership: Challenges faced by a selection of women head teachers in Ba, Fiji under the supervision of Dr.Unaisi Nabobo-Baba and Dr. Akanisi Kedrayate from the School of Education, Faculty of Arts and Law, USP.

I would like to seek approval to conduct research in a selection of Primary schools with women leaders in Ba and to gather relevant data pertaining to my investigation from the Ministries of Education and Women and Social Welfare and the District Education Offices and Primary schools under the intended study. This research will be guided by the highest level of integrity, responsible conduct and will be undertaken in accordance with the ethical guidance of the Public Service Commission and the respective school and individual cultures, upholding human values and professionalism.
Prior to the research informed consent, detailing nature of research, privacy rights, respect for human freedom and ensuing voluntary participation and confidentiality will be sought from the female head teachers of selected Primary schools in Ba. Various pseudonyms will be assigned to different participants, both during data collection and the final research report to ensure confidentiality.

Please find attached a copy of my **Statement of Intent** and offer letter from the USP.

Looking forward to a most favourable response at your earliest.

Sincerely

Jasmine Mohammed (Mrs)

44556.

Email: jsmn_mhmmmd@yahoo.com
### Types of Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION TYPE</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Hypothetical Question</strong></td>
<td><strong>Suppose you were asked to lead a larger school. What would be your reaction?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Begin with ‘what if or suppose’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• They inquire about the respondent’s actions in a particular context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Devil’s Advocate</strong></td>
<td><strong>Women cannot be effective school leaders. What would you tell people who say this?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• challenges the respondent to consider an opposing view or explanation to a situation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Ideal Position</strong></td>
<td><strong>What do you think are some of the ways in which the MoE can promote more women in educational leadership in Fiji?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• asks the respondent to describe an ideal situation to extricate both information and opinion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Interpretive Questions</strong></td>
<td><strong>How is leadership different from what you have expected?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• seeks to verify the researcher’s understandings on what the respondent has been saying</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• offers the respondent opportunities to provide more information and opinions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Source: Merriam, 2009, p.98)

(Source: The Researcher: Interview Questions, 2010)
Appendix C2  The Four Elements of Authenticity and Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authenticity and Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Credibility</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parallels internal validity. It refers to the extent to which the findings are believable or trustworthy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dependability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parallels reliability. It refers to the extent to which the same results can be obtained by independent researchers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transferability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parallels external validity. It refers to the extent to which the findings can be transferred to other contexts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Confirmability</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>parallels objectivity. It refers to the extent to which the results can be confirmed by other means, eg. analysis notes, raw data such as the recorded interviews etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D1  Request for Approval to conduct the Participatory and Learning Workshop

The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of Education
Marela House
Suva.
04 November 2010
Ufs The Principal Education Officer
Ba/Tavua.

Dear Sir

Re: Participatory Learning Appraisal Workshop- Ba Education District

I am a civil servant currently on study leave at the University of the South Pacific pursuing a Master of Arts in Education. The topic for my thesis is *Women in Educational Leadership: Challenges faced by a selection of female head teachers in Ba, Fiji*. Research approval has been granted by the Research Development Unit-MoE. Data collection methods for the topic under investigation include in-depth interviews, field observation and a participatory learning appraisal workshop.

I seek your approval in conducting a two day workshop in Ba (in collaboration with the Ba District Education Office) on the 23rd and 24th of this month (Week 12). All expenses will be funded by the research grant from the USP. Refreshments and lunch will be provided. The Workshop will not only provide a means of gathering qualitative data for my research and inform the Ministry of Education but will provide a platform for sharing knowledge and experiences and empowering the participants.

Sincerely looking forward to a most favorable response.

Respectfully yours

Jasmine Mohammed (Mrs)
44556.
Appendix D2

Workshop Details

**Workshop Title:** Gender Mainstreaming: enhancing equity in educational leadership.

**Venue:** DISMAC Room, 2nd floor, Koronubu House, Ba.

**Date:** 23rd and 24th November, 2010

**Aims**

To raise awareness of the challenges/barriers faced by women in educational leadership and foster appreciation for gender mainstreaming as an effective strategy for addressing gender related issues.

**Objectives:**

The objectives of the workshop were to:

- Provide a forum for sharing the challenges/barriers women in educational leadership encounter
- Identify cooperative ways of addressing issues emerging from the gender perspective
- Critically analyze gender mainstreaming as an effective strategy for enhancing equity in educational leadership
- Formulate recommendations on ways in which the MoE can enhance equity in educational leadership
Appendix D3       Invitation to participate in the PLA Workshop

To: ______________________________________________________

School: __________________________________________________

Namaste/Ni Sa Bula/Assalamulaikum

A workshop on Gender Mainstreaming: roadmap to enhancing equity in educational leadership will be conducted by Mrs Jasmine Mohammed 44556 in collaboration with the Ministry of Education- Ba District as part of her research for her MA in Education thesis. You have been selected as one of the participants. Approval has been given by the Permanent Secretary for Education for the workshop and the release of participants.

Date and Time: 23rd and 24th November, 2010- 8.15 am-3.30pm

Venue: DISMAC Room-2nd floor Koronubu House

Facilitator: Mrs Jasmine Mohammed 44556

Chief Guest: Opening: Mr Kamlesh Sharma PEO-Ba/Tavua

Closing: Mr Prem Chand Sharma SEO- Ba/Tavua

During the workshop, morning tea and lunch will be provided. Certificates of participation will also be awarded.

For any further information, please contact the undersigned:

________________________________________________________

Mr Kamlesh Sharma                   Mrs Jasmine Mohammed
Principal Education Officer          44556
Ba/Tavua                           MA in ED.-USP

6258058/9279504
Appendix D4   Ice Breaker and Ground Rules

Ice Breaker

Take a minute to choose three words to describe you. Go around the room, ask participants to introduce themselves and share the three words that best describe them. Allow Questions!

Ground Rules

RESPECT ALL: TIME, PEOPLE, IDEAS AND PROPERTY
CELLULAR PHONES-KEEP ME SILENT!
ONE PERSON TALKS AT A TIME
BE PUNCTUAL
AVOID PASSING JUDGEMENT
PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING
KEEP DISCUSSION RELEVANT
AVOID KILLER PHRASES LIKE “WE ALREADY TRIED THAT”
AND “IT WILL NEVER WORK” AND “YES BUT...”
Appendix D5  
Group Strategies:  D5.1  The Placemat Strategy

PLACEMAT TEMPLATE

David’s ideas

Summary of common ideas and information for the question

Eleni’s ideas

Sarojini’s ideas

Tevita’s ideas

The Placemat illustrating Male Viewpoints of “Blockers to Women’s Advancement

Source: Researcher on 23/11/2010
D5.2 Plus/Minus/ Interesting (PMI) Template and the Problem Tree

Plus/Minus/Interesting Template

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plus</th>
<th>Minus</th>
<th>Interesting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The Problem Tree: Underrepresentation of Women in Educational Leadership

Source: Researcher on 23/11/2010
# Appendix D6  Evaluation Sheet

## Workshop Evaluation

**Gender Mainstreaming: Roadmap to Enhancing Equity in Educational Leadership**

**A. Please read the following statements and rate them on a scale 1-5. Tick your responses.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programme was available</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well organized and facilitated</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective and interesting activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aims and Objectives were achieved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided useful visual aids and handouts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was very empowering</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provided interactive learning experiences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Provided opportunities for critical thinking and self reflection</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provided information that was new to me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar workshops should be conducted for other educational leaders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**B. Open-ended free response**

**What is most valuable about this workshop?**

**What is least valuable about this workshop?**

**Any other comments you wish to make?**

---

**Thank you for your feedback.**

Jasmine Mohammed 44556  MA in Ed. USP 2010

---

Source: Researcher, 16/11/2010
Appendix E  Recommendations emanating from the workshop

Recommendations emanating from the workshop

Source: Researcher on 24/11/2010
COMPULSORY RETIREMENT AGE FOR THE PUBLIC SERVICE

1.0 The Public Service Commission has reviewed the retirement policy for the Public Service, and reduced the compulsory retirement age from 60 to 55 years for both civil servants and government wage earners. However, the implementation of the revised/new compulsory retirement age is to be staggered between 2007 and 2008 with this taking full effect from 1 January 2009.

2.0 Cabinet, vide Cabinet Decision No: 62 of 2007 had agreed to the revised compulsory retirement age of 55 years and its staggered implementation. The phased implementation will hopefully enable affected officers to rearrange their finances and other commitments before their actual retirement. It would also allow departments to strategize on succession planning to ensure services are not unduly affected. Although there is a staggered implementation process, nothing precludes the Commission from retiring an officer at 55 years, earlier than scheduled, on the grounds of public interest.

3.0 The Public Service (General) (Retirement Age Amendment) Regulations 2007 amends Regulation 14(1) of the Public Service (General) Regulations, 1999, on the compulsory retirement age. The new retirement policy becomes effective from 31/03/07.

4.0 Clause 3 of the amendment Regulations provide for the transitional or staggered implementation of the new retirement age, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Civil Servant Ages</th>
<th>Retirement Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

217
Those above 60 years  
To be retired immediately

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Retirement Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>60 years</td>
<td>Retired as &amp; when they turned 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59 and 58 (officers turning 58 up until 31/12/07)</td>
<td>31/12/07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57, 56 and 55 (officers turning 55 up until 31/12/08)</td>
<td>31/12/08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The 55 yrs compulsory retirement age will take full and automatic effect from: 01/01/09

5.0 General Orders 223 and JIC Agreement Clause 15 are amended accordingly. Furthermore, GO224 and JIC Agreement Clause 17 are to be fully complied with.

6.0 Civil Servants and Government Wage Earners are to be informed and notified of the date of their retirement. Those who have accrued leave due to them should be allowed to take this leave prior to their attaining the retirement age.

7.0 Those officers, apart from the Accounting and Common Cadre (including the Administrative, Clerical, Secretarial, Hansard and Telephonist groups) should write to their Permanent Secretaries seeking re-employment after retirement, clearly stating properly assessed in terms of the needs of the Ministry with emphasis on the scarce skills areas, availability of vacant post(s) and funds and the duration of the re-employment.

8.0 Officers re-employed will be on contract, at the grade immediately below that which the officers had retired on and will be paid the salary at the maximum of the scale.


10.0 Please ensure that this circular is brought to the attention of all officers and employees in your Ministry/Department(s). Any clarification and/or further information required may be sought and obtained from Mrs. Losana Ravuso, Principal Employee Relations Advisor, Employee Relations Division, Public Service Commission, on telephone 3314588 ext 218 or email lravuso@psc.gov.fj

[Tom Lee]

Acting Permanent Secretary for the Public Service & Public Sector Reform
1.0 It is noted that in some Ministries/Departments, a number of substantively vacant positions have been filled by acting appointments for excessively lengthy periods. Consequently, it has been decided that long standing acting appointees that fall within the specific criteria set out below, should forthwith be confirmed in the posts in which they have been acting.

2.0 An Officer whose acting appointment complies with ALL of the following criteria is eligible to be confirmed in the post in which he/she has been acting subject to being recommended by his/her Permanent Secretary or Head of Department and subject to the Commission's final endorsement and approval.

3.0 To become eligible, an acting appointee must fulfill ALL six(6) of the following criteria:
1) The acting appointment is in a post at grade SS01 or its equivalent grade or below;
2) The acting appointment is in a post not affected by the Retirement Policy;
3) The Officer has been continuously acting for six(6) months or more;
4) The post in which the Officer has been acting is substantively vacant;
   OR
   The post in which the Officer has been acting will have become substantively vacant as a result of a subsequent promotion in accordance with the provisions of this circular;
5) The Officer is qualified for appointment to the post in which he/she has been acting in terms of the prescribed Minimum Qualification Requirement(MQR); and
6) The Officer's performance including that in an acting capacity has been satisfactory, is endorsed as such and the Officer is recommended for
confirmation by his Permanent Secretary or Head of Department.

4.0 Where processing of a previously advertised vacancy is at an advantaged stage and a Permanent Secretary wishes to recommend for appointment an applicant with clearly better MERIT other than the Officer currently acting in the post, then a formal Commission Submission in the standard format must be submitted to the Commission immediately and not later than 26th March 2010.

5.0 To facilitate the implementation of the regularisation exercise, Ministries and Departments must submit all relevant and accurate information required on the attached form urgently and not later than 26th March 2010.

6.0 In considering officers for promotion, the Commission will exercise its discretionary powers provided of the Public Service Regulations (1999), the provisions State Service Degree No. 6 of 2009 and any other relevant statutory, standing instructions and Circulars.

7.0 Further clarifications may be made with Mrs. Iva Tavai email lvaT@govnet.gov.fj or Mrs. Laite Waseiyaroi email lwaseiyaroi@govnet.gov.fj or Mrs. Misau Fasala email misau.fasala@govnet.gov.fj Telephone number 3314588, extensions 408, 404 and 221.

Pamesh Chand
Permanent Secretary for the Public Service
1.0 Background

1.1 The Roadmap for Democracy and Sustainable Socio Economic Development (2009-2014) is committed to eliminating gender disparity at all levels of education, labour force, and business sector to ensure the ‘Achievement of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women’ in our nation.

1.2 The United Nations 2007 revised list of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) states that sex-disaggregated data become a gender specific indicator to each target under the MDGs.

1.3 A lack of information on the economic contribution of both women and men in the various sectors of the economy remain an impediment in the formulation of policies to strengthen contributions of women. For gender perspectives to be mainstreamed in design implementation monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes, collection of sex disaggregated data is essential.

1.4 The basic strategy is to ensure that the concerns and experiences of men and women become an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in the political, economic and social spheres so that men and women benefit equally and that inequality is not perpetuated.

1.5 Coupled with this there are a number of traditional customary practices which remain obstacles to women’s economic empowerment and national efforts to combat poverty.

1.6 A critical component of this work is the adoption of a central data & information management system to reflect gender statistics and indicators disaggregated by ethnicity, age, disability, employment and other relevant status.

1.7 A more qualitative information database on gender related issues and women’s issues is vital for the development of policies in government and help us meet our international protocols such as CEDAW and MDG.
2.0 Mandatory Exercise

2.1 After endorsement by Cabinet it is now mandatory that sex disaggregated data be incorporated into all government policy documents; and therefore become an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in each ministry.

3.0 Coordinating Agency

3.1. The Ministry of Social, Welfare, Women and Poverty Alleviation will spearhead the awareness processes throughout the government Ministries and Departments.

3.2 Permanent Secretaries will be responsible for the establishment of sex-disaggregated database in their respective agencies.

4.0 Effective Date

This exercise is to begin immediately.

Further clarification may be obtained from Luse Qereqeretabua on telephone number 3312199 or email luse.qereqeretabua@govnet.gov.fj

Iva F Tavai
Acting Permanent Secretary for the Public Service