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World Education Leadership Symposium Online Conferences 2021 (WELSmain)

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Prof. Dr. Stephan Gerhard Huber

Host WELSmain 2021 (since 2009) / Veranstalter WELSmain 2021 (seit 2009):

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University of Teacher Education Zug (PH Zug)

Institut für Bildungsmanagement und Bildungsökonomie (IBB) /
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**Struggling to make a difference
against the odds: a synthesis of
qualitative research on women
leading schools in Zimbabwe**

Dr. Zvisinei Moyo
University of Johannesburg

zvisinei.moyo@gmail.com



Introduction

- Synthesis of findings from studies of gender and educational leadership in Zimbabwe.
- Features embedded in the cultural context have motivated scholars to focus on female roles in school leadership
- Hallinger (2018) recommendation of reviews of African women leading education literature
- The historical economic meltdown might have worsened the plight of women leading education in Zimbabwe, prompting this research synthesis to move back to move forward.
- Patriarchal values and norms of behaviour are abundantly evident - women routinely suffer from social, political, economic and cultural discrimination.
- Disproportionate numbers of males and females leading schools
- Decision making in the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education system is highly centralized

Method

- ▶ Studies identified through a multiple electronic search using a carefully defined eligibility criteria and search terms.
- ▶ A total of 35 studies were identified, downloaded and saved
- ▶ further reviewed resulting in 25 mixed sources spanning from 2008 to 2018. eligible.
- ▶ Findings extracted from individual studies stored in a brief format in an MS Excel file, and in a longer format in a MS Word file – further examined - broad themes were generated in an iterative process.
- ▶ Once the 3 themes were identified, all studies were coded such that cross-study synthesis could be conducted.
- ▶ Similar process was used to identify sub-themes within each of the broad themes.
- ▶ Went back to extract descriptions stored in the word file to elaborate on each of the themes and their composite dimensions.



Main themes

Sub-themes

Barriers to gaining leadership positions

Personal factors

Institutional barriers

Cultural barriers

Female ways of leading

Caring and nurturance

Collaboration and power sharing

Context challenges of women leaders

Role conflict

Institutional context

Cultural context

Barriers to gaining leadership positions

Personal factors

- Glass ceiling
- Lack confidence
- Low self-esteem

Institutional barriers

- Centralisation
- Top to bottom
- Engraved discrimination
- Masculinity

Cultural barriers

- Traditional norms
- Beliefs
- Social constructs

Female ways of leading

Caring and nurturance

- Creativity
- Empowering
- Motherliness
- Kindness

Collaboration

- Consultative leadership
- Two-way communication
- Shared decision making

Power sharing

- Communal strategies
- Relation oriented
- Negotiation
- Reciprocity

Challenges to female leadership

Role conflict

- Familial roles
- Gender roles
- Discrimination

Institutional context

- Society sets as acceptable
- Deviating from norms unacceptable
- Low parental cooperation
- Unrealistic cooperation

Cultural context

- Stereotypes
- Prejudices
- Cultural constructs
- Power hierarchies



Implications



- majority of studies reported challenges encountered by female leaders raising questions about social justice in the Zimbabwean society.
- findings are consistent with findings from broader research on 'caring school leadership' that have emerged from the United States (e.g. Grant, 2005; Kwadzo, 2010; Lumby and Azaola, 2014; Louis, Murphy & Smylie, 2017; Mestry & Schmidt, 2012).
- finding has potent implications with respect to the role of women education leaders in advancing social change in Zimbabwe, and other African societies (Naidoo et al., 2016; Nkomo and Ngambi, 2009)
- Through their ways of leading, female leaders could redesign institutional environments to decrease gender-based alienation.



Conclusion



- ▶ Culture, gender stereotypes and social values intersect to form barriers attainment and advancement in management roles, as well as shaping how females lead.
- ▶ Challenges faced by female leaders can be reduced by adopting policy frameworks that are favourable for social justice and equality.
- ▶ Institutions of learning, could be used to transform society- female leaders could redesign institutional environments to decrease gender based alienation.
- ▶ Acknowledge the critically important role that female leaders can play in the improvement of education systems.
- ▶ The female ways of leading documented in this review are helping to gradually shift – one leader at a time – expectations away from traditional autocratic ways of leading towards new possibilities.
- ▶ Future research should continue to:
 - ▶ investigate female education leaders' experiences through social justice values and foreground how aspects working against the advancement of women can be obliterated.
 - ▶ examine success stories of female education leaders.